

Conclusion

This thesis attempts to provide a comprehensive view of what post-modernly came to be known as reader-oriented criticism. It begins with an introduction that provides the historical roots of the modern school through tracing the instances of attention paid to the reader across the diachronic history of literary criticism and whatever fields it attached itself to in its history. Early harbingers were clear in stressing the dialogic relationship between the reader and the text in the works of Horace, Macrobius, St. Augustine, Husserl, and Rosenblatt, and in the initiation of the subjective paradigm through the works of Horace, Bacon, Hume, Husserl, and Freud. They were also clear in the emphasis on the role of literature in the works of Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle, Rosenblatt, and Jauss, and in the recognition of the influence of contextual elements on the reading experience which was quite obvious in the works of Hume, Johnson, and Rosenblatt. In addition to that, some of those theorists contributed to the main cores of some modern models. This was evident in Husserl's influence on the inter-subjective model and in Freud's influence on the psychological model. This introductory chapter ends with a detailed account of Rosenblatt's transactional theory which was considered the instigator of modern reader-response criticism.

The following chapter tackles the three models of modern reader-response theories. The first model, the inter-subjective model, stressed the importance of the dialogic relationship between the reader and the text and the role of the text as the absolute governor of the reading experience. It also highlighted the role literature played in the reader's individual and social contexts, as well as the role the reader's context played in shaping her/his experience of a text. This model also provided a detailed account of the

mechanism of the literary experience starting with the influence of authorial intentions on the reader's procession of the text and the role played by the text during this experience, to the strategies through which the reader, guided by the text, reached a final interpretation. The next model, the social model, focused on the influence of the social, cultural, and institutional contexts on the configuration of the reader, the text, the author, and the progression of the reading experience as a whole. This model also emphasized the importance of the reader's competence to achieve an optimal reading experience.

The third model, the psychological/subjective model, resorted to utter subjectivism and accepted any response as valid, relegating misreadings and misinterpretations to mere symptoms. This model also stressed the supremacy of the unconsciousness in the process of finding meanings and interpretations and adopted Freudian epistemological/psychoanalytical strategies of analysis. However, faced with the issue of collective agreements on some interpretations, they resorted to Freud's criterion of subjective universality as the main mechanism behind such congregations. They also stressed the importance of these congregations for the individual as a mechanism of validating responses, and for the society at large as the mechanism of developing collective establishments of values.

Discussing the theoretical propositions of the three models revealed that, despite their conflicting outlooks, they shared an area of middle grounds. These grounds included the acknowledgement of a role for the reader in the literary experience, the polysemnatic nature of a literary text, the dynamic nature of the literary experience as an event, and the special role that can be traced back to metacognitive stances of response. The inter-relationship between the context, the reader, and the interpretation as an outcome of that

dynamic encounter also formed part of that area despite the varying levels of acknowledgement it received from each model. As for collective agreement as the criterion of validating interpretations, it was specifically proposed by the theorists of both the social model, and the psychological/subjective model.

Chapter two provides the application of those modern models from the perspectives of real readers. It also works as an experiment in which members of a sample group of real readers were asked to read specified extracts from a novel and to answer a questionnaire that was especially prepared and given to them. This experiment attempted to evaluate the theoretical propositions provided by each of the three models. Analyzing the participants' answers to the questionnaire justified the authority of the text to a great extent though not to the degree of having the absolute authority over the reading experience. The reading mechanism, however, needed synthesizing between what the three models proposed, so did the authority of context both on the personal/impersonal level, and on the level of the reading experience as a whole. The notion of expectations on all levels, the contribution of the personal/subjective influence, but within the limits of the text, and the special role of metacognitive responses were all justified as valid. Propositions tackling authorial intentions received limited justification, while notions of rank subjectivity, utter dependence on contextual conventions, and utter reliance on the authority of the text were altogether unjustified

The last chapter draws on these results in addition to the common grounds between the theoretical models to achieve a synthesized model. Achieving this synthesis between the different reading mechanisms proposed depended on expanding the notion of the reader as an entity so as to encompass all validated aspects of this reader. According to

this expanded view, the reader stood as a combo of unique subjective factors in addition to the relatively stable/relatively objectified contextually influenced elements, all of which came in a negotiation event with a text in order to come up with a virtual dimension of this reading experience; the interpretation of that text. The spot in which this whole experience fell in the area of equilibrium between the two extremes of this combo, the degree to which it is affected by one more than the other, and its tendency to move from one to the other are all subjective cases. This integrating view helped avoid the limited notions of the reader as a textual construct, a social/cultural/institutional convention, or a subconscious marionette.

