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Darlington, Sonja Pfister, Ph.D.

Iowa State University, 1990

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Literature as visual response and aesthetic experience: An alternative approach

by

Sonja Pfister Darlington

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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1990

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ABSTRACT

Given the proliferation of theoretical discussions in literary criticism, teachers find it difficult to choose a practical approach that provides students with a meaningful literary experience. To put students back in touch with literature, however, their experience in the learning environment needs to be considered. In the exploration of experience, John Dewey's theory of experience, a literary theory known as reader-response, and Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory will provide the framework. My thesis is that the literary "transaction" between the reader (student) and the text is limited when the reader uses only verbal symbols to express experience. For some students the transaction may involve other meaningful symbol systems.

Arguments that point out that an important part of experience includes multiple perceptions of reality can be found in other fields, such as psychology, aesthetics, pedagogy, and mathematics. In addition, my personal responses to literature add support to the legitimacy of multiple perception, particularly, in the area of visual response. The implication of developing this perspective for teachers is that by focusing on the variety of experiences that students meet in living, teachers can help students to become performers in the literary event.

Based on the student as performer, an alternative approach may involve a variety of strategies: approaching the literary event as a risk-taking activity, encouraging students to express their own emotional and intellectual engagement through nonverbal symbols, using student/teacher time for conversations about literary experiences, creating an in-class environment that involves students in the conflicts that arise as a result of multiple experiences, and organizing student participation in activities that lead to making an art object. When applying these teaching techniques, testing and evaluation may also reflect the open-ended quality of student performance.

CHAPTER ONE

ESTABLISHING THE PROBLEM

How to Put Students Back in Touch With Literature

Introduction and thesis statement

Many secondary teachers complain that students are not showing an interest in literature. These same teachers notice that engaging students in a meaningful literary experience in secondary and post secondary schools has become less important to educators in literature than debates about issues in literary criticism. As William Cain documents in The Crisis in Criticism (1984), so much criticism is being published that literary theory is creating an overwhelming "scholarly stockpile" (p. 163). At the same time, teachers find themselves wanting a quick, simple guide and step-by-step instructions to help apply these critical theories in the classroom (Lynn 1990, p. 258). Thus amidst a variety of approaches aimed at including the views of theorists and critics the question of how to encourage a significant relationship between literature and students has been pushed aside. However, some teachers are aware that the lack of concern for students and the literary experience affects what takes place inside their classrooms. Alert teachers, who are greeted in class by a bewildered group of strangers to literature, know they face the challenge of saving both the subject of literature and the students who are not engaged by it.

This overload of critical approaches is a stimulus for studying the problem of how to engage students with literature, and this dissertation will argue that an alternative approach to teaching literature may help reunite students with literary experiences. While the general perspective will be directed toward putting students back in touch with literature, the specific focus will be on the literary experience of the student (reader). In the exploration of this experience, John Dewey's educational theory of experience, a literary theory known as reader-response, and Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory will provide the framework within my central argument for an alternative approach in the secondary literature classroom can be made. Dewey and Rosenblatt reexamine the experience between the *doer* and the *object* and the *reader* and *the text* respectively.

Once these ideas on experience are developed, a significant part of this dissertation deals with arguing that the "transaction" between the reader (student) and a text is limited when the reader uses only verbal symbols to experience literature. My thesis is that literary experience need not be expressed solely through verbal symbols; rather, for some students the transaction between reader and text can involve other equally meaningful symbol systems. Furthermore, students who do not appear to make connections to literature through verbal symbols can still be within the scope of what is considered literary experience. A student's intellectual, emotional, and active processes may be well served, for example, by a visual response to literature.

The implication of developing the thesis for teachers is that they can put students back in touch with literature by focusing on the variety of experiences that students meet in living and by helping students to become performers in the literary event (the activity that takes place between the reader and the text—nonverbal as well as verbal). Arguments that point out that an important part of experience includes multiple perceptions of reality can be found in other fields such as psychology, aesthetics, pedagogy, and mathematics. And examples from each of these areas support my position that multiplicity is indeed a significant part of experience. A personal response to literature adds support to the legitimacy of multiple perception, particularly, in the area of visual response. As these examples demonstrate, an emphasis on experience involves a methodology that is also based on experience.

Finally, the thesis that has been elaborated thus far can include strategies that expand Rosenblatt's limited focus on the verbal response to literature. An alternative approach may involve a variety of different steps: approaching the literary event as a risk-taking activity, encouraging students to express their own emotional and intellectual engagement with literature through nonverbal symbols, using student-teacher time for conversations about literary experiences, creating an in-class environment that involves students in the conflicts that arise as a result of multiple experiences, and organizing student participation in activities that lead to making an art object. If this approach is adopted,

then class activities should incorporate the suggestions made above and the testing and evaluation process should also reflect these different activities. Therefore, the conclusion of the dissertation examines how the thesis may influence what is being evaluated.

Appropriately, a discussion of the confusing array of critical approaches begins the discussion of the problem of how to put students back in touch with literature. In addition, a concrete example that lays the foundation for the thesis is presented so that the reader is aware of the variety of critical approaches with which the secondary teacher is assumed to have some familiarity. Thus the following section begins by addressing the general problem of how to connect students with literature and gives a brief analysis of some of the critical approaches described in the 1988 National Council of Teachers of English text on literature in the classroom.

The confusing array of critical approaches

One of the concerns for literature teachers in the secondary classroom is that there are multiple ways in which to introduce, examine, and evaluate the relationship between students and literature. Teachers can choose from among so many different approaches that the classroom has become an arena in which the freedom to choose is similar to the shopper in an over-sized store who can reach up and personally select from among hundreds of items. And once teacher-shoppers have made their selections from the array of possibilities, the

fare presented to students looks like the variety displayed at buffet tables.

Thus the trade-off for the teacher-shoppers is that while their choices have dramatically increased, they no longer have clear criteria by which to choose a balanced nutritional program or create a pleasing array for their students. In fact, the teacher-shoppers may be questioned as to whether they are now merely disbursing non-edibles. Many secondary teachers of literature would argue that the pluralism of critical theories has led to these kinds of difficulties. These teachers maintain that critical theories have actually helped to create confusion in the classroom. Their most immediate problem is how to put students back in direct touch with the art object (the literary text) in an environment that is besieged by a variety of critics, each with his/her own theory of literature that preselects what the student will respond to.

This situation is clearly the impetus for the recent 1988 publication of Literature in the Classroom: Readers, Texts, and Contexts, edited by Ben Nelms. As the second volume in a series requested by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Executive Committee, the purpose of this book is to reclaim the central position of literature in the English curriculum. To accomplish this goal they include the following objectives: to present "examples of varied approaches to the teaching of literature in elementary and secondary schools" and to relate "the teaching of literature to current modes of literary criticism

and to reader-response theory" (p. vii). According to this recent text, then, the NCTE national agenda for the 1990s can be said to focus on the problem of incorporating multiple critical theories of literature into elementary and secondary classrooms.

The text reflects the variety and complexity of current critical perspectives and presents the multiple issues which exist for secondary teachers in the classroom. The text also mirrors theoretical viewpoints by basing its pedagogical suggestions, for example, on historical, structuralist, sociological, and feminist positions. It centers on the kind of participatory relationships available to readers and also addresses teachers who want to concentrate on a renewed vision of the democratic ideal: to create a meaningful discussion among multiple voices. Thus, with this kind of plurality represented by its writers, the NCTE text has many benefits for secondary teachers. And, as a compilation of the approaches that secondary teachers can incorporate in their classrooms, a summary of the text provides a useful sketch of the problems facing the teaching of literature today.

<u>The 1988 NCTE text as representative of a variety of critical perspectives</u>

Ben Nelms, the editor of the NCTE text, traces the impetus for this book to John Gerber's essay "Varied Approaches to 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd' " (1970). Challenged to respond to Gerber's description of widely-held assumptions about literature, Nelms wanted

to refute Gerber's position. The latter holds that 1) the teacher's responsibility is to be knowledgeable about periods, genres, and major British and Amercian authors, 2) the teacher's purpose is to teach students how to analyze texts critically, and 3) the teachers need to accept the autonomous existence of certain English texts as the canon of literature. Such views about literature and the teachers of literature are anathema to Nelms, who sees a need to replace these outdated assumptions with the more recent emphasis on the reader and the plurality of critical perspectives. Nelms makes the following comments about the predilection of today's teachers.

> Their undergraduate preparation may have emphasized critical analysis more than historical periods, traditional genres, or major authors. They are likely to have given serious attention to long-neglected works by women, ethnic minorities, and writers of the non-Western world, and in subclassical genres such as science fiction and fantasy. Among the outcomes that today's teachers might expect of literary study are personal satisfaction, developmental values, social awareness, and the articulate expression of response as well as skill in critical analysis (p. 5).

