

Chapter Three

The Synthesized Model

In this chapter, the results of the application and the assessment carried out in the previous chapter are presented. After that, the chapter draws on these results to draw a synthesis between the main propositions of the three models that constitute the main bulk of modern reader-response criticism. This synthesis is provided based on the theoretical discussions in the introduction and chapter one, the data analysis provided in chapter two, and the results presented in the first section of this chapter.

I. Results of the Application/Experiment

i. The Inter-subjective Model

The application of the propositions of the inter-subjective model yields the following results. Concerning the first proposition; the horizon of expectations, the responses of the participants justify this concept with its three sources; the contextual, the personal/subjective, and the textual. Real readers' answers validate the social, cultural, and historical contextual input with ample proofs. The answers also reveal the influence of the horizon of experience on the readers' processing of the text; thus proving the personal influence as well. The answers also imply that any subjective analogizing is possible. However, as proposed by this model, this falls largely under the guidance of the text which can maintain, modify, or revoke any subjective contributions or influences.

As for the mechanism of the reading experience proposed by this model, answers of real readers justify the presence of gaps left within the text, the reader's procession of these gaps on the bases of the three sourced horizon of expectation and under the

guidance of the text, and the text's contribution by maintaining, modifying, or revoking these expectations both with respect to what is supposed to happen next and what has already been read and processed. Answers also confirm the polysemantic nature of literary texts, and, to a slightly lesser degree, the readers' attempts at finding unity in a text through the mechanisms of selection, rejection of alien associations, and grouping.

Concerning authorial intentions, the participants' answers indicate that this particular proposition holds a rather weak authority over the literary experience. It is true that some authorial intentions are realized. However, others, including the main message the work tries to deliver, are not realized even by those participants who have received professional training in literary criticism institutions and whose responses reflect a considerable amount of proficiency. In addition to that, apart from realizing or failing to realize the author's intentions, the fact remains that there is no textual mechanism through which the author can ensure the delivery of her/his message except for the direct statement of this message.

This takes the discussion to the proposition of the virtual dimension of the text being achieved somewhere between the author's artistic pole and the reader's aesthetic pole. The discussion of authorial intentions weakens this proposition. The best verdict thus is that, except when the reader is formerly familiar with a stated authorial intention, the virtual dimension is mainly carried out within the vicinity of the text, under some readers' unconscious attempts at recreating the author's experience as the true one. This may be triggered by the reader's psychological disposition at validating her/his interpretive account by resorting to the author as a figure of authority and identifying with her/him, as Iser suggests, by introjecting what is perceived as her/his experience.

However, some readers develop a higher level of response; they develop metacognitive stances that allow them to detach their experiences from that of the author, and sometimes even from textual elements. This is best exemplified in the answers of the three participants who provide totally subjective criteria for judging the novel as a thriller (1:1). As claimed earlier, what makes these answers different is not the core of their answers; as they all expect suspense and excitement like the rest of the participants, the distinguishing element is their dependence on their own subjective responses to the work at hand rather than on any objective description of textual properties, or authorial intentions.

The propositions concerning the role literature plays in the personal/collective contexts of its reader, and its ability to cause horizontal change is proven possible. However, the chances of accomplishing this level of response remain mainly within the subjective configuration of the reader. It is the highest level of response as it depends on the reader's ability to take a metacognitive stance and then goes further so as to adopt a resisting attitude towards the issue the literary work evokes. With this point, the results of the application of the inter-subjective model propositions end.

ii. The Social Model

What is inferred from the analysis concerning the first proposition of the social model is the considerable effect of the social/cultural/institutional contexts on the reader's response to literary works. These contexts cast quite an impelling shadow on the elements that draw the reader's attention, the themes that she/he looks for, the patterns that she/he easily identifies, and on the terms she/he uses. Moreover, they can even prevent or hinder

response altogether. This proves Fish's proposition that if the reader shares the same institution as that of the author, or that represented by the text, or at least this institution shapes part of her/his repertoire, then she/he will have a better chance of coming to realize the intended meaning of what is communicated.

Three facts also prove themselves in the answers of the participants. First, the role of metacognition receives further support from the application of the propositions of the social model. The degree to which the reader is metacognitive of her/his social/cultural/institutional contextual dispositions can play a considerable role in the reader's account. Such metacognitive stances along with the resisting responses of some participants reflect the advantageous stance that metacognitive awareness allows. It permits readers to occupy objective stances of evaluation, and makes available the possibility of taking resisting attitudes against subjective or collective dispositions. Moreover, the tendencies of some participants to generalize their responses or provide judgmental responses offer the corollary of this proposition; the lack of metacognitive awareness can generate stereotypical or prejudiced responses to the perception the reader holds of her/his own context or that of others.