In order to achieve this proposed expanded view, redefining the concepts of identity theme and context so as to accommodate all the contextual aspects proved valid by the results of the questionnaire became an essential prerequisite. This expansion integrated the subjective as well as the collective contexts while retaining Freud's proposition of the interrelation between both and the role each played in the configuration of the other. These two integrative revisions entailed a further revision; that of the role of the text, which remained the main contributor and regulator of the reading experience, but, in light of all these revisions, it was no longer held as its absolute governor.

The main outcome of these revisions, and the main contribution of this synthesized model, however, was the realization of the hierarchal five levels of response. This particular proposition provided the advantage of integrating the validated level of response proposed by each model without having to dismiss the validated levels of the other models. In other words, it avoided the main reason behind the conflicts that had afflicted this school of criticism and caused its influence to decline; the tendency to work

from a one and only orientation, and to dismiss any other as inapplicable. It also had the advantage of integrating the subjective model in its best contributive force without having to fall within the vicinity of uncontrolled subjectivism, or having to dismiss the whole model altogether for rank subjectivism and anarchism.

This hierarchy of response opened the space to account for a uniquely configured individual response which, while retaining its subjective nature, was still controlled by the interrelationship it held with its context and by the textual authority of the specific reading experience at hand. The subjective configuration of this equilibrium determined which scenario of reading procession the reader followed. This hierarchy also helped highlight the different levels at which literature can accomplish its various roles, and the instances in which the highest level of response, indicated in Juass' work, could be achieved; that of the resisting response leading to an actual horizontal change.

The fact that this proposed synthesized model was essentially based on the results of the experiment that evaluates the propositions of the other models, naturally entails that this model was assessed using the same mechanism. The outcome is a theoretically proposed, actually applied and assessed synthesis of the conflicting theories of modern reader-response criticism. Thus, the conclusion here, after thoroughly examining and experimenting with real readers and their responses, is that reader-response theories need not be an enigma of conflicting ideas, but can rather formulate a realistic, synthesized model that is both applicable and informative.

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Appendix (A)

Data of the Participants

Table 1

Age-groups, gender, and level of language of the participants.

Age Groups			Gender	
15-20	2		Female	17
21-25	7		Male	6
26-30	8		Level of Language	
31-35	3		Adequate	3
36-40	2		Strong	3
41-45	Zero		Fluent	12
46-50	1		Mother-tongue	3

Table 2

Data of the participants of the questionnaire.

Participant	Gender	Age	Native (N) / Non-Native (NN)	Qualifications
A	M	22	NN	Student (Nautical and Maritime Studies)
B	M	28	N	B.Sc. Medicine
C	M	35	NN	MA in Middle Eastern Studies / MA TESOL
D	F	25	N	BA in English Literature
E	F	36	NN	PhD. Molecular Biology / MA TESOL
F	F	36	N/NN	MATESOL / Student PhD. (Applied Linguistics) / Teacher
G	M	35	N	MA TEFL / Teacher
H	F	25	N	BA in Linguistics and Translation / Teacher
I	F	18	N	Student (Language and Communication)
J	F	29	N	B.Sc. in Education / Student (MA in Linguistics and Translation) / Teacher
K	F	30	N	BA in Linguistics and Translation / Student (MA in applied linguistics) / Teacher
L	F	31	N	BA English Literature / MA Applied Linguistics / Teacher

M	F	46	NN	BA History / JD in Law / Teacher
N	M	19	N	Student (Language and Communication)
O	M	26	N	BA in Linguistics
P	F	23	N	BA Literature and Language / Student (MA TESOL – AUC) / Teacher
Q	F	28	N	BA Literature and Language / Student (MA in English Literature)
R	F	25	N	BA in Sociology
S	F	27	N	Tour Guide
T	F	30	N	MA English Literature / Teacher
U	F	30	N	B.A. in English literature
V	F	24	N	BA English Literature Teacher
W	F	21	N	Student (Logistics and International Transport)

Appendix (B)
The Questionnaire and the Participants' Responses

The Questionnaire
Demographic Information

Thank you for your time and effort. Before you begin with the questionnaire, please answer some questions about yourself. All information will be used in academic research only and your identity will be kept confidential.