Aside from redirecting the emphasis of literature studies, Nelms suggests that the study of literature ought to include an even greater diversity. In this introductory essay, he writes that all the writers included in this volume agree that literature studies should not

encourage reliance on "one overarching method or theme." Instead, as the writers of the book indicate, their purpose is to "aim toward flexibility by providing a variety of schemata, interpretive approaches, and vocabularies" (p. 11).

The plurality that is advocated by Nelms and the other writers is apparent in the organizational format of the chapters within the book's three sections, which focus on reader, text, and context, respectively. As Nelms invites his readers to engage in the "disparate" essays of the NCTE text, he encourages them to think of literature as a process involving four recursive stages: evocation, response, interpretation, and criticism. Like the nesting of Chinese boxes, each approach provides the possibility of enriching the others. The theme throughout each stage is plurality. In the first section *student responses to literature* the writers of the six essays emphasize various ways to encourage students to become involved in the literary experience--the evocation and response stage. In the second section six high school teachers elaborate a broad range of ideas on interpretation. In the third section the focus on the social dimensions of literature has to do with multiple possibilities in the social context. The multiethnic and multivalued nature of the world is described by writers who insist upon "the pluralism of visions that only literature can provide. . ." (p. 13).

Dispensing with the first section of the NCTE text because the multiplicity of the approaches is well-represented throughout the text, a brief review of six approaches on interpretation will be given. The

second section of the NCTE text begins with Eugen Garber's probe into Nathaniel Hawthorne's "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." As Garber notes, his piece serves as a prologue to more specific pedagogical questions and also to more specific applications of theoretical perspectives. Following a brief synopsis of Hawthorne's short story, Garber suggests how structure, history, myth, and psychology can become useful to explore this text. Aside from these *stable readings* as he calls them, interpretation can also be challenged by ideology (e.g., economic and gender), deconstructionism, and other readings, such as post-structuralism. Thus, Garber advocates that structural, historical, mythical and psychological perspectives represent a form of harmony which he identifies as *interpretive probes.* In contrast, ideological, deconstructionist, and poststructural perspectives undermine the integrity of these other positions. He identifies the latter views as *critical probes* , ones which appear to create cacophony.

Although this essay does illustrate how classroom teachers may integrate multiple approaches, Garber's distinctions are confusing and misleading. Certainly, my premise that so many approaches befuddle the teacher is supported by Garber's seemingly arbitrary distinction between interpretation and criticism. He argues that certain perspectives, such as the structural, historical, mythical and psychological, help to construct interpretation, while others, such as the ideological and deconstructionist, function as radical methods to question readers' assumptions. I find it difficult to understand why

Garber believes psychological methods help to inform interpretation while a feminist discussion of gender suggests a form of criticism. Isn't it possible that some psychological methods question assumptions and do not support stable readings? However, aside from such differences, Garber's essay introduces the idea of using multiple approaches in the secondary classroom.

As a complementary piece to Garber, Patricia Hansbury's "Readers Making Meaning: From Response to Interpretation" discusses not only various approaches but also a variety of literature for high school students. She argues that her goal as a teacher is to offer students "schemata or modes of perception that can be applied to the works they encounter (p. 106). Hansbury starts by applying David Bleich's emphasis on subjectivity and asks students to find the most important word in "Eveline" by James Joyce. Exploring the difference in students' personal responses, Hansbury follows Louise Rosenblatt's advice of asking students to write their own questions, and she applies Rosenblatt's suggestion to Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." Focusing on the reading experience of A Modest Proposal by Jonathan Swift, Hansbury uses a structuralist approach to ask students also to question specific places in the text where literary conventions can be explored. As a close-reading exercise, Hansbury investigates questions that can identify and interpret the details in Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery." And finally, to develop students' responses throughout a lesson, Hansbury suggests that students keep a

response journal and incorporates this technique for George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four and Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn.

James Butterfield from Sand Creek School in Albany, New York, selected a historical-cultural approach to discuss Ray Bradbury's Dandelion Wine. Butterfield began by asking students for their definitions of history. Two prereading activities involved students arranging five tunes in historical order and identifying dress styles from the 1800s through 1900s to analyze "sense impressions" that help restore memory. These activities related to another assignment: to define culture. These strategies became the means by which students focused on character development, setting, vocabulary, dialogue and attitudes, and the means by which students connected these characteristics to history and culture. Finally, a writing assignment included describing the story from three different historical perspectives: the character's viewpoint in the early 1900s, the author's viewpoint at time of the story, and the student's viewpoint from the late 1900s. The historical-cultural approach concentrated primarily on students' knowledge of people and the past in the sequential activities of prereading, reading and discussion, group work, follow-up discussion, and writing.

Doris Quick from Burnt Hills Schools in Burnt Hills, New York, decided upon a structuralist activity to introduce John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men to her ninth graders. As Quick notes, this approach is not the focus of her classroom but rather a means to encourage close-

reading. The structuralist approach is based on Roland Barth's semiotic theory of codes that underlie the structure of literature. These include the action code (what moves the plot along), the enigmatic code (what arouses or satisfies readers' curiosity), the symbolic code (what is represented by the words), the cultural code (what cultural knowledge helps to create meaning), and the communication code (what is understood between the narrator and the reader). Quick asked her students to work in groups, to cite numerous examples of one particular code, and to discuss the significance of their feelings. While arguing that questioning and sharing tentative answers can also succeed in accomplishing the same goal of close reading, Quick maintains that this approach encourages collaborative learning, encourages students to become a community of interpreters, encourages students to comment freely on the meaning, and encourages students to pursue how codes function in the story. Furthermore, as she notes, this structuralist activity works well as a rereading activity.

Carol Decker Forman from Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake High School, New York designed a sociological approach which she applied to Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman. Four models from the writings of George Herbert Mead, Milton Rokeach, Emile Durkheim, and Karl Marx provided the background for the sociological analysis. She developed the first model by borrowing and modifying Mead's *I-me* paradigm of development and the concepts of the *significant* - and *generalized other*. Using Mead's concepts, students could learn to understand Willy

Lohman's problems in measuring his own worth. Forman adapted a second model from Rokeach's ideas on values formation. This helped students to understand the conflict among "societal values." Forman's third model was based on Durkheim's explanation of the kinds of control society exercises over individuals. Using his term "anomie"—the feeling of little or no connection with society— students focused attention on Willy's alienation from his family and society. Forman incorporated a fourth model based on Marx's ideas of the ruling class's power to control the means of production. These ideas were discussed in order for students to understand the societal elements that worked against Willy. To bring all the models together, Forman had students free-write a response to Miller's play and relate a specific aspect to the five kinds of alienation identified by Paul Blumberg in "Work as Alienation in the Plays of Arthur Miller."

The last approach in this section is a feminist perspective by Roseanne DeFabio who introduced Jane Eyre to her college-bound seniors. Her critical resources fall into three categories: archetypes of the mythic hero and the quest, archetypes related to the feminine experience, and work based on modern political feminism. The general procedure during class followed a clearly defined format. Readings were assigned for each class period and students kept a response journal. Students chose, discussed, and wrote about significant passages and written responses were shared in class. At the conclusion of two weeks following this process, five critical issues emerged for individual

groups to pursue. They included the quest pattern, characters, fire and ice imagery, weather and nature, and religion. DeFabio encouraged the groups to examine the text in these areas more closely by suggesting models based on the feminine perspective. Her sources included R. D. Laing's theory of madness in The Divided Self, Barbara Rigney's application of Laing's theory in Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel, and archetypal material from Annis Pratt's Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction, M. E. Harding's Women's Mysteries Ancient and Modern, and Erich Neumann's Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine. As DeFabio notes in her introduction, she is a structuralist and chose to try to incorporate feminist criticism using ideas such as alienated female consciousness and archetypal quest patterns from the female perspective.

Following these six approaches, the final section of the NCTE text deals with the context in which literature finds itself in the real world. The essays address the social dimension of literature by including a variety of topics on the global society, international understanding, multiethnic culture, students' values and responsibility, and the question of censorship. The overall scheme in this third section is to develop the plurality that literature hypothesizes exists in the real world. The strategy is to encourage teachers to lead students towards questioning their unexamined assumptions. It is also to give students tools to evaluate their responses and subsequent interpretation and critical perspectives about literature. Therefore, Mary Sasse writes

about literature in a multiethnic culture, Eileen Tway and Regina Cowin demonstrate how to teach in a global society, Sylvia White and Rule Pritchard discuss students examining their values, Ben Nelms and Elizabeth Nelms discuss recent adolescent novels, and Deanne Bogdan examines the censorship of literature texts.