The second fact is that none of the institutions assessed in the data analysis section proves able to provide a 100% pure account. A considerable number of accounts give conflicting responses. Like the Marxists praising what they perceive of as the human element within a capitalist like Royal, or the feminists believing the author to be a female based on the perception that the author depicts female feelings and plights with accurate details. Moreover, as many of these paradoxes can be traced back to subjective psychological influences; an expanding revision of the notion of context as proposed by social model

theorists so as to allow more room for personal/subjective input must be urged. In addition to that, several participants supply multiple accounts, each belonging to a different institution. Participant T, for instance, provides a Marxist analysis, a feminist analysis, as well as an extra post-colonial analysis. Participant Q also gives a Marxist account as well as a feminist one. This undermines Fish's revision of the distance between the reader and the institution she/he comes to occupy, and his proposition that the reader is herself/himself a construction of this very institution.

The third fact concerning the first proposition of the social model is that all answers prove to stem from somewhere or the other in the text. In fact, some factual elements come in literally in many answers despite the variations in age, gender, cultural, and educational backgrounds. There is a war taking place in the prologue, after eight years and a half, Jane is starting her own business, her father's business is sabotaged, there are family struggles, murders, demonstrations, the president calls Jane, and Joycelyn hides Royal's letters. Furthermore, Grooms, Roy, Conover, Soverell, etc., are all held as suspects by traces left within the narrative. What varies is the emotional response to these themes or factual incidents, the position they occupy on the participants' lists of major/minor themes, and their evaluation of the author as a literary figure, or the text as a thriller novel.

This further proves that the social model's proposition that interpretive acts do not come from the reader, and that they are dictated by the social, cultural, or institutional conventions that form the reader's repertoire is again proven *partially* unjustified by real readers. These contexts do exert a considerable influence, and sometimes, it is true, they are the most dominant influencers. However, instances of unconsciously subjective or

conscious/unconscious metacognitive deviations from the norms sometimes even without necessarily belonging to another culture or institution prove their proposition to be, to a certain degree, not absolute. There has to be a space left for the interpretive acts to be, even if slightly, influenced by textual input, as well as by the personal/subjective attitudes.

The discussion moves now to the results concerning the notion of competence. The answers of the participants reveal that this element, in case of its presence, does provide a guiding influence. Also, this proposition partly resounds the inter-subjective horizon of experience and acquaintance with the rules of the genre. Therefore, it can trigger the same effect on the reading experience. However, competence should have also been assessed in the light of Culler's claim that a literary experience will be enjoyed even in cases of extreme misreading or misinterpretation, but as none of the participants provide major misinterpretations or misreadings of the text, the assessment of this proposition was not possible.

As for the criterion of acceptability, the congregations that the institutionally oriented participants demonstrate in addition to the collective dispositions displayed by the majority of the participants hailing from similar cultural/social/institutional backgrounds, entail the validity of this proposition. This is of course given with reference to the proposition concerning the polysemantic nature of the work also being validated.

iii. The Psychological Model

Concerning Bleich's propositions, the final verdict against the first two propositions indicates that there is indeed a personal or subjective input into the readers' responses. Some conscious, intellectual interpretations do reveal a subjective root for most of the accounts. Some other answers also reflect perceptive, affective, and associative traces. However, the main contribution of the application of these two propositions is the fact that again this subjective input is proven to work mainly within the vicinity of textual borders and under a certain amount of contextual influence. Also, the degree of this subjective input is proven to be subjectively variable; for where some answers are open and clear about the subjective traces they bear, thus displaying what he refers to as the "Subjective Criteria of Importance", others are insistently detached and objective, thus displaying the "Objective Criteria of Importance". In addition to that, some answers provide a virtual display of the objectification of the original subjective responses which he also proposes.

On a different level, the direction in which the procession of the response as a whole moves between the emotional/affective end of response and the intellectual end is, in the least, not fixed. Whether there is a rule to govern this process or not, is also uncertain. Both directions are justified by real-readers as possible. However, the fact that none of the participants offer a textually unjustifiable interpretation may indicate that the opposite direction to what he proposes is prevalent while his proposed direction remains a possible mechanism for some readers. The issue seems to be left within the subjective territory of each reader as a unique entity.

Concerning his third proposition; that the reader never talks about the story except as something of subjective importance, and that she/he tends to lie, ignore, or add certain alien elements to her/his original response in order to hide the subjective nature of this response, the results tend to replicate those of the two previous propositions. The application of real readers proves that this mechanism is also possible. As a matter of fact, this proposition may be used as the rationale behind the fact that the inter-subjective model's proposition of rejecting alien associations receives a more limited validation than most of that model's other propositions. However, the fact remains that this proposition is still mainly possible, especially in the light of the, by now, proven textual influence.