1. **Name:**-----
2. **Age:** -----
3. **Nationality:** -----
4. **Gender:** Male/Female
5. **Qualifications:** -----
6. **How would you rate your level of English? (weak – adequate – strong – fluent).**
7. **Which of the following applies to you?**
 - a. I only read when I have to ().
 - b. I am not generally a reader, but if I find something that really arouses my interest I enjoy reading it ().
 - c. I am a reader, I enjoy reading whenever I have the time or the chance offers itself ().
 - d. I am a book-worm, reading is my most enjoyable activity ().
8. **Which of the following would you be interested in reading about or discussing? (You can choose more than one).**
 - a. Politics and current affairs ()
 - b. Feminism and human rights ()
 - c. Psychology ()
 - d. History ()
 - e. Literary works ()
 - f. Linguistics ()
 - g. Others (please specify) -----

Instructions:

1. Do not try to look up any information about the theory, work, or author.
2. Follow the instructions accurately.
3.
 - a. **As you go on with the reading process, refer back to the questions you have already answered every time your perceptions/ expectations/ or interpretations of any of them are further confirmed/ modified/ or cancelled altogether.**
 - b. ***DO NOT CORRECT, MODIFY, OR DELETE*** any of the previously written answers. What you should do is add a new section to your answer every time you feel that your previous answer is changed or you feel that you want to add to it. The new section should specify the following:
 - a. What triggered this correction, modification, cancelation, or addition?
 - b. Where exactly in the text was this action triggered?
 - c. Your modified version of the answer.
 - c. Make your answer as detailed as possible. However, there is no optimal range of writing for any question.

Section (1): Before reading

Before reading

1. If you knew that the extracts you are about to read are selected from a thriller novel, what expectations would that piece of information trigger in your mind?

While/After reading

2. After you are done with your reading, specify which of your expectations were met?
 3. Where exactly in the text were these expectations met?
-

Section (2A): While reading

Read the Prologue (P. 1→10) then answer the following questions.

(Refer to the instructions section, item number 3)

1. Based on what you have read in the text, do you think that the author is actually a male or a female? What elements (personal/cultural/textual/linguistic ...etc.) led you to that conclusion?
2. Read Page 10. How would you comment on Jane's reaction when she sees Chevy's wedding ring?
3. According to you, which word/phrase/or scene in the prologue is the most significant? Why?

N.B: Part one starts eight years and a half after the prologue.

Section (2B): While Reading

Read the rest of the selected parts then answer the following questions.

(Refer to the instructions section, item number 3)

1. **Comment on *one or more* of the following items:**
 - a. Your perception of Jane's character.
 - b. Jane's relationship with her father.
 - c. Jane's relationship with her mother.
 - d. Jane's relationship with Roy.
 - e. Royal Akers relationship with Wade Crane and Jack Dunn.

2. When Jane was informed that her father was dead, she left her assistant to finalize a huge deal that would shape the future of her own company and left. The following two quotations represent two opposing reactions to her behavior. Which one would you agree with? Why? What is your comment on the fact that the two reactions were quite opposite?

- a. “ ... LincPenworthy called your sudden departure, [‘]emotional and unprofessional[’] ” (P. 45).
- b. “The Chinese were *impressed*. I recall hearing the phrase ‘dutiful daughter’ more than once” (P. 46).

3. Which of the following extracts do you think is more significant

- a. To the main theme of the novel?
- b. To you personally?