Because of all the approaches that have been mentioned, however, for many teachers the NCTE text merely adds to their confusion, and the purpose and future of teaching remain ambiguous. The text seems to imply that the future belongs only to the teachers who can integrate a variety of critical approaches and to those who can choose from among these writings to help develop the role of the reader with their students. How are teachers to respond if they cannot make sense out of so much plurality? What is to become of the teachers who do not examine the works of the multi-critical theorists? What are the teachers to do who do not have the time even to read and digest the NCTE text, a short form describing the possibilities? Where are teachers to go if they have been immersed in a particular critical perspective and cannot adapt to the others? And who says that theorist and practitioner make compatible bedfellows?

Walter Jackson Bate, for one, would agree with the NCTE writers that criticism benefits the practitioner teaching literature. He defends criticism and its relationship to other disciplines in the humanities. As he writes,

> The great justification of criticism at any time is that it can help to bring into focus and emphasize the function of the arts and of the humanities themselves. The humanities, by definition, do not seek to offer analysis without synthesis, description without evaluation, or abstractions without feeling. . . . And the activity that subserves the humanities--critical theory--fulfills its purpose only if it is as fully aware as possible of the aim and character of what it *subserves* (Bate 1952, p. xi).

However, as eloquent and persuasive as Bate and others may be about the value of criticism, many others find that literary criticism has forcibly widened the gap between practitioner and theorist. For example, Stephen Tanner in "Education by Criticism" (1986) writes that "criticism is losing touch with common sense, social responsibility, the determination of values, and, generally, with life that is actually lived (p. 23). And, previous arguments along this line can be found in Gerald Graff's "Who Killed Criticism?" in American Scholar (1980) and in William Cain's The Crisis in Criticism (1984). As Tanner suggests, the problem of finding out what criticism subserves is not an easy one.

Given either the position of skeptics like Tanner or pluralists like the NCTE essayists, this debate is among critics. The classroom teacher still has the problem of how to make sense of teaching literature. The question to be asked is, if the ground were cleared of all the approaches that have been advocated, what would remain as the

heart of literary education? Assuming that secondary teachers are justifiably confused by the proliferation of critical approaches, how could they return to the essence of what it is that they do in the classroom? How could they be able to put students back in touch with the literature? After paring away the multiple layers of interpretation about which teachers ought to be informed, what is left? These are the questions that will be discussed in the following chapters.

Organizing the Argument: A Description of Chapters Two through Six

This disseriation has been organized into six chapters. The introductory chapter has located the problem to be examined, namely, how to put students back in touch with literature. Chapter Two will develop a link between Dewey's theory of experience and various orientations in reader-response criticism. It will begin with Dewey's educational theory of experience and move to a parallel position that can be found in current literary criticism. The search will begin with an overview of literary criticism and narrow down to a theoretical perspective known as reader-response. Using three critical sources by Jane Tompkins (1980), by Susan Suleiman and Inge Crosman (1980), and by Elizabeth Freund (1987), four aspects of reader-response will be examined: a definition, a historical view, multiple dimensions, and three common characteristics. To conclude the background on reader-response, Robert Probst (1988) will present the practitioner's views on

reader-response, marking the transition from the theory to its practical application.

Chapter Three will examine Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory, a parallel in literary criticism to Dewey's educational theory of experience (Dewey, p. 1938). As an educator defining her critical position, Rosenblatt is primarily concerned with the teacher's task "to foster fruitful interactions—or, more precisely, transactions—between individual reader and individual readers and individual literary works" (Rosenblatt 1968, p. 27) Of interest to this study is her definition of *transactional*; therefore, Chapter Two will begin with a background on transaction by examining Rosenblatt's terminology and its implication for her theory (1985). Then the following characteristics will be discussed: the distinctions between a text, a poem and the reader; the distinction between efferent and aesthetic reading; the active and organic process between reader and text; a description of the literary event as a way of happening; and Rosenblatt's debate with Bruner's spiral curriculum. The chapter will conclude with the limitation of Rosenblatt's transactional theory that is based on interpreting the literary experience with verbal symbols.

Chapter Four expands Rosenblatt's definition of the literary experience by using Dewey's principle of continuity to argue that all the conditions we meet in living contribute to present experiences, including nonverbal responses. As evidence for the legitimacy of nonverbal responses in the literary experience, chapter four presents

examples for the idea that multiple perceptions of reality are an integral part of experience. Examples are provided from the following fields: psychology (Howard Gardner), aesthetics (Virginia Woolf), pedagogy (Maxine Greene), and mathematics (Seymour Papert). These examples will be used to support the significance of the nonverbal response for students and, therefore, for teachers of literature.

Chapter Five supports incorporating visual responses in the repertoire of reader-response techniques. This chapter presents four exempla that document and illustrate visual responses to literature. The four visual illustrations include responses to the following works: "Circles" by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Orlando by Virginia Woolf, Odysseus by Homer, and Bleak House by Charles Dickens. Each painting provides support for the argument that these visual responses have been generated by specific past experiences. Each offers the suggestion that it is an alternative response and, as such, that it may be a solution to the problem of limiting the literary response to the strictly verbal. In addition, each visual example offers the possibility for a connection to be drawn between the act of painting and the literary experience.

Concluding this dissertation is a chapter on the pedagogical methods that may unlock the transaction between reader and text--which until now have been interpreted as verbal responses--and may allow other possible transactional activities to take place. Chapter Six is divided into three sections that present strategies for an alternative approach to teaching literature in the secondary classroom. The first

section begins with a brief examination of the literary event as a risk-taking activity. Using Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poem "Constantly Risking Absurdity," a comparison is drawn between the risks that are taken by the student of literature and the dangers of an acrobat. The second section suggests teaching strategies developed around Eugen Garber's three organizing principles of engagement, multiple perspectives, and resymbolization. Specific examples for each stage provide supporting evidence that an alternative approach implies an emphasis on different kinds of classroom activities. The fluid and recursive process throughout these stages is represented by the image of "the Roman fountain" in a poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer. Finally, the third section concludes with a discussion on evaluation and focuses on aesthetic activities as the basis for evaluating student experiences. The attention on evaluation reflects the change in what is important in an approach that emphasizes the literary experience.

CHAPTER TWO

EXPERIENCE AND LITERATURE

A Link Between Dewey, Reader-Response, and Rosenblatt

Introduction

Chapter Two touches on three topics: Dewey and his theory of experience, reader-response theory and the reader, and Rosenblatt and her focus on both experience and the reader. The first part of the chapter begins with a quotation by John Dewey on the trouble with traditional education and leads to a brief examination of Dewey's ideas on experience and the critical importance of both the principle of continuity and interaction. Finding that experience is affected by the development of what is outside and inside of the individual, Dewey focuses attention on the interaction between the two. Of particular significance in Dewey's ideas on experience is the fluidity of the environment that surrounds the individual and of the interaction between an individual's past and present experiences. Dewey's theory describes an organic process in which neither the environment nor the individual are fixed entities.

Dewey's theoretical views on this organic process and his emphasis on the experience of the student (subject) have a parallel that can be found in literary theory called reader-response. The second part of this chapter deals with the argument that the reader's relationship to a work of art is as important as the the work itself. Theoretical issues in reader-response are examined to study the various approaches toward

the reader through the definitions and interpretations presented by three representative works in the 1980s: Jane P. Tompkins' Reader-Response Criticism, Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman's The Reader in the Text, and Elizabeth Freund's The Return of the Reader. Their background will include three different historical perspectives, a variety of ways to define reader-response, and three ideas that they share about reader-response. Comparing and contrasting their works will make it possible to suggest parallels between Dewey's educational philosophy and reader-response theory.

To draw attention to the theory in reader-response that emphasizes the experience of the reader with the text, the third part of the chapter will discuss Robert Probst's analysis of reader-response. Probst, as practitioner, makes the connection between reader-response and Rosenblatt's transactional theory. He establishes a link between educational theory, reader-response, and the critical significance of Rosenblatt's work. In Response and Analysis (1988) he asserts that Rosenblatt is the best representative of modern response-based theory.

Reducing many of the arguments and issues in literary theory to a subjective-objective continuum of interpretations, he locates Rosenblatt's theory in the center of the range of interpretive responses that place meaning either in the text or in the reader. Between the subjectivist's position of David Bleich at one end and the objectivist's position of the New Critics at the other, Rosenblatt is described as having a view that includes substantial contributions by both the reader and the text. The reader, as interpreter, brings his/her personal

experience, and the text, as that which engages the reader, guides interpretation. Both are equally significant parts of the interpretive process; and Rosenblatt's theory emphasizes the interplay between the two. Rosenblatt describes this particular relationship as the "transactional process," and it is the connecting link between her and Dewey. The following discussion begins with Dewey's ideas on experience.

