

Editorial

Of confinements, books and passions

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Reading, among other things, is an activity that allows us to immerse ourselves in the past, giving us the opportunity to enter the unknown universe made up of lives, times and places to which we do not belong; in other words, reading opens the doors for us to access, imagine, feel and live what has not corresponded to us. Regarding this, in these days of confinement to which the presence of a virus has forced us to do so, it has definitely exposed our fragility, and vulnerability to nature, of which we undoubtedly part of, although we sometimes deny it. I have had the opportunity to read the biography of two men who are preeminent in western culture. They are the Renaissance painter Miguel Ángel Buonarroti, and the writer Oscar Wilde. It occurs to me that the term "closure" could allow me to associate what these two men, and a third who will come later, Sigmund Freud, could say about the passion for reading.

In the first place, Michelangelo, painter, sculptor, architect; a man who had no formal instruction, but was passionate about reading, especially the great poet Dante, who is said to have recited his verses and whose descriptions in his Divine Comedy most certainly inspired him when painting of his frescoes; likewise, it is known that he was a reader of Boccaccio, Savonarola, the Bible, among others. Michelangelo, who suffered from several of the plagues that struck the Italy of his time, of course, had to lock himself up sometimes, a confinement that he made use of to read and study anatomy. It is worth mentioning that the brilliant painter had a reputation for being little given to dealing with others, that is, he liked to be "closed off" in himself, was rather lonely, meditative, neurotic, some would say. Likewise, in addition to painting and sculpture, his talent allowed him to compose poetry, dedicating a sonnet to Dante. He also addressed in his poems, very human

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issues such as love, beauty, death, artistic creation, among others. His works, which are more on painting and sculpture, reflect the knowledge that he had about the human being, about his passions, feelings and desires; knowledge, very surely, obtained in great part, through his readings.

Second, we are presented with Oscar Wilde, “locked up” in a depressing prison into which he was thrown by the power, hatred and hypocrisy of the society of his time; prison from which he cries out to one of the few friends who were faithful to him, to send him books, that he cannot live without books; that in that horrible prison in which he finds himself, the only thing that relieves him a little is the reading the great writers he loves (among others, Dante was one of her favourite authors). If something distressed or afflicted him, it was the thought that when he got out of jail he would not be able to enjoy his books, lost now, because they had been taken from his home and sold during the judicial process that followed. Wilde, a great writer, whose literary characters know how to accurately display everything that man can enclose, was a voracious reader; for him, books were as important as the air he breathed, they were the only thing, outside of his thoughts, with which he was able to fill the unfortunate days of being locked up in prison.

Knowing the passion of these two great men for books has evoked in me the passion present in Sigmund Freud, who, moreover, can be said to have spent his initial years “locked up”, isolated from official science that was not very willing to consider his observations on the human psyche, in which, according to him, the priority is contained in the unconscious processes. Freud, a great reader since he was a child, was convinced of the knowledge possessed by literature writers and poets about the complex human psyche, a knowledge that greatly surpassed that of psychologists themselves; his work is infused with references to poets and their characters. In addition, his passion for history, philosophy, mythology, art, led him to complete his particular vision of the human being, culture and the malady that derives from that inexorable living of the “locked up” man in culture.

These are three characters who have bequeathed us of great works, three characters for whom life without books and without reading was inconceivable; likewise, three men whose works reflect, in their own way, of having drunk from the sources of literature; three men, each in his time, for whom the “confinement” was more bearable by mastering it with the reading of their favourite authors.

To us, citizens of this apocalyptic century, subjected to a confinement whose final point is yet uncertain, the path chosen by the three great men may well serve as an example. We should not forget that reading always opens a door for us to look out, even to travel and discover other times, cities, and existences as ephemeral as ours, subjected to the ups and downs of history, as well as to the waves of personal destiny. Whoever does not read, from my point of view, is condemned to live in a prison worse than that of Wilde’s, a prison without windows or doors that allow them to get a broader idea of reality. Finally, it is worth saying that reading can also, to those who support it, open the door to think about themselves; it can open the door for him so that on a tour of himself, he can interrogate his Sphinx, asking him some transcendent questions.