Moreover, nothing in the collective evaluation of the answers of real readers suggests that this process does take place in each and every element of response. In fact, the absence of any mechanism, except direct coach psychoanalysis, that can refer each and every element in each and every reader's response to a personal subjective origin supports the proposition that this is but a possible mechanism, and that its possibility of application lies within the subjective configuration of each reader. The overall assessment of the first three propositions thus yields a profound result; the proven authority of the text, and the lack of any misinterpretations on behalf of the participants, extremely undermine the subjective hegemony advocated by Bleich. The model proves to be merely an account of one of the possible accounts of the reading experience, and in case of its ever taking place, in most cases, it largely falls under the contextual/textual guidance or influence.

The last of Bleich's propositions; that similar interpretations are subjectively based communal acts that are essentially founded on the persuasive capacity of the proposer

and the willingness of the receivers to accept her/his account, assimilate it, and integrate it into their repertoires of responses, is proven valid. This validation, however, is subject to the acceptance of the fact that the relationship between the subjective entity on the one hand and the collective entity on the other is inter-dependent. As discussed before, Freud maintains that cultures or civilizations, are but the “cumulative product[s] of our psychology, its intrinsic character, and the ways it reacts upon its environments; civilization is also in some ways analogous with the human psyche, exhibiting a collective psychology that develops according to similar rules” (qtd. in Habib 586). He also admits that the human psyche is situated “within the fabric of social institutions”, which “evolves a superego under whose influence cultural development proceeds” (qtd. in Habib 586). This contextualization of the subjective entity is what may account for the weak validation Bleich’s previous three models receive from real readers. His failure to recognize this inter-relationship, except when forced to account for similar interpretations, is the primary reason his model is undermined.

One more point that Bleich proposes and that also fails to be validated by real readers is the role of the author as the manipulator of the readers’ emotions which are in turn, according to Bleich, the only important factors of response. According to the collective results of the three models discussed so far, this proposition proves unjustified on both its levels. Emotions are not always the leading responsive measures, and authorial intentions are already proven to have a rather weak hold on the actual experience of the reader.

The discussion now tackles the results of the assessment of Holland’s propositions. The first of these propositions is that of the subjective identity theme. The concept does

reveal its shadow in several responses. However, just like Bleich's subjective entity, it lacks contextualization; Holland's identity theme needs further expansion so as to allow for the so far proven contextual influences to be taken into account. The concept in its expanded version finds ample proofs for itself in the accounts of real readers. As for his four phased model, the assessment proves the possibility of the model as yet another possible account of a reader's literary experience. However, what fails to prove itself is the proposed pure subjectivity of the model. In other words, Holland's revised, mainly subjective, model fails to prove itself whereas his earlier model, which can be claimed to be based on an inter-subjective orientation, is the one proven possible. The earlier model accounts for the literary experience, as an event, to be based on the inter-relationship between the reader and the text, which is what the application of the three models has by now proven.

II. The Synthesized Model

Before initiating the discussion, it must be emphasized that this model is a synthesis between the above mentioned models. The discussions of the theoretical propositions together provide a view of some common grounds that can be used as the foundations of this model. The analysis of the participants' answers to the questionnaire provides the practical support to some of these contentions and revokes others as mere theoretical propositions with no traces in the proceedings of real readers. The main contribution of this section is to provide a model that presents logical, comprehensive links between the elements proven valid by the data analysis.

Accounting for the proposed model will be divided into two sections. The first section synthesizes the proven aspects of each of the constituents of the reading experience. These constituents will be discussed according to the following questions: What is the context? What is its role? What is the role of the author? What is the text? What is the role of the text? And what is the role of the reader? The second section tackles the experience of reading as a process, and it will be discussed according to the following questions: How does the literary experience proceed? What are the levels of response? And finally, what roles can literature play in the light of this experience?

i. The Constituents of the Reading Experience

What is the Context? What is its Role?

This notion of context needs synthesizing between the solely subjective input informing the psychological/subjective model's propositions particularly that of identity theme, the social model's comprehensive social/cultural/institutional contextualization, in addition to what can be considered the outcome of mixing both which comes in the form of the contextual input into the reader's horizon of expectations proposed by the inter-subjective model theorists. The main problem seems to be that each model recognizes the notion of context solely from the outlook of this specific model's orientation, intentionally or unintentionally neglecting all other contributors to the notion. The results of the application provided above offer the aid needed to synthesize the three propositions.