Dewey's educational theory on experience

> The trouble with traditional education was not that educators took upon themselves the responsibility for providing an environment. The trouble was that they did not consider the other factor in creating experience: namely, the powers and purposes of those taught. It was assumed that a certain set of conditions was intrinsically desirable, apart from its ability to evoke a certain quality of response in individuals. This lack of mutual adaptation made the process of teaching and learning accidental. Those to whom the provided conditions were suitable managed to learn. Others got on as best they could. Responsibility for selecting objectives carries with it, then, the responsibility for understanding the needs and capacities of the individuals who are learning at a given time. It is not enough that certain materials and methods have proved effective with other individuals at other times (Dewey 1938, p. 45).

To put the student back in touch with learning, this passage suggests that educators must not assume that certain fixed conditions, created outside of individual experience, constitute the learning environment. When students' needs and power have not been integrated into the learning environment, there is trouble. Even when particular materials and methods have proven effective with other students, there can still be trouble. The precise nature of the trouble is the false assumption that the learning environment depends entirely upon certain effective conditions for learning to take place. As an example, an English teacher can emphasize classifying literature into categories or analyzing specfic texts and ignore what the student brings to the learning situation. Instead of concentrating on the necessary conditions for a learning environment, the American philosopher of education John Dewey argues that the learner's *experience* must be at the center of learning and teaching. According to Dewey, there are no givens outside of experience that can in any way amend, curtail, or replace it as the stronghold of learning and teaching. Experience must be center stage, and the needs and capacities of the learner must be given priority. Thus, before conditions can be determined for the learning environment, individuals and their experience must be considered. As the quotation from Experience and Education suggests, a set of conditions cannot be reduced to "a diet of predigested materials which replace the experience of the individual" (pp. 45-46). Such materials only hinder the learner and create trouble.

Thus, as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) promotes the multiple critical approaches that secondary teachers can incorporate into their classrooms, the NCTE is also concentrating its efforts on improving a particular set of conditions. Dewey would object. He would ask, why emphasize possible critical literary methods in the curriculum when students *first* need to be encouraged to experience the art object, literature? He would also ask, have the NCTE writers carefully considered the individual needs and abilities of their target audience: the students? He would be more interested in an answer to these questions that he *set* than in an explanation of the various critical approaches. According to Dewey, the approaches are merely another way of focusing on a set of conditions.

To clear the ground, therefore, of critical approaches and other distractions that remove students from direct experience with literature, Dewey serves as the catalyst that rejoins student and art object (literature) in this discussion. He holds this priority status because he places the student at the center of the learning yet, by emphasizing *experience*, fosters a fruitful relationship of the student and the learning environment. The critics who have become the intermediaries between literature and subject must step aside, as must the teachers who espouse various critical approaches.

Dewey must enter center stage. As the scenery has been cleared for his performance, the philosopher emerges as one who can guide his listeners back to the essentials in the classroom. Having already subdued the interruptive voices that have confused the situation, he has

the duty of defining the problem, and to do so he must examine some terminology. Moreover, he must argue a theoretical position, which forces him, like the pantomimist, to work without concrete images, without props. Hence, he can suggest realities rather than imposing them, and he can encourage his audience to recreate his suggestions rather than copying them.

To begin, in Chapter One of Experience and Education Dewey examines the interplay of traditional and progressive education. Studying the two approaches in education, Dewey finds that the intersection between the two takes place in the experience of the individual. Experience includes both what is outside the individual (what traditional education provides) and what is within the individual (what progressive education provides). Elaborating on experience in Chapter Two, Dewey clarifies how experience can also be miseducative (pp. 25-26). First, he notes, that experience miseducates when it distorts growth and encourages callousness and lack of sensitivity. Second, experience miseducates if an individual falls into a rut. Third, it is counterproductive when, because it is pleasurable, it moves an individual towards a careless attitude. Fourth, experience miseducates if the energy that is produced dissipates in too many directions, thereby generating confusion and aimlessness.

Clearly, these four miseducative experiences do not identify the genuine experience that is desired in education. Dewey maintains that other significant characteristics establish experience as the intersection of what is without and within the individual. Specifically, two aspects of

quality can distinguish genuine experience: immediate appeal (agreeableness or disagreeableness) and influence on later experiences. Like the philosopher Mortimer Adler, in his Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto (1982), Dewey would agree that *quality* is "the heart of the matter" (p. 49). However, Adler focuses on the quality of learning and notes that it depends on the quality of teaching: didactic instruction, coaching, and Socratic questioning. In contrast, Dewey specifies that the quality of learning depends, first and foremost, on the quality found in experience. Dewey argues that whether experience is agreeable or not is an easily identifiable measure of quality. The critical measure of quality that eludes educators is how experience affects later experiences. Dewey's point is that addressing this aspect of quality sets the problem for educators. They need to spend their energies studying those *presently* agreeable activities that also promote desirable *future* experiences (p. 27). For Dewey, the problem of education is one of quality. Quality is significant because it rests on activities which sustain experiences that are fruitful and creative in subsequent experiences.

To explain experience so as to place the focus directly on the student, Dewey describes two criteria of experience: continuity and interaction. In Chapter Three of Experience and Education, Dewey elaborates these two principles. He lays the foundation for his educational views which target experience as the fulcrum around which the science of education must revolve. As he notes, experience is the interception of continuity and interaction: its longitudinal and lateral aspects (p. 44). Likening the relationship to a bow and an arrow, Dewey

explains how they impose upon each other. The one constitutes the support against which the other must be pulled. And, likewise, the friction caused by one coming into contact with the other propels the motion of the other forwards. Before identifying the more specific properties of each, however, Dewey insists that the interdependent relationship of the bow to the arrow must be understood as analogous to his criteria of experience. Once this is conceptualized, both continuity and interaction can be understood more fully.

The principle of continuity--the arrow or the lateral aspect of experience--is reflected in the fact that "every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after." This implies that it "covers the formation of attitudes, attitudes that are emotional and intellectual; it covers our basic sensitivities and ways of meeting and responding to all the conditions which we meet in living" (p. 35). This arrow, then, so to speak, is continually transforming itself as it passes through time and space, though that modification does not destroy its quality of continuity. In contrast, the principle of interaction, the bow or the longitudinal aspect of experience, is reflected in the giving of "equal rights to both factors in experience—objective and internal conditions." This implies "an interplay of these two sets of conditions," so that both internal and external factors—subjective and objective conditions—interact to create a situation (p. 42). This bow, then, so to speak, adjusts the inside and outside forces that simultaneously interact upon

each other. And, as with experience, the effect of both factors upon each other is critical.

Returning to the bow and arrow metaphor, Dewey concludes that an experience is made up of an aspect of continuity (a habit that is modified) and an aspect of interaction (internal and external conditions). To follow his argument, it is important to note that Dewey makes a shift in terms while describing the internal and external relationship and the environment. He introduces the term *transaction* to replace *interaction*. In his words, the transaction is what happens between an individual and objects and other individuals; and, it is the activity that takes place "between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment. . ."(p. 43). Dewey's new term will be examined in much greater depth in succeeding chapters.

The radical departure from the idea of interaction for Dewey's theory of transaction is the remarkable fluidity that it brings to the experience. Dewey describes both the individual and the environment as being in states of continual flux. Therefore, in the educational situation neither the students nor the environment are fixed entities. They are both engaged in the process of interaction or, as Dewey would note, transaction. They are organically related factors contributing to experience. However, as important as the foregoing discussion may be, the primary purpose of including Dewey in an explanation of how to put students back in touch with literature is that he reasserts the importance of the individual, in this case the student, in the learning process. Dewey's overarching interest centers on the subject of

experience, *the student* , rather than on conditions of any kind. As he notes, "experience is truly experience only when objective conditions are subordinated to what goes on within the individuals having the experience" (p. 41).

As he was asked to do, Dewey had defined the problem: emphasizing "objective conditions" over students' needs and abilities detracts from the essential quality of experience. As he was also asked to do, he examined the terms *continuity* and *interaction*. And, as he found it necessary, he coined a new term *transaction* which describes what happens between an individual and the environment. Finally, as Dewey argued his theoretical position on learning, he tried to persuade educators that the focus in the classroom should be on experience. For Dewey, experience is the most essential aspect of education, as his Experience in Education suggests. Experience, is what gives education a structure and provides it with the vital signs of life.