(You can choose more than one)

- 1. Page 2 “In recent weeks Jane’s “log team” ... medical attention.”
- 2. Page 10 “It was such a long time ago, ... family apart.”
- 3. Page 48 “The rest of Main Street had changed ... nudged fate along.”
- 4. Page 110 “Timed how long it took me this time ... Music to my ears.”
- 5. Page 217 “First, Hyon has no assurance ... is that we have no choice but to risk this.”
- 6. Pages 295→298 “But the genial male voice ... I don’t have time to recap.”
- 7. Page 342 “I’m afraid, Ms. Malcolm, your father’s death wasn’t any accident. He was murdered.”
- 8. Page 458 “That’s my girl ... All the more reason for me to stay then.”
- 9. Other (Please specify): -----

The extract/s which is/are more important to the theme of the novel is/are: -----

The extract/s which is/are more important to you is/are: -----

Comment on each of your choices:

Section (3): After Reading

1. Which *character* did you identify with the most? Why? Does this character bear any resemblance to you or to anyone you know and can identify with? Who is this character?

2. Which *relationship* did you identify with the most? Why? Does this relationship bear any resemblance to your personal life or to any relationship you know of or can identify with? What is this relationship?

3. Specify which of the following contributed to your response to the work, and specify where exactly in the text did it/them influence your response.
 - a. Personal aspects ()
 - b. Cultural aspects()
 - c. Ideological aspects()
 - d. Psychological aspects ()

4. What is your comment on the following characters?
 - a. Royal Akers
 - b. Joycelyn
 - c. Roy
 - d. Anne

5. Which of the following characters did you find interesting? Why? (You can choose more than one).
 - a. Wade Crane ()
 - b. Don Landsman ()
 - c. Elie ()
 - d. Jack Dunn ()
 - e. Mr. Skoggs ()
 - f. Aunt Lou ()
 - g. Roy ()

- 6. Do you think that the author's strategy is to offer a representation of a slice of modern life, or do you believe the author is attempting to deliver a specific message? If the second, what do you think this message is? What is your response to that message?**
- 7. Which of the following plotlines caught your attention the most? Why? (You can choose more than one).**
- a. The change that occurred in the town. ()
 - b. The sabotage that Akers Company faces and the search for the one behind it. ()
 - c. The logistical problems that result from the sabotage and their solutions. ()
 - d. The human/political repercussions that result from the sabotage. ()
 - e. The adversary effects of over-dependence on technology ()
 - f. The relationship between Jane and her father. ()
 - g. Jane's character and her success in saving the Akers company. ()
 - h. Others (Please specify) -----
- 8. Write a summary of your expectations of how the novel will end?**
- 9. In the following part, feel free to write whatever you want to add concerning the novel, your response to it, what insights - if any - this questionnaire helped you realize about your reading strategy...etc.**

Answers of the Participants¹

1.1

Number of Valid Answers		20
Words Repeated the Most		Frequency
Crime/s		11
Mystery		9
Suspense		7
Revelations		3
Fear		2
Special Features		
Special Feature		Frequency
Objective		13
Subjective		3
Objective/Subjective		4
Explicit Horizon of Experience		2

1:2

Number of Valid Answers		15	
Expectations Fully Met	Expectations Partly Met	Expectations Surpassed	Expectations not Met at all
8	2	3	2

1:3

Number of Valid Answers		12
Themes/Scenes Where Expectations Were Met		Frequency
War/Missile Scenes		6
Royal/Ellie's Murder		6
Sabotage		7

¹ The answers for questions 2B:1 and 3:4 are not presented in tables as both are subjective questions that mainly aim at further elaborating the participants' perceptions of certain characters or relationships. The data yielded in the answers, therefore, extend the possibility of being catalogued and tabulated. The valid answers or the ones that shed further lights on any participant's answers were directly quoted during the data analysis.

2A:1

Number of Valid Answers		23
Choice		Frequency
Female Author		11
Male Author		8
Undecided		4
Special Features		
Criterion	Special Feature	Frequency
Gender Roles	Cultural/ Ideological	11
Gender Roles	Institutional: Feminist/ Psychoanalytical	4
Undecided	N/A	2
Gender-based Stylistics	Linguistic	14
Gender-based Stylistics	Cultural/ Ideological	3

2A:2

Number of Valid Answers		22
Orientation of Response	Frequency	Keywords/Main themes
Jane's Past	7	Father's Affair, "that woman"
Psychological Analysis	16	Jane's instant reaction and the psychological response to the revelation
Jane's Character (cultural/ideological)	11	Morals-Noble-Ethics-strong character-respects traditions-virtuous- fair-steady-thoughtfulness