The offered synthesis is mainly influenced by Freud's recognition of the elements that affect the subjective identity theme, as well as Rosenblatt's recognition of the

contextual elements that affect the reader as well as the reading experience as a whole (see above pages 8, 9, and 19). Even within the propositions of the psychological model, which preaches the rankest level of subjectivity, we come across various statements that support this synthesis. We find such statements in Bleich's analysis of the teenagers' obsession with the absence of sexual scenes in Victorian novels, and his declaration of interpretations as communal acts (see above pages 49 to 51), and in Holland's definition of the collective identity theme as the MNP or the mental national product of a certain nation or group (see above pages 58 and 59).

The concept of context, according to this synthesis, needs to be divided into two types. The first type is related to the human participants in the literary experience, while the second is related to the experience itself. Concerning the first type, it handles the two participants in the reading experience; the author and the reader, and it is divided into personal aspects and impersonal aspects. With the former comes the psychological makeup or the identity theme as Holland calls it. Each individual is a unique mixture of a set of fantasies, defenses, and adaptations which, despite being universally fixed themselves, allow for the personalization of a mix or a kit for each individual which in turn constitutes her/his identity theme.

However, even this enlarged revision of the individual identity theme, as proposed by Holland in his revised model, is lacking. There are other elements that contribute to the construction of the identity theme other than the psychosexual phases, and what they trigger as defense and adaptation mechanisms. These include such factors as color, age, race, gender, personal memories and traumas, the history of relationships between the individual and all external entities in her/his surrounding environment, etc. These

elements act doubly as subjective contributions to the individual identity theme, and as evolutionary subjective congregations forming collective institutions that maintain an inter-relationship with the subjective influencer/influenced party.

This brings the discussion to the impersonal aspects. A person, since infancy, is affected by such contextual, impersonal elements as her/his surrounding cultural and social dispositions, superegos and grand narratives, racial and religious beliefs and prejudices, the economic stance she/he occupies, norms of the historical period, familial environments as well as the surrounding physical environment, etc. These elements act as largely, even if momentarily, uniform and steady influences on the individual/s' configuration of personal/collective identity theme/s. These impersonal aspects of contextualization also include the institutional influence which, in addition to the subjective congregations mentioned in the personal aspects, may be educational or intellectual, as well as the reader's horizon of experience and knowledge about the conventionally based rules of the genre.

There are two points that must be maintained here. First, the identity theme thus formed is a mainly stable configuration. However, it is not eternally fixed as Holland suggests. The justification for this point resides in the second point. As mentioned before, the contextual elements that contribute to the formation of the identity theme especially the impersonal and collective contributors maintain an inter-relationship with the individual subjective entity. Therefore, any variation in the collective or impersonal context will naturally lead to a variation in the identity theme of the individual. It is true that these collective contexts are not in constant change, yet, they are not universally fixed.

In addition to that, on the personal level, apart from the largely stable contributors such as color, race, and gender, some contributors are subject to change either naturally or by exceptional incidents. The first type includes such elements as age for instance which, with its constant change, brings about definite evolutionary outlook variations, while the second may include traumatic experiences and accidents. The result is that the identity theme is not, as proposed by this model, eternally fixed. Moreover, achieving a metacognitive stance of any of the above mentioned contributors, may lead to a resisting attitude which in turn can bring about varying levels of change within the identity theme of each reader.

This extended, contextualized version of the identity theme plays a significant role both in the process of writing and the process of reading. Whether the author is presenting something in synthesis with her/his own identity theme or is metacognitively taking a stance against something in the repertoire of this identity theme, she/he are still acting with reference to it. The reader, on the other hand, may or may not have access to these authorial intentions, but she/he resorts, consciously or unconsciously, to her/his respective identity themes as primary participants in generating responses.

Moreover, the degree to which the stance is metacognitive is not only a major influencer of response, but also the determiner of the direction of the relationship between the subjective identity theme and the objectified intellectual response of the reader. That is, the degree to which this aspect of contextualization plays a role in the reading experience is itself a subjective case. It varies from one person to another. Also, as it is not the case that each and every reader is literate enough with the concepts of general psychology and psychoanalysis, this level of response is usually not clear enough.

However, in some instances, especially when the reader is well versed in the field, there can be clear accounts of the contribution paid by this human level of contextualization in the experience as a whole.

This first type of contextualization is not the sole player in the reading experience. The second type, the one related to the experience itself, also plays a significant role, one which, though neglected by the psychological model theorists, prove more apparent and easier to ascertain from the answers provided by the participants of the experiment. This aspect includes, as proven by the data analysis, the social dispositions, cultural conventions, and the historical instance of the text's production and/or of the era/s the text tackles. The genre to which the text belongs also contextualizes the experience, as well as the institution/s which the text explores.