Extending Dewey's general ideas on education, his philosophy can be applied to the teaching of literature. In fact, after Dewey's pantomime on stage, it seems clearer why he would say that the critical approaches that the NCTE explores are external to the student. The approaches by Garber, Hansbury, Butterfield, Quick, Decker, and DeFabio are instructive. Yet Dewey would be quick to note that as a group of approaches, they are a set of conditions that cannot replace the emphasis on the needs and abilities of students. Classroom teachers must give priority to the student. Students' experiences are the catalyst around which objective conditions can be created. As Dewey might

repeat again, "experience is truly experience only when objective conditions are subordinated to what goes on within the individuals having the experience" (p. 41).

A subject/object continuum: a philosophical and literary stance

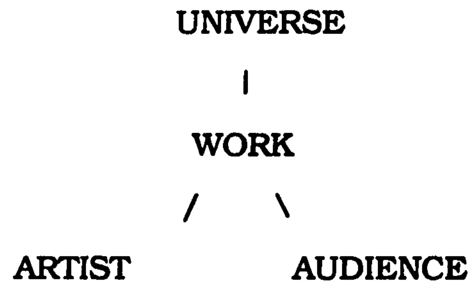
Although Dewey has spoken on behalf of the philosophy of education, his part in this discussion is far from over. His theoretical views on education are far-reaching in terms of their implications and applications to various disciplines. His emphasis on experience would change the curriculum in any area where the external conditions, e.g., the subject matter, are of utmost concern to the educator. Similarly, as the implications of Dewey's views on experience influence pedagogy, the application of his argument would also change the learning process as it has been defined by many teachers. Both of these points, while relevant to many current problems in education, are particularly important in the teaching of literature.

Dewey's theoretical view on transaction (what takes place between the individual and the environment) is a particularly fruitful aspect of his thinking. The significance lies in Dewey's perspective on the relationship between the individual and the environment, especially his emphasis on its interactive character. Both the subject (student) and the object (literature) *participate* in the interplay between the two and Dewey ascribes importance to both. He does not deny that an object exists outside of the subject; likewise, he does not deny that a subject exists apart from the object. His theoretical position can be visualized

as being at the center of a continuum that at one end emphasizes the subject and the other end emphasizes the object. Dewey's concept of experience lies in the middle of these two extremes.

Because Dewey's subject/object argument can also serve as the entry point to a discussion of a theoretical continuum in literature, his ideas are relevant to both literary criticism (the theoretical approaches to literature) and to the practitioner (the teacher at the secondary level). While the work of literary critics and practitioners overlap, the function of experience as it relates to both the theoretical and practical aspects of literature will be examined separately. The following discussion will proceed from literary criticism and a specific look at reader-response to the teaching of literature in the secondary classroom.

To begin, the "objective conditions" that Dewey finds are external to the student can be found in literary criticism. The relationship between subject and object can be illustrated in a scheme by M. H. Abrams. Abrams intended his model to help explain the history of various critical theories and their practice (David Lodge 1972, p. 1). However, it may also serve the purpose of clarifying the external conditions in literary criticism. As Abrams notes in The Mirror and the Lamp (1953) there are a variety of relations between the four primary elements in literature: the universe, the work, the artist, and the audience (p. 6).



The link between these four aspects, according to Abrams, constitutes the basis for critical theory, and the interplay among these primary elements, with a varying degree of emphasis on each, distinguishes the nature of particular relationships. These relationships are the cornerstone for specific orientations in literature and in all the other arts as well.

What Abrams' model contributes to Dewey's theoretical argument is that it helps to clarify that three of the four elements in literary criticism can be identified as "objective conditions." These external factors are the universe, the work, and the artist. Dewey's subject is represented by the audience (the individuals who experience literature); therefore, because the other elements function outside of the subject, they can be considered external factors. An analysis of the relative emphasis on these four elements in specific orientations in literary theory reveals that in Abrams' terms, the New Critics emphasize the significance of the work (text), the Reader-Response critics ascribe major importance to the audience (reader), the Romantics and the Biographical critics focus on the creative expression and background of the artist (writer), and the Mimetic theorists, influenced by Plato and Aristotle, concentrate on the universe (reality) captured in the text.

In a jest regarding the complexity of issues related to these four poles of interpretation, Elizabeth Freund notes that criticism, which may be seen as enormously tedious and perhaps worthless in view of its being ultimately unexplainable, is like a "game of musical chairs" (1987, p. 11). More seriously, however, it must be noted that in the 1990s, discussion is indeed lively on a wide variety of issues based on these relationships. In particular, theorists are focusing attention on the activities surrounding the reading of a work of art. This specific theory of literary criticism is called reader-response. Many of these critics regard the reader's relationship to a work of art as more important than the work itself.

Thus, assuming the lively interest by theorists on this particular element of Abrams' model, the question arises whether current attention from teachers is also focused on the reader. Not surprisingly, the emphasis on the reader is also a primary concern that the 1988 NCTE writers address. As Ben Nelms notes, an objective of the text is to "relate the teaching of literature to current modes of literary criticism and to reader-response theory" (p. vii). Therefore, since reader-response is of such importance to current critical theorists and practitioners as well as a starting point suggested by the earlier Dewey analysis, the final section of this chapter will examine reader-response. As reader-response is a theoretical position with many subtle arguments, the subsequent discussion will address the more formal considerations first. Following the discussion of the critical perspective, the focus will shift to the practitioner's application of

reader-response. To conclude Chapter Two, reader-response will be connected to the subject/object continuum and Dewey's emphasis on the interplay between the two.

Reader-Response: A Theoretical Perspective

A definition of Reader-Response

To begin a review of reader-response criticism with a definition of *reader-response* is a difficult task because there seems to be as many definitions as there are theorists and interpreters of literature who have had an interest in the reader and/or the reader's response. Certainly, it would be safe to venture that reader-response has gained recognition within the last twenty years and that reader-response implies a rather obvious interest in the reader. Beyond these two broad qualifying remarks, however, it is impossible to define with finality the intent of *reader-response.* No consensus among theorists on a definition can exist because they are engaged in an unending debate over a range of subtle issues in a variety of disciplines. As W. J. T. Mitchell comments in an article in Critical Inquiry (1982), "Criticism has not disentangled itself from other disciplines such as history, philosophy, and psychology to discover its own unique axioms and postulates; it has turned instead toward increasing interdisciplinary entanglement" (p. 609).

While defining reader-response criticism may be impossible, a discussion that limits the focus of reader-response criticism at the theoretical level can begin with two reservations. They are presented by Peter Rabinowitz in "Shifting Stands, Shifting Standards: Reading,

Interpretation, and Literary Judgment" (1986). First, as Rabinowitz notes, the methodology shared by reader-response critics varies profoundly. These critics are united in expressing an interest in discussion about the individual reader, but their approach tends to be structuralist or Freudian (p. 115). Second, as he adds, *reader-response* implies a relationship to a specific school of criticism, which, in turn, suggests a limited interest among other critics for the reader. Such a connection to a particular critical school is undesirable because, as he notes, reader-response is a theoretical position that unifies many critics (p. 116).

Keeping in mind that reader-response does not share a single methodology and that it is not a school which limits other critics from inquiring into the nature of the reader, a more specific understanding of the issues in reader-response can be achieved by focusing on three works: Reader-Response Criticism (1980) edited by Jane P. Tompkins, The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation (1980) edited by Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, and The Return of the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism (1987) by Elizabeth Freund. These critical works, chosen for their variety of critical interpretations within reader-response, present a range of theories. They investigate the subject/object continuum that moves from an emphasis on the subject by David Bleich and Norman Holland at one end to an emphasis on the text by Jonathan Culler and Gerald Prince at the other end. The center of the subject/object continuum is represented by Louise Rosenblatt and Wolfgang Iser.

Aside from the texts mentioned, many other anthologies and/or texts, e.g., Interpretive Conventions: The Reader in the Study of American Fiction by Steven Mailloux (1982), are valuable theoretical sources. However, a limit must be imposed on the many critical interpretations of reader- response so that the ensuing discussion remains focused. Therefore, an examination of reader-response will concentrate on the three representative texts by Tompkins, Suleiman/Crosman, and Freund. A brief analysis of historical origins, of multiple issues in interpretation, and of some of the similarities in Tompkins,' Suleiman/Crosman's, and Freund's views will provide some theoretical background. Comparing these various aspects should reveal current views on reader-response and make clearer some of the subtle differences in reader-response theories.

A historical view of reader-response

Many historical threads, woven into various schemes constituting chronologies of ideas, persons, or events identify the beginnings of a reader-response orientation in criticism. Tompkin's historical perspective in her collection of essays begins with an idea: *the mock reader*. Freund's sense-making of the past begins with an historical figure: I. A. Richards. And Suleiman/Crosman's historical perspective begins with an event: a 1975 seminar "The Reader in Fiction." As the next several pages will demonstrate, the three texts attribute the historical roots of reader-response to more than one source of critical development.