2A:3

Number of valid Answers		22	Number of Choices	26
Choice	Element	Frequency		
Logistics	Military operations in the Gulf War	1		
Total		1		
Missile Scene	Racism	1		
	Gas Mask	1		
	Missile Scene	1		
	Helping Injured Soldiers	2		
Total		5		
Jane's Usefulness	Jane's Usefulness	4		
	The word "denied"	2		
Total		6		
Last scene	Romantic scene	4		
	Reference to the father	6		
	"That woman"	1		
	"Silver of glass"	3		
Total		14		

2B:2

Number of Valid Answers	22
Choice	Frequency
A	2
B	16
Both	2
Undecided	4
Special Features	
Feature	Frequency
The difference is due to cultural differences	13
Tendency towards generalization	3
Judgmental response	5
Subjective judgment	1
Institutional judgment	2
The word “dutiful”	7

2B:3

Extract	Theme/s
1	Jane’s character, and her usefulness + War
2	Family/Father-daughter relationship
3	Change of town/effects and repercussions of globalization/capitalization
4	Sabotage case
5	Repercussions of sabotage
6	Repercussions of sabotage
7	Sabotage/murder
8	Father-daughter relationship
9	Other

Importance to the Novel		Importance to the Participant		Total
Extract	Frequency	Extract	Frequency	Total Frequency
1	0	1	1	1
2	3	2	9	12
3	3	3	6	9
4	2	4	1	3
5	5	5	0	5
6	4	6	1	5
7	8	7	3	11
8	5	8	4	9
9	2	9	0	2
Total	32	Total	25	57

3:1 and 3:2

Number of Valid Responses	20	Number of Valid Responses	15
Character	Frequency	Relationship	Frequency
Jane	14	Jane/Father	6
Aunt Lou	3	Jane/Mother	4
Joycelyn (the mother)	1	Jane/Aunt	3
Jack Dunn	1	Jane/Roy	1
Alex/Roy (the brothers)	1	Jane/Family	1
Special Features			
Criteria of Choice	Frequency	Criteria of Choice	Frequency
Subjective	13	Subjective	7
Objective: Textual	2	Objective: Textual	4
Objective: Institutional/Social	2	Objective Institutional	2
Not Clear	3	Not Clear	1

3:3

A = Personal Influence	B = Cultural Influence	C = Ideological Influence	D = Psychological Influence
Choice		Frequency	
A		15	
B		6	
C		5	
D		12	
Special Features			
Feature		Frequency	
Objective analysis		2	
Subjective analysis		2	
Metacognitive awareness		4	

3:5

Number of Valid Answers	28	
Choice	Frequency	
A=Wade Crane	6	
B=Don Landsman	2	
C=Uncle Elie	0	
D=Jack Dunn	1	
E=Mr. Skoggs	6	
F=Aunt Lou	11	
G=Roy	2	
Special Features		
Character	Word/feature repeated/implied the most	Frequency
Wade Crane	Loyal/Loyalty	4
Mr. Skoggs	Forgiveness	4
Aunt Lou	The character who reveals the secrets/past events	5

3:6

Number of Valid Answers		20
Option	Frequency	
A	10	
B	8	
Both	2	
Specifications		
Participant	Theme	
B	Effect of modern life on familial relationships.	
E	Globalization and the interconnectedness of modern life.	
F	Corporate Wars	
G	The importance of expressing one's intentions before committing any action that can make a family relationship sad, and the importance of taking over the responsibility of saving the family business.	
K	Adverse effects of over-dependence on technology.	
L	One should never get away from family and her/his roots.	
Q	How to overcome yourself and your past + family relationships	
T	Capitalism/materialism vs. humanitarianism/ emotionalism/social ties.	
V	Life of business and the importance of logistics for it.	
W	Facing challenges+ family relationships + human mind vs. technology + importance of logistics.	