The analysis of the data gathered from the questionnaire supports this expanded revision of contextual influence on the experience as a whole as well as on the construction of the reader. The cultural, social, institutional, historical input is proven influential, and the personal, psychological contribution is proven quite possible to subjectively varying degrees.

What is the Role of the Author?

The author, as Culler proposes in not a "congenial idiot" who merely puts threads of words on paper out of which the reader in a solo act configures a text. Indeed the author has intentions, even if her/his intention is just to express herself/himself. The point proven by the questionnaire though is that there is no mechanism by which the author can ensure that her/his intentions are delivered (except for the direct statement of these

intentions), or that the reader will respond to them in the desired or intended manner. In fact, all of the propositions made on behalf of the author in the three models fail to come up with such a mechanism. However, it may be claimed that just as some readers are more competent than others, some authors may be better at presenting their intentions than others. More importantly, as Fish claims, if the reader happens to occupy the same institution/institutions, or any other contextual entity, that the author occupies, she/he is more probable to identify the original authorial intentions of that author.

What is the Text? What is its Role?

The text is the medium of communication between the two human participants in the experience. It is also, in most cases, the major configurator of the experience. Based on the discussion of authorial intentions and the virtual dimension of the text, there can be two ends to the text, or just as Iser claims two poles; the artistic and the aesthetic. The first pole is an attempt by the author to deliver a message or an experience. However, this message or experience stands its chance of delivery under the ability of the text. The other pole is the realization achieved by the reader also under the guidance of the text. What comes as the final product is the virtual dimension not only of the text, as Iser maintains, but of the experience as a whole.

In addition to that, the text is endowed with a polysemantic nature that provides it with the potentiality to be open to numerous interpretations simultaneously. This is one of the propositions that all three models agree on, and that has been justified by real readers. Moreover, this polysemantic nature expands across the text's diachronic history of reception. Each of these potential meanings and interpretations reached by the readers is a

culmination of an experience between what the author attempts to offer, what the text actually delivers, and what the reader virtually makes out of all this.

This proposition, that the text exerts a considerable amount of authority on the reading experience, is, as stated before, applicable in most reading cases. It is, however, not applicable in all cases as the discussion of the reader as a constituent of the reading experience, and the discussion of the experience itself will further display. The reason behind this is that there is no absolute mechanism by which the text can pull the brakes on any reader deviating from textual authority. This may be due to a lack of competence on one level or another, or to subjective psychological drives. Optimally speaking though, the text provides a considerable amount of guidance or management during the reading experience. The notion of gaps left within the text to be filled by the reader, or the notion of expectations formed according to the textual evocations and the contextual elements discussed above may indeed initiate on the basis of subjective contributions and analogizing. However, in the vast majority of cases, all these inputs are subsequently validated, modified, or revoked by textual input. This is sometimes achieved through apparent/discreet revelations, or through linguistic and semantic signs. The horizon of experience also, if available to the reader, contributes to this process of guidance.

What is the Role of the Reader?

The reader, just like the author, comes to the text as an already contextualized entity. Optimally speaking, this reader then proceeds with the text based on the contributions made by her/his personal identity theme, context of the experience, and management of the text. As stated before, a space of subjective contribution is left for the reader within

the potentiality of the polysemantic ability of the text at hand. The area of this space is itself left to be determined by the subjective configuration of each reader. On the one end of the continuum of readings, some readers are more expressive, or more in touch with their unconsciousness, either consciously or unconsciously. This reflects on their procession of the text as will be discussed in the following section. If taken to the extreme, however, this tendency will lead to a misinterpretation, and the account provided will be entirely subjective and typically distorted. Other readers tend to be more discreet and more, consciously or unconsciously, neglectful or protective of their unconsciousness. In this case, their accounts reveal less personal input and tend to be seemingly distanced and objectified. If this occurs as a defense mechanism, it can still result in a distorted reading as the defenses applied by the reader lead her/him to neglect certain elements in the text. These are usually elements that trigger anxiety and alarm for the reader.

On the other end of the continuum, some readers take a detached objective stance concerning the text at hand. This can be due to one or more of many reasons. It can be due to the fact that the text does not address any personal subjective/psychological drives in the reader, or that it represents a remote experience to which she/he does not relate. This can also be due to the reader achieving a metacognitive stance. In other cases, the reader is trained in a certain institution, in which case, the experience is based on the propositions of this institution. In all these cases the reader's experience proceeds on the conscious level, ending with a largely objective interpretation. In some other cases, as Holland suggests in his first model, the artistic frame of the experience is broken for one reason or the other, also some post-modern texts break the artistic frame intentionally for

the reader, in these cases the reader, even if she/he had initiated the experience with a highly subjective reading, will snap out of the unconscious realm and proceed with the reading experience consciously, again ending the experience with a largely objective interpretation.