Tompkins begins with an historical attachment of reader-response criticism to Walker Gibson's *mock reader*, an idea presented in an essay written in 1950. Tompkins argues that the mock reader, a name suggesting the fictive nature of the reader, is the first of many progressive steps that have helped to disassociate the reader--during the act of reading--from the text (Tompkins 1980, p. xi). The reader is asked to imagine various roles and, as opposed to the real reader, is thus able to penetrate the strategies engaged in by the author to control him/her during the reading of the text. As Tompkins notes,

> Gibson's essay anticipates the direction of reader-response criticism will subsequently take: it moves the attention away from the text and toward the reader, it uses the idea of the reader as a means of producing a new kind of textual analysis, and it suggests that literary criticism be seen as part of larger, more fundamental processes such as the forming of an identity (p. xi).

Commenting on just such a line of development that Tompkins has chosen to follow, Freund says,

> The concept *audience* or *reader* may be anything from an idealized construct to an actual historical idiosyncratic personage, including the author. Personifications--the mock reader (Gibson), the implied reader (Booth, Iser), the model reader (Eco), the super-reader (Riffaterre), the inscribed or encoded reader (Brooke-Rose), the narratee (Prince), the ideal reader (Culler), the literent (Holland), the actual reader

> (Jauss), the informed reader or the interpretive community (Fish)—proliferate" (p. 7).

This discussion suggests that an historical perspective could well focus on the development of the term *reader.*

In contrast, Freund begins the historical background to reader-response with I. A. Richards' aesthetics of response in the 1920s. Freund begins the first chapter of her book with a statement about modern Anglo-criticism beginning with Richards' work. She argues that Principles of Literary Criticism (1924) "is at once the seminal theorization of reader-oriented criticism and a brief for the literary culture of the following decades" (p. 23). Anthony Pugh in Poetics Today (1987, p. 8) suggests that in Freund's The Return of the Reader, her "plot in fact makes Richards responsible for both the New Criticism's fetishization of the text, and the more recent *return* of the reader. . . " (p. 690).

Freund is not the only critic to emphasize the historical contribution to reader-response of I. A. Richards' criticism. Tompkins in "The Reader in History," the last essay of her collection, also deals with Richards, whom she credits with being the most response-oriented critic of his time (p. 219). His notion of poetry as a civilizing agent (a classical and Renaissance concept) in society and thereby a force that orders the world—through its detachment—is, as Tompkins notes, a significant catalyst in twentieth-century critical belief. She adds further that "this critical step prepares the way for the criticism of T.S. Eliot and his disciples, which ends by repudiating affect and

removing poetry from its historical circumstances altogether" (p. 220).

Suleiman/Crosman examine the point of origin and note that their book is the result of a 1975 seminar called "The Reader in Fiction" at the Modern Language Association Convention (p. vii). As they write, "The unusually large attendance at this seminar convinced us that the time had come for a serious assessment and overview of the rapidly growing new field of audience-oriented criticism" (p. vii). The seminar included discussion leaders Inge Crosman, Stanley Fish and Gerald Prince on the topic of the *narratee* and the *implied reader* as interpreted by three approaches: semiotics, hermeneutics and phenomenology. Suleiman and Crosman's text consequently is made up of solicited essays from scholars that build on work already begun.

As Tompkins states in her introductory article to Reader-Response Criticism, reader-response could be said to have begun with I. A. Richards, D. W. Harding or Louise Rosenblatt (p. x). The emphasis on readers could also begin with Rosenblatt, Kenneth Burke or Wayne Booth's Rhetoric of Fiction, as Mailloux argues in Interpretive Conventions. As other critics are surveyed or the ones discussed are scrutinized more carefully for the historical origins of reader-response, the seemingly limitless list of significant events, persons, or ideas is not confined by a consensus on any of these points. With so many opinions on the origin of reader-response, therefore, it seems appropriate that Tompkins, Suleiman/Crosman and Freund represent the discussion of this difference.

Multiple dimensions

Similar disagreement among the three critics is noticeable in comparing all three texts for the respective definitions of reader-response. Exemplifying Rabinowitz's comments at the outset of this discussion, Tompkins, Suleiman/Crosman and Freund emphasize multiple dimensions rather than an easily identifiable single characteristic or general focus that could identify the movement. Reader-response places emphasis on the activities related to reading and reader but, placing it in a specific category, no matter how broad, remains elusive and, perhaps, purposeless. A review by Michael Steig notes that the four texts written by Fish, Johnson, Suleiman/Crosman, and Tompkins on reader-response in the 1980s "provide no consensus as to what a reader is or where. . . nor do they converge on any single model of literary meaning" (1982, p. 183).

As an example, Tompkins argues that reader-response criticism is not a position with a unified conceptual base "but a term that has come to be associated with the work of critics who use the words *reader, the reading process*, and *response* to mark out an area of investigation" (1980, p. ix). Similarly, Suleiman and Crosman state that in theory and practice the implications of the reader--and more generally of the audience is "not one field but many, not a single widely trodden path but a multiplicity of crisscrossing, often divergent tracks that cover a vast area of the critical landscape in a pattern whose complexity dismays the brave and confounds the heart" (p. 6). And Freund, like Tompkins and Suleiman/Crosman, finds that reader-response criticism is a "labyrinth

of converging and sometimes contradictory approaches" and that considering it a single entity in any sense would be "a flagrant distortion of the plurality of voices and approaches, of the theoretical heterogeneity, and of the ideological divergences. . ." (p. 6).

Clearly, while Tompkins' definition converges on words such as *reader* or *the reading process* to describe the meaning of the term *reader-response*, she would be in agreement with the others when they elaborate on its meaning with images such as *divergent tracks* or *labyrinth*. However, a substantive issue that divides Tompkins and Suleiman/Crosman is whether the emphasis is on the reader or more generally on the audience. The difference between Tompkins and Suleiman/Crosman, as Sosnoski writes, is in their aims (1981-2, p. 753). Tompkin's text, according to Sosnoski, promotes the evolution of conceptions of readers, texts, and readings from the New Critics in the '50s to the '70s. Suleiman/Crosman's text, in contrast, investigates the status of the audience as it is evoked or executed "in" the text (p. 753). Suleiman's introductory essay, entitled "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism," for example, examines the implications of a collective community of readers that have access to the multiple codes and conventions that make a text readable.

Not to detract from the comparisons being drawn among the three critics but briefly to clarify Suleiman/Crosman's position, it is helpful to look to Victoria Pedrick and Nancy Rabinowitz. They try to distinguish between reader-response and audience-oriented criticism, making note of Peter Rabinowitz's comment that response and audience-oriented

criticism share an object of study but not a methodology (1986, p. 105). Audience-oriented criticism, according to Pedrick and Rabinowitz goes "beyond examining a text's values. . .to considering the effect of the rhetoric on actual readers." Its origin is in rhetorical criticism, and it is probably most admirably demonstrated by Wayne C. Booth in The Rhetoric of Fiction (p. 105). As Suleiman/Crosman note, the rhetorical aspects of the audience-oriented movement includes "any criticism that seeks to study the means whereby authors attempt to communicate certain intended meanings or to produce certain intended effects" ("Introduction," Arethusa, p. 106)

While there are distinctions made by critics regarding the difference between audience and reader-response criticism, for the purpose of this brief introductory discussion that makes a comparison between Tompkins, Suleiman/Crosman, and Freund, the *audience* will be defined by Pedrick and Rabinowitz. Though, clearly, these last two do not encourage using the terms *reader-response* and *audience-oriented* interchangeably, their definition of audience is one that recognizes the importance of the audience over the author's intentions and the autonomous text. They state, "Reader—or audience—oriented criticism allows for a wide variety of approaches, each of which focuses attention on the audience rather than on the author and his/her motivations to write, or on the text as a self-contained and static entity" (Pedrick and Rabinowitz 1986, p. 105). This emphasis on the reader and the diversity of approaches is what Tompkins, Suleiman/Crosman, and Freund share.

Three common characteristics

Thus while the three critics cannot agree upon the historical origins and the current dimensions of reader-response criticism because these factors do not appear to depend upon any single theorists' contribution, it is possible to find consensus on three significant points. First, all three critics agree that reader-response is in some sense a reaction against the New Criticism. Second, all three critics suggest an interest by reader-response critics for the observer as well as the observed. And third, the emphasis on the observer is indicative of a much broader perspective that connects reader-response critics to developments in other fields.