3:7

Option	Theme
a	Change of town/repercussions of capitalism
b	Solving the sabotage crime
c	Logistical repercussions of the sabotage
d	Human/political repercussions of the sabotage
e	Adversary effects of overdependence on technology
f	The relationship between Jane and her father
g	Jane's character and success in saving the company
h	Others

Number of Valid Answers		23
Option	Frequency	
a	4	
b	7	
c	3	
d	5	
e	3	
f	16	
g	15	
h	1	

Number of Valid Answers	16
Expectation	Frequency
Jane's Success	13
Sabotage Case Solved	8
Family Reconciliation	6
Romantic Relationships	3
Business Reconciliation With the Town's Merchants	2
Special Features	
Feature	Frequency
Overall Number of Answers Providing Expectations Within the Limit of Textual Guidance	16
Overall Number of Answers Providing Detailed Specifications of their Expectations	5
Overall Number of Answers Providing Other Special Features	2

Number of Valid Answers	13
Participant	Answer
C	The questionnaire made me think more about how “deeply” I read fiction, or how fiction or other genres might affect me as I analyze it. However, I feel like this kind of story, even though it is well written, is not the kind that leads one to think more deeply about the story or the impact of the story or characters on the reader him or herself. It reads well and is very entertaining, but once it is done, I can see myself just moving on to the next book without much more thought about this one.
E	I enjoyed the novel quite a bit. It's been a couple of years since I read a thriller. One thing I noticed about how I read is that I do look at patterns, sometimes not even completely consciously, and compare details, plot points, and other items to other similar stories that I have read.
G	I was not so much interested in the details of how Jane saved the Akers business, a lot of logistical details that bored me. Some minor characters were not clear to me and I found out that I do not try to know more about them or analyze their personalities. I found out that I only care for the main characters and the main themes.
I	The novel depicts the fear of many individuals who suffered from family arguments, a parent's infidelity or domestic violence as a child. The effect of small occurrences and horrific sided explanations about matters, cause the children involved to misinterpret the truth, giving them fear of falling into the same mistake. In the novel we can see how these troubles affected Jane, Roy and [Alex] in their relationship with their father and with others. Even aunt Louise was affected by the stereotype of men she encountered around her, leaving her desolate,

	<p>alone and preferring isolation to taking the chance and having a life away from the silent observer's seat.</p> <p>As a reader and a student, this questionnaire helped me find ways to identify themes and main ideas in a novel, and to track the evolvement of these themes throughout, while analysing the characters and building interpretations on the given information.</p>
K	<p>Answering the questionnaire helped me better analyse the characters, themes, and relationships of the novel.</p>
M	<p>I would be curious to read this novel in its entirety, as the excerpts were interesting. However, I cannot comment on reading strategy, response or insights based on such a limited portion.</p>
N	<p>This questionnaire helped me understand that I read for psychological gratification, and interest in living in the shoes of certain characters. Perhaps this is why I don't like to read any work, I just read something that involves a character that can be in sync with me as a person, heart and soul and mind.</p>
P	<p>I think the questionnaire is so useful and beneficial. The story is interesting, but not easy. I think readers should have a background on psychology to know how to analyze the characters. The questionnaire is so detailed. It focuses on the characters more than the events. For me this is more interesting, because I usually care about characters more than the events. Therefore, I enjoyed reading and answering the whole questionnaire. I liked that the questionnaire focused on the psychological part. Reading the story and being able to analyze the characters and actions psychologically were enjoyable.</p>
Q	<p>I don't think I have been paying attention to the sequence of events as much as to the characters' development all along. I had initial judgments of Royal and his relationship with Ann, which have been entirely refuted later.</p>
R	<p>I do not have any, I believe in the art should not be edit it by any other theory.</p>
T	<p>I think this questionnaire helped me to find out that I focus on Marxist, feminist and psychological readings of literature. It also shows me that I am concerned about the author, his intentions, and how he/she both reflects and criticizes the world where he/she lives. I am interested in commenting on all the characters and can identify myself with some of them.</p>
V	<p>Thrillers actually are not really my cup of tea. To have logistics- which is a pure business science- involved, made things less interesting. However, somehow the writer managed to excite my interest on how things will turn out to be at the end and how important this field really is.</p>
W	<p>During answering this questionnaire I realized that I've connected the characters to myself, that includes having different feelings towards them such as compassion or anger, I usually connect with the main character and the antagonists only , but this time I have felt those different feelings towards characters such as wade, Chevy , Royal and Jocelyn , even when I felt connected to Jane it was a bit different than usual, this time there was kind of aspiration to be like her when I go out in the business field myself.</p>