Between the two extremes, a pure psychologically subjective account, and a pure intellectually objectified one, lays all shades of grey. This area in the middle is where the bulk of responses work. Such responses are usually a combo of subjective input, contextual influence based in the cultural orientation, social dispositions, historical context of the reader and of the text, institutional influences, and textual input. All these come under the management of the text and culminate into an account.

ii. The Reading Experience

How Does the Literary Experience Proceed?

An account of the literary experience can be provided now that all its constituents have been discussed. The author, a unique yet contextualized entity, writes a work with an intention/s that she/he exerts an effort to make intelligible for the reader. However, once the work is finished, it stands as an independent entity apart from its author's power. The reader comes to the work, also a unique yet contextualized entity, with a horizon of expectations about the work based on its genre, any data from her/his horizon of experience, any previous knowledge about its author and her/his intentions, the era the work discusses ... etc.

As the reader starts reading, she/he is faced with gaps and the yet incomplete plot threads that require further expectations. Also, as reading proceeds, the polysemantic

nature of the work reveals itself to the reader, who may choose one theme to follow, or may choose to follow more than one simultaneously. Sometimes several themes reveal themselves to her/his consciousness/unconsciousness, in which case, the text, in a sense, forces the reader to choose more than one theme to follow. In any case, most readers try to find unity by grouping the elements belonging to the theme/to each theme together, rejecting alien associations, and proceeding to confirm, modify, or refute their earlier conjured expectations both for what is yet to come and in retrospect of what has already been read. Whether the subjective dispositions take the lead of these processes or the conscious intellectual depositions varies subjectively from one reader to the other. The majority of experiences tend to fall in an area of equilibrium that is achieved mainly through synthesizing the subjective and the personal/impersonal contextual input with the textual and the experimentally related contextual input and metacognitive stances.

Working on the themes, trigger the notion of interpretation. More than one scenario is possible to take place at this point. One of these possible scenarios is that suggested by Holland, most probably, in his earlier model. The point is, even if the text contains a fantasy or the material to make a fantasy, the reader still may not introject it. The polysemantic nature of the text, even on the unconscious level, does not entail that each work is a comprehensive anthology of fantasies. A reader may fail to identify with any number of fantasies or of potential fantasies. In which case, the reading process mainly proceeds on the conscious level, though still it can be influenced by other general psychological elements from her/his repertoire. The reader may choose to identify with a Marxist theme, not necessarily out of a cognitive ideological stance, but because she/he finds herself/himself in a position that represents the suffering of the working class, or

she/he may choose, for instance, not to identify with the autobiographical story of the Oxford University Dangerous Sports Club's first bungee-jump in modern history as she/he is afraid of heights. However, in case the reader does engage the psychological level into the experience, she/he then introjects a fantasy, something that can trigger anxiety and alarm, in which case, she/he may proceed in the manner proposed by Holland and exemplified in the application by participant Q.

Another possible scenario is that proposed by Bleich. The reader may respond to the text in an emotionally subjective manner, then recreates an objective account that hides the subjective origin of the first response. However, as the data analysis approves the dual-nature of response; intellectual and affective, Bleich's proposition can also be applied in the opposite direction. There are factual information and data in the text, to which the reader responds under the guidance of the text. After perceiving such facts, the other level of response comes in; which is the emotional response to these facts. For example, Royal, in the novel, is a successful businessman. The reader, B for instance, reacts to that piece of information factually by maintaining that he is successful. However, on the emotional level, he dislikes him. Also, as mentioned in the analysis, some participants identified the elements of a thriller novel in the text; on that level they are factual. However, they disliked the text, or found it boring. Both directions are possible and again the occurrence of one rather than the other depends on the subjective orientation of the reader.

The point is, as expressed earlier, the lack of competence of the majority of readers with the intricate details of the psychoanalytic field can only help pass both Holland's and Bleich's propositions as possible scenarios, not by any means *the only* scenarios as

claimed by each. Also, in these instances, the progress will, in most cases, still be under textual guidance.

Whether the reader culminates a fantasy towards consciousness, resorts to conscious intellectualism to hide the subjective nature of her/his response, or the work fails to leave an impression on this level in the first place and the experience initiates consciously, the process of interpretation is now within the vicinity of the consciousness. In this phase, the reader proceeds intellectually mainly on the basis of her/his contextual repertoire. This relationship too can work in both directions. The text may lend itself to a particular institution or disposition, which, in case of its being part of the reader's repertoire, will be brought to her/his consciousness and thus influence her/his proceeding with the text. In the opposite direction, the reader may come to the text with pre-set dispositions or particular institutional orientations which she/he tries to identify in the text. In both cases, once a disposition is taken, whether consciously or unconsciously, the reader proceeds to act accordingly. She/he goes on to create a virtual world of what the referential language triggers in her/his mind.