To begin, in Tompkins' introductory essay her discussion starts with a statement that reader-response constitutes a counterpoise to that of the New Critics, such as Wimsatt and Beardsley. In the latter's "The Affective Fallacy" written in 1949, these critics tried to separate the poem from the various factors that might encourage an emotional effect (Tompkins 1980, p. ix). Reader-response critics would not separate the poem from the writer or reader. While Tompkins notes that the essays which she includes in her book suggest that the objectivity of the text has been destroyed, she maintains, nonetheless, that reader-response criticism has not cast off the formalist mantle (p. 227), just "transformed formalist principles into a new key," because both assume that the goal of criticism is meaning (p. 201).

Suleiman and Crosman note in their introduction that while there has been a movement away from the formalist and New Critical

emphasis on the autonomous text, this shift in emphasis should not diminish or negate the substantial contributions of either of these schools to the field of literary theory (1980, p. 5). Their remarks suggest unequivocally, however, that there has been a change from the purely text-itself approach to consideration of the text in the context of a variety of activities, which reader-response highlights.

Likewise, summarizing the work of Tompkins and Suleiman/Crosman, Freund notes that "the point of departure in each story is always a dissatisfaction with formalist principles" (Freund 1987, p. 10). She also acknowledges that emphasis on the text and the reader relationship has been growing in strength in recent years. As she writes,

> In the last fifteen years or so, an intense concern with the text-reader relationship, with the reading process, with our acts of understanding and interpretation, and with the subject of the "subject" has been occupying the forefront of Anglo-American critical attention. Broadly speaking, this constitutes a movement away from the positivistic assumptions of formalism and New Criticism with respect to the objectivity and self-sufficiency of the literary text (p. 5).

Thus there is agreement by Tompkins, Suleiman/Crosman, and Freund that reader-response is a reaction to the New Critics' single-minded emphasis on the text itself. As such, it is the first of three major points that presents reader-response as an identifiable critical movement.

The second point of consensus among reader-response critics is a consideration not only for the observed but also for the observer. In Tompkins' introductory article, she notes that the essays she has collected in her text direct attention toward the reader. These essays she writes, "examine authors' attitudes toward their readers, the kinds of readers various texts seem to imply, the role actual readers play in the determination of literary meaning, the relation of reading conventions to textual interpretation, and the status of the readers' self" (1980, p. ix). What is crucial here, as Mailloux notes, is that for Tompkins, the perceiver—the reader—is not separated from the perceived—the text (p. 20).

Suleiman and Crosman add that in this new shift towards the observer "one hardly picks up a literary journal on either side of the Atlantic without finding articles (and often a whole special issue) devoted to the performance of reading," and they continue on about the "confrontation, transaction, or interrogation between texts and readers. . .whose very formulation depends on a new awareness of the audience as an entity indissociable from the notion of artistic text" (p.4).

Freund, like Tompkins and Suleiman/Crosman, also writes that reader-response criticism "refocuses attention on the reader" and that its critics are concerned with questions regarding the reading process as it involves psychology, cognitivism, and knowledge about the unconscious. Furthermore, she comments that "reader-response probes the practical or theoretical consequences of the event of reading by further asking what the relationship is between the private and the

public, or how and where meaning is made. . . " (p. 6). Freund's position is that all of this new analysis leads to a reconceptualization of the text-reader interaction.

A reconceptualization of text-reader interaction or of the observed-observer assumption leads to the third point that provides some unanimity among Tompkins, Suleiman/Crosman and Freund. The emphasis on the observer is indicative of a much broader perspective that connects reader-response critics to developments in other fields. As Suleiman/Crosman note, there is recent attention in all disciplines to self-reflectiveness, which she defines as "questioning and making explicit the assumptions that ground the methods of the discipline, and concurrently the investigator's role in delimiting or even in constituting the object of study"(p. 4). This shift in perspective towards self-reflectiveness, according to Suleiman and Crosman, is not only indicative of what is being thought about in the area of literary criticism but was precipitated by an analogous move in this direction by physicists in the early 20th century as they examined principles of relativity and uncertainty (p. 4).

"Parallels between paradigms in science and in reading and literary theories" is the title of a review article written by Constance Weaver in Research in the Teaching of English (1985). In the field of science she examines the shift from a mechanistic to an organic paradigm. Referring to contributions by Bohr (the complementary of opposites - light is both a wave and a particle) and Heisenberg (the uncertainty principle - human intervention in an observation actualizes one

possibility and negates others) in quantum physics, Weaver suggests that there are two basic tenets of an organic model which both scientists would support. The first is that the world cannot be divided into separately identifiable parts that can be recombined to form the whole. The second is that the fundamental nature of the universe is a process that is active (p. 302). Both tenets suggest possible movement away from a mechanistic paradigm.

From the fields of chemistry and biology, Weaver draws on the work of Prigogine and Stengers, who write,

> we now know that far from equilibrium, new types of structures may originate spontaneously. In far-from-equilibrium conditions we may have transformation from disorder, from thermal chaos [entropy] into order. From this transformation may originate "new dynamic states of matter" reflecting the transaction of a given system with its surroundings. The new, more complex structures are called *dissipative structures* because of the role of dissipative processes in their formation" (1984, p. 12).

Describing a process that includes the phenomenon of synchronicity (whereby cause and effect are inseparable and indeterminate), the developing paradigm suggests that process is most important (pp. 303-304). These fields of study, then, physics, chemistry and biology, are significant contributors to the building of a new literary paradigm that includes the developments of Rosenblatt, who, as Weaver mentions, first

emphasized the importance of context and also credited science with parallels to literary theory (p. 309).

Although no direct cause-and-effect relationship exists between literary criticism and other fields of study, all three critical views argue that they interact in a curiously interdependent way. As Tompkins writes from her viewpoint on the development of the reading process, "What began as a small shift of emphasis from the narrator implied by a literary work to the reader it implies ends by becoming an exchange of world views" (1980, p. x). As she goes on to note, such a seemingly small change reaches momentous proportions, particularly when the net result is an epistemological revolution that repoliticizes literature and literary criticism (p. 37).

Therefore, reaching beyond reader-response criticism, Tompkins suggests that the epistemological shift has a direct effect on opening up discussions in many other disciplines. Echoing the interdependent relationship between fields of study, Freund argues that "the Anglo-American literary critic has become increasingly aware of the non-insularity of his discipline, situated as it is within a vital network of relationships which constitute the pluralistic cultural ambience the human sciences inhabit today" (1987, p. 7).

To conclude this particular discussion on reader-response, then, one sees that reader-response critics do share the view that their work is a reaction to New Criticism, that the observer as well as the observed is significant, and that they support a paradigm shift similar to that in

other disciplines. Summarizing reader-response in Interpretive Conventions, Mailloux writes,

> All reader-response critics focus on readers during the process of reading. Some examine individual readers through psychological observations and participations; others discuss reading communities through philosophical speculation and literary intuition. Rejecting the Affective Fallacy of American New Criticism, all describe the relation of text to reader. Indeed, all share the phenomenological assumption that is impossible to separate the perceiver from the perceived, subject from object (1982, p. 20).

An interesting parallel can be found between the views that the three critics share and what has already been established in Dewey's analysis of experience. In Experience and Education Dewey maintains that giving priority to objective conditions creates a problem for the educator, who should be interested in the student. Similarly, the critics argue against the New Critics who support the sole emphasis on the object (the text). Dewey's theory of transaction is a position that recognizes the interplay between the learner and the environment (subject and object); likewise, the critics reorient their emphasis on the observer and observed. Finally, just as Dewey uses the term transaction to describe the broad context or situation in which the individual has experience, so, too, do the critics relate the observer and the observed to the broader context of activity in other academic fields. These

examples suggest strong parallels between Dewey's educational philosophy and reader-response theory.

Reader-Response: A Practitioner's Perspective

In addition to the parallels that connect Dewey to some major issues in reader-response theory, Dewey's subject/object continuum, cited earlier in this chapter, can also be related to the range of theoretical positions discussed by Reader-Response critics. Mailloux (1982) provides a model which illustrates various theoretical approaches in reader-response. The variety of critical positions includes affective, phenomenological, subjective, transactive, transactional, structural, deconstructive, rhetorical, psychological, and speech act. Mailloux simplifies what he calls the "metacritical chaos" by suggesting a continuum that spans the extremes of the various positions (p. 19).

Mailloux has basically coded a range of reader-response criticism by arguing that at one end of the continuum lies a psychological model, a position which emphasizes the individual response to a text, while at the other end lies a social model, a position which emphasizes the context upon which the text is built. In the middle of the continuum lies the intersubjective model, which gives equal weight to the individual response and the importance of the text (p. 22). They are labeled by the critical terms subjectivism, structuralism and phenomenology, respectively. Then, Mailloux investigates five reader-

response critics and works out their individual positions in his metacritical model (see Figure 1).

