



III col·loqui internacional del projecte *Mimesi*

LA POÈTICA DE LA IL·LUSTRACIÓ: RAÓ & CÀNON

Universitat de Barcelona 6|7 octubre 2011

PERFECTIBILITAT I PROGRÉS

Dalla perfettibilità alla logica evuzionistica.

Aspetti della poetica sette e ottocentesca

(From perfectibility to evolutive logic.

Aspects of 18th and 19th poetics)

Gisela SCHLÜTER (Universität Erlangen Nürnberg)

This talk will discuss some motives of French historic and aesthetic thinking in the the 17-19th centuries related to the evolution and progress –or progresses– of arts and sciences. From the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* on, the 18th century theories in progress, and especially scientific and artistic progress will be analyzed, as well as the gestation, in the mid-18th century, of the originally biologic and anthropological concept of perfectibility. The second half of the 18th century consummates the concept of progress, even though it casts a shadow of scepticism. Nowadays scholars discuss again upon the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* as the triggering element for the debate between Neoclassicism and the first Romanticism. After the revolution, Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant reassumed the concept of perfectibility, highly criticized by the early German romantics, in order to reshape its cultural, moral and political value. When along the 19th century enlightened progress tend to fall into discredit and decadence, poetics reanimates the motif of evolution along with a meta-capacity known as “indefinite perfectibility”, within the framework of an evolutionist theory of literary history and its genres.

The guiding principle of this talk will be the research of poetological references of heterogenic overtones, and the paradigms of nature and natural history from the *Querelle* until the evolutive literary theories. Analogies and metaphors merged into an abstract 18th century concept, that of ilimited perfectibility, which foretokens the 19th century evolutionist logics. After the introduction (I) and a brief reference made to the *Querelle* (II), it will discuss the 18th century concept o progress and progresses (III) and its manifestations in the late 18th century literary historiography (IV); a brief history of the “indefinite perfectibility” concept will be drawn, as well as some observations upon its aesthetic implications (VI). The last part (VII) will refer to the 19th century criticism on the enlightened concept of progress, but mainly to the evolutive theory applied to literary historiography and particularly to the historical reconstruction of the system of literary genres.