What is proposed so far then is a mixture of personal input based in a subjective yet contextualized identity theme, and all or any of the cultural, social, historical, institutional, linguistic contexts that influence the experience as a whole. The text now acts as the manager of the experience, guiding the reader as she/he proceeds as to what input to adopt and what input to reject as alien to the experience. This is not accomplished in the direction of a unified, one and only outcome, but as a mechanism that applies itself to any of the potential themes, interpretations, or meanings that the text lends itself to.

The final step of the process now is the criterion for the judgment of which meanings and interpretations are acceptable or relevant to the potential propositions of the text, and which are not. The fact that the text manages the reading experience does not provide a mechanism of judgment. In fact the management process itself lacks an absolute mechanism. Resorting to textual authority as the only criterion, as the inter-subjective model theorists propose is thus unjustified. In addition to that, the polysemantic nature of texts multiplies itself as it ranges across borders of eras, races ... etc., and as no single reader/institution has the ability to exhaust all potential meanings, and, due to the fact that there is a space left for subjective variations within the readers' responses, the presence of a criterion seems to be the best mechanism against misreadings and misinterpretations.

The basic criterion thus is the notion proposed by the social/psychological model theorists; that of acceptability or the collectively validated interpretations. It is mainly dependent on the proposer validating her/his interpretation by presenting it in a persuasive manner so as to allow others to accept it and integrate it in their repertoire of responses to the work. This is mainly achieved via resorting to textual/experimentally related contextual references as proofs of the interpretations or responses proposed.

This can account for the somewhat almost-universally held judgments; such as the fact that *Hamlet* is better than *Titus Andronicus*, as Holland maintains (see above page 55), or that Milton is better than the Ogilby as Hume insists (Habib 334). Moreover, for some texts, if not for the majority of them, there is a range of widely proposed and accepted readings and interpretations (something that supports the suggestion of the presence of a manager of the experience and undermines the subjective hegemony). This is more

evident in the responses to the texts that have been there for a while. The process of how this accomplished, however, can better reveal itself with new publications.

One more point that is suggested by Culler and that needs to be stressed now is that there will be a literary experience even in cases of extreme misreadings and misinterpretations (see page 42; *Structuralist Poetics* 140). Lack of literary competence, weak mastery of the language, and misreadings might all hamper the accomplishment of what might be coined “an acceptable interpretation” which critics are in pursuit of. However, there will still be an experience. Despite the fact that the participants of the questionnaire did not provide such examples of distorted readings so as to support this proposition, all of Bleich’s real-readers’ experiments support that in the end some level of response was achieved while reading.

However, again as Culler rationalizes, refuting the existentiality of misinterpretations and misreadings, as the subjective model theorists propose, is unjustified. To accept that there has been an experience is one thing, and to accept the unacceptable outcome as valid is another. One can accept a response that claims *Titus Andronicus* to be better than *Hamlet* no matter how a minority the readers beholding this claim may be. However, one cannot accept that *Titus Andronicus* is about the effects of global warming on medieval societies. Furthermore, as Culler continues to argue, the time and the effort exerted in schools and universities to teach literature show that there is indeed something to be taught. It cannot be refuted that reading the second novel is easier than the first, and the seventeenth poem to study or read is easier to work through than the second. Therefore, as some people’s job is literature others, it is indeed the mission of specialists help those people stand on a firm ground about what they propose.

The objection to some of the suggested means of achieving this solid ground is to the approach. Making a science of literature in the fashion of natural sciences or any other sciences that lack the unique properties of literature is like using cooking oil for a car or vice versa. Scientific theories are not divine laws; they are not infallible, what were once followed as ultimate truths, are now negated or doubted, sometimes even refuted altogether. The whole world picture was disrupted by Copernicus, and the whole legacy of the reign of the reason, the conscious subject, and the old voluntaristic psychology was shaken to the ground by Freud's work. Likewise, what is deemed as the truth now can be refuted a hundred years in the future. This takes the discussion to the role of literature.

The pervious point does not entail that literature ceases to be of use and lends itself solely to the traditional role of escapism. As a matter of fact, Rosenblatt's and Jauss's suggestions for the roles of literature are strongly seconded here (see above pages 11, 12, 27, and 28). The point is that the manner in which literature achieves its roles needs not be in the fashion of any other science or field, it can still achieve its roles in a unique manner and still be appreciated for that. Referring to Rosenblatt's propositions on that point, and to Jauss' arguments will provide a comprehensive view of the roles that can be accomplished by literature without needing to rephrase them again here. What is left to be accounted for now is the mechanism by which this role is achieved. This is where the levels of the readers' responses come in.

