

*From Scholarship to Teaching:
In Memoriam Ana-Karina Schneider*

Ana-Karina Schneider, the eminent English studies specialist from Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania, always impressed by her profound knowledge of several areas in English and American studies: gender and identity studies,¹ American literature,² modernism and postmodernism.³ On the other hand, two of her books clearly show that Ana-Karina Schneider was also a scholar who generously shared her knowledge with her students and did her best to make literary discourses or literary metadiscourses of past centuries interesting and challenging (in the best sense of the word) to today's young generations. With Ana-Karina Schneider, scholarship and teaching go hand in hand and support each other.

*In 2008, Ana-Karina Schneider published a historical survey of the Anglo-American literary criticism. The book was clearly written with a view to a specific readership (the students from the schools of letters), but it can also be of interest to anyone who is interested in the evolution of literary criticism. The seven lectures that make up Schneider's *A Short History of Anglo-American Literary Criticism* are perfectly adapted to the usual structure of an academic semester (fourteen weeks) in the Romanian higher education. It is obvious that the author had in her mind an academic schedule where a lecture is offered every other week. Schneider's clear style and perfect knowledge of her topic justify the inclusion of this work into a lot of bibliographies.*

Five years later, Schneider published another student-oriented book: her lecture notes for the study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English literature. It is common knowledge that these two hundred years used to be a fascinating period in British history. It was not only the age of Dryden and Pope but also the span of time when political power

swinged from the authoritarian royal rule to the emergence of a new political force in the British system: the Parliament. Gradually, and not without setbacks, the royalty became more and more a symbolic force, and the exercise of power turned, more and more, into a parliamentary prerogative. The king rules but does not govern. This was the most important political tenet of that time. Literature followed this process from an apparent distance. This is the age when a new genre appeared: the novel. This nascency points to the changes in society, the growing influence of a new social class, the bourgeoisie, and different literary tastes and preferences. Schneider follows these transformations with scholarly acumen and pedagogical skill.

The lecture notes begin with the Renaissance literary metadiscourse, namely Stephen Gosson and Philip Sidney. There follows the discussion of the Jacobean drama (John Webster and Ben Jonson), the seventeenth-century poetry (John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Ben Jonson, John Milton and John Dryden), the Enlightenment, the rise of the novel (Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, Laurence Sterne), the rise and the variety of the essay (Richard Steele, Joseph Addison, Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, and Dr. Johnson), the Gothic, sentimentalism and pre-romanticism. In tune with the latest approaches to the history of the eighteenth-century novel, namely with Isabel Armstrong, Schneider emphasizes the “feminization of the literature” (115), but refuses to adopt a very decisive feminist stance. On the other hand, she also takes some distance from the over-canonized Ian Watt and his perspective on the rise of the novel, where Jane Austen is the token female novelist, and no other women contributed to the creation of the British novel. Several Annexes offer the reader passages from relevant works of the period under scrutiny or critical passages that are both explanatory and stimulative for further research. In this way, students are lured to develop their own critical thinking. They are provided with new ideas and appreciations about the writers under perusal, and discretely, but efficiently, they are encouraged to go beyond their school duties and write articles, read conference papers, publish essays.

Schneider’s text is spiced with maieutic questions meant to guide the students’ acquiring knowledge process, self-evaluation tests,

descriptions in a nutshell (a sort of summative passages). Literary terms are explained in very clear terms, which makes this book a possible reading for anyone interested in literary history, whether student or a person eager to increase his/her knowledge. The glossaries situated at the end of the book or after certain chapters, if the author considered them to be necessary, are short but well compiled mini-dictionaries which prove Schneider's scholarship and her pedagogical talent. After each chapter, there is a reinforcement section which sums up the main points of the previous subdivision and facilitates the students' learning process.

An interesting detail of Schneider's lecture notes is the terminology she uses. Schneider proves that she is acquainted with the jargon of literary studies, but she also dares to initiate new terminological areas. For instance, when dividing the span of time the book covers, the author uses the term "aesthetic ages" (9) and avoids the well-known "The Age of Dryden" or "The Augustan Age," pointing to the fact that her balanced survey also tackles the background of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century aesthetic/cultural evolutions. Schneider's style has the clarity and the limpidity of Steele's and Addison's essay – what an interesting contamination! – but occasionally the author also winks at the reader and allows us to see her own very personal opinion of the authors she discusses. As this review is meant to stir up the interest in Schneider's activity and various literary interests, I shall give just one example. Dr Samuel Johnson is mildly but accurately ironized as "[t]he last great literary dictator" (98). For other such stylistic and conceptual firstlings, one has to read Schneider's book.

In conclusion, we must emphasize the truth that Schneider's lecture notes can be helpful for students, teachers, and other scholars who specialize in English literary studies for a very long time from now on. This book is relevant for Ana-Karina Schneider's generous spirit. A scholar who has always impressed by her thorough and highly competent research, she was also a teacher to be remembered for her competence and gracious authority. She spread knowledge to the young generations, not only because this was her job, but especially because she was more than aware that the talent she had been given must be increased exactly as the Saviour advised all to do in "The Parable of the Talents." "For

unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance”
(Matthew 25: 14-29). And Ana-Karina Schneider had a lot of spiritual
abundance. May she rest in peace!

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Notes:

¹ See Ana-Karina Schneider, *The Literature of Identity in the USA: Women Novelists of the 20th Century*, Editura Universităţii “Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu, 2014.

² See Ana-Karina Schneider, *Critical Perspectives in the Late Twentieth Century: William Faulkner*, Editura Universităţii “Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu, 2006.

³ See Ana-Karina Schneider and Anca Tomuş, *Modernism/Postmodernism: A Study Guide*, Editura Universităţii “Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu, 2015.

Works Cited

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- . *The Literature of Identity in the USA: Women Novelists of the 20th Century*. Editura Universităţii “Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu, 2014.
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- The Bible*. King James Version, Matt., 25: 14-30.
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