What are the Levels of Response?

The account of the reading experience so far suggests a five-leveled hierarchy of responses. However, before discussing this hierarchy, it has to be declared that it is not a

must that each reader's individual response will go through or reflect all five phases, or necessarily go through any number of the five phases in the order suggested. This is mainly left within the borders of the expanded identity theme of each subjective entity. The first level of the hierarchy is the perceptive level. On this level, certain factual information from the text and the context of the reader and the experience are perceived by the reader. This is the highest objective level of the individual's response. The second level is the emotional level. The reader here responds affectively to the factual information perceived. This, as indicated before, can be the reader's highest subjective level of response.

The third level is the intellectual level. Here, the reader goes through the literary experience in one of the scenarios suggested earlier to come up with an intellectual account of the text. On this level, the equilibrium between the objective response and the subjective response takes place. However, for some readers the second and the third levels can exchange positions. Some readers approach the text with set expectations that they try to find in the text, like the Marxists looking for certain patterns of relationships, or the feminists searching for certain female characteristics, etc. Once found or constructed, they conjure up re-disposed interpretations. After that, they would react to them emotionally; evaluating them. At all events, for the bulk of the readers, by the end of the third phase, a certain degree of equilibrium is supposedly achieved.

The fourth level is the metacognitive level. The achievement of this level of response may not be within the reach of every of reader especially if the metacognition required is related to contextual elements or grand narratives. However, it is almost always the case that as reading proceeds the reader becomes conscious of something in

her/his personal/collective contexts. This is due to the inherent referential nature of literature and the literary language. This triggers the notion of competence. Indeed the more competent the reader is literary wise, institutional wise, contextual wise, and linguistic wise, the higher her/his chances of achieving metacognition.

However, despite the relatively high level of this response which naturally entails that not many readers accomplish it, it is a notion that we come across very often in the application/assessment section as the data analysis displayed. Its effect though is most explicitly displayed on the personal as well as on the collective level in the participants' answers to question 3:9. Moreover, it is a notion that was explicitly or implicitly suggested in many of the theoretical propositions tackled in this thesis.

The importance of this notion is that it is the meter against which the previous propositions work. It is the mechanism by which both the author and the reader can accomplish the other roles of literature, apart from the established aesthetic/escapist values. The amount to which the author is metacognitive of her/his intentions and strategies influences her/his execution while writing as well as the degree of her/his success later. The amount to which the reader is metacognitive of her/his contextuality on the personal/impersonal level, affects her/his response to what the text provides, how much unconscious input is there, how much conscious intellectualization is taking place, and what is her/his stance with reference to certain dispositions provided by the text. In addition to that, the degree to which the reader is metacognitive of the contextuality of the literary experience she/he is processing affects her/his affective response to the particular text at hand.

Moreover, the more metacognitive the reader is of the management of the text, the more in touch she/he is with all her/his levels of response, the closer she/he is of an optimal experience. On the larger scale, the more metacognitive readers there are, the more literature achieves its roles. It is true that literature can achieve many roles unconsciously, yet the more metacognitive the reader is, the more consciously resisting she/he is towards the issues the text raises awareness about.

This naturally leads to the highest level of response; the resisting level. In the previous level, the reader may come to occupy a metacognitive stance either of a subjective element of response or of one of the themes or the messages the text evokes. This naturally entails a further conscious consideration of the subject of this metacognition. This further consideration can lead to the resisting level. In this case, a theoretical or practical resisting attitude will be adopted by the reader/s leading to a subjective/collective horizontal change.

With the end of this discussion of the hierarchical levels of response, the proposition of the synthesized model comes to an end too. As the discussion has so far proven, the main problem behind the conflicting relationship between the three models resides in the inability of each model's propositions to expand beyond the limited orientation of the model's philosophical background. The core of the problem seems to be, as Rosenblatt diagnosis, in the failure to see that an object can have more than one value; a work can "yield the kind of sensuous and emotional fulfillment which we call *esthetic* – it can be enjoyed in itself- and at the same time have a social origin and social effects" (*Literature* 31). Most of the issues between the models were resolved by adopting a larger, more inclusive, metacognitive, synthesizing attitude; something that, it won't be judgmental to

declare after studying the majority of the principal theorists of the schools since its initiation, only Rosenblatt, the underestimated initiator of the thesis, has achieved though rarely acknowledged for.