Comparing Dewey's transaction theory of experience to Mailloux's model, it is becomes apparent that Dewey's view closely resembles the intersubjective model which emphasizes the contribution of the reader and the text. The intersubjective model consists of a paradigm that unites knowledge found in the text with the response that the reader brings to the reading experience. Thus, interpretation is a part of the interaction of the text and the reader. At the root of this interaction is the assumption that object and reader are inseparable; therefore, both are mutually involved in the interpretive process. Wolfgang Iser and Louise Rosenblatt are the leading advocates of this model.

Rosenblatt, who is a leading advocate of what Mailloux calls the *intersubjective model*, is the connecting link in the discussion that began with Dewey's theory of experience, moved to the examination of the reader in reader-response, and now passes from the theoretical views of reader-response in the classroom. Rosenblatt's position becomes the central focus of attention because her work places the student at the center of experience. She argues for the *transactional* between the reader and the text and values the contribution Dewey has made to the understanding of the relationship between subject and object. Her work is a valuable example of the ideas that Dewey elaborated upon in his educational philosophy. It may not be overstating the argument to say that reader-response and Deweyian views on experience are intimately related.

Mailloux's Continuum

Subjectivism	Phenomemology	Structuralism
Psychological Model	Intersubjective Model	Social Model

I________________________________I________________________________I

David Bleich's subjective criticism	Norman Holland's transactive criticism	Wolfgang Iser's Phenomeno-logical criticism	Stanley Fish's affective stylistics	Jonathan Culler's structuralist poetics	Stanley Fish's theory of interpretive strategies
primacy of subjectivity	transaction between reader and text within reader's identity theme	inter-action between reader and text	text's manipu-lation of reader	reading conventions	authority of interpretive communities

(Mailloux 1982, p. 22).

Figure 1. Continuum of reader-oriented responses

Interestingly, Rosenblatt's contributions to reader-response are valued differently by the theorists and practitioner considered in this overall discussion. While Rosenblatt is credited by theorists Tompkins and Suleiman/Crosman for a significant pioneering work in reader-response, her theoretical efforts appear to be taken more seriously by practitioners. The theoretical critics Tompkins and Suleiman/Crosman relegate Rosenblatt to a footnote in their introductory chapters. Tompkins mentions Rosenblatt's work among the omissions that seem most significant in the theoretical development of reader-response. She writes, "Louise Rosenblatt deserves to be recognized as the first among the present generation of critics in this country to describe empirically the way the reader's reactions to a poem are responsible for any subsequent interpretation of it (p. 38)." Suleiman/Crosman's credit to Rosenblatt begins with a regret. "To my regret, Louise M. Rosenblatt's pioneering work in the field of subjective criticism came to my attention only after this essay was in proof" (p. 45). They go on to say that Rosenblatt's Literature as Exploration challenged the objectivist assumptions of the New Criticism in the classroom of colleges and high schools, and that although the book influenced pedagogical concerns, it was not recognized for its importance to literary theory until recently (p. 45).

In contrast to the theoretical critics who all but overlook Rosenblatt, the practitioner Probst cites her as making a substantial contribution to reader-response (1988). In his preface to Response and Analysis, a handbook for teachers using reader-response techniques in

the classroom, Probst acknowledges the debt of current critical theory to Rosenblatt's idea that experience involves the student as a significant participant in the relationship between reader and text. Applying reader-response to the classroom, Probst credits the current excitement for developments in this area and the rediscovery of the reader's role to Rosenblatt's 1938 Literature as Exploration.

Probst finds Rosenblatt's shift of emphasis away from the New Critical approach is particularly important at the secondary level, where all readers, whether serious students of literature or not, are important in the learning environment. Probst elaborates on Rosenblatt's strong leadership in this direction and writes that such an approach to literature

> tries to see what it would mean to assume that literature must be personally significant, to respect the reader's responses to literary works, to insist that the reader accept responsibility for making sense of personal experiences, both literary and otherwise, and to acknowledge the influence of literature in shaping our conceptions of the world (1988, p. [vi])

Probst's work asserts that while examining the role of the reader, Rosenblatt also encourages the idea that knowledge is constructed rather than found and that the construction of knowledge is a verbal process (p. [vi]). To support the latter's position, Probst takes a look at current literary theory in the last chapter of his book and sketches a continuum from subjective criticism to structuralism. In contrast to Mailloux's continuum of psychological, intersubjective, and social

models, Probst's continuum probes the dialectical discussion of subjectivism versus objectivism, locating in subjectivism the complete authority of the reader and in structuralism the complete authority of the autonomous text.

In a short, eighteen-page chapter at the end of his text, Probst outlines the spectrum of literary criticism that justifies a reader-response approach to teaching. He notes briefly the extreme ends of the continuum first and then emphasizes the center of the continuum. He cites Rosenblatt again as "the best representative of modern response-based theory" and suggests that she is the spokesperson for a diverse group (p. 235). The binding espistemological assumption, according to Probst, for this variety of views is what Mailloux writes about the perceiver and the perceived: "the object of knowledge can never be separated from the knower; the perceived object can never be separated from perception by a perceiver" (p. 235).

Probst identifies this assumption as that aspect of reader-response criticism which makes it compatible with educational theory and makes it important for the teaching of literature in the classroom. The reader-response contribution is, then, that students are the center of teaching and the curriculum and must, therefore, be the primary focus when activities such as literary history or textual analysis are considered. Consequently, as the teaching effort in the classroom shifts from the object (text) to the perceiver of the object (reader or student), another shift occurs in classroom priorities and learning activities.

This is precisely what Dewey argues in Experience and Education (1938). He asserted long before Probst that in education the student's experience must be considered prior to objective conditions. The passage that begins this chapter suggests this idea clearly. Dewey argues that the trouble with traditional education is that students' needs and power are not given due consideration. According to Dewey, these "other factors" have been overlooked. He advocates returning to the experience of the student. His theory of transaction is a means of explaining experience as the interdependent relationship between student and the environment. The relationship depends on the principle of continuity and the principle of interaction. Above all, however, Dewey asserts that the experience of the student supersedes any other influence.

Likewise, Probst provides evidence for Rosenblatt's assertion that the experience of the reader (student) supersedes any other influence. Both share a philosophical perspective which emphasizes that the student is at the heart of learning. Probst's disagreement with Bleich over a difference in emphasis helps explain more clearly what is at stake. Probst believes that Bleich's Subjective Criticism argues for an entirely subjective interpretation of text devoid of any objectivity beyond the text's physical nature. Probst cites the debate between Bleich and Rosenblatt over who is essentially in control of the action that occurs when a text is read. Bleich says that the reader controls the entire reading and interpretation process. The reader responds to the text and his/her response is a resymbolization of the text; therefore, the

critical part of the process turns an object (text) into the subjective formulation (response). The reader, then, is solely in charge of the act of reading. By contrast, Probst maintains that for Rosenblatt, as for himself, the text also initiates action in that it directs and defines the limits of the responses that individuals can make to a given text. Rosenblatt suggests that a transaction between reader and text implies that control lies in the possibilities both reader and text bring to the act of reading.

Probst's disagreement with Bleich centers around an epistemological problem, namely, is the text a source of meaning or "only a stimulus to subjective meditation" (p. 239)? In the latter case, when individuals disagree about the meaning of a text, the text itself has no authority to determine meaning; rather, meaning is decided upon by the consensus of a group involved with making knowledge about a particular text. Even though Probst disagrees with Bleich's denying that the text and reader act in a sort of partnership to decide upon meaning, he credits Bleich's theory with inviting students to perform acts of interpretation rather than expecting the teacher to perform "miracles of interpretation" (p. 241). Also, Probst notes that Bleich's theoretical approach encourages students in the classroom to be reflective about themselves during the reading process and teaches students to learn to value themselves.

Thus, Probst contends that Bleich's subjective theoretical stance brings powerful tools to classroom practice. Subjective criticism focuses attention on the needs of the student; therefore, the curriculum

should reflect a student-driven learning environment that permits students to direct literature discussions. Probst complains, however, that the literature classroom will thereby be without a means to interpret the contributions of literature beyond subjective responses. And if teachers of literature need more structure than is available to them from Bleich's perspective, Probst argues that Rosenblatt can provide a balance.

In arguing against Bleich, Probst helps to clarify Rosenblatt's position in the center of a continuum that ranges from sole emphasis on the subject to sole emphasis on the text. Maintaining that literary criticism should emphasize the interplay between the two, he places Rosenblatt in a similar place as Dewey on the continuum. Their theoretical views are compatible because they both view the quality of experience in learning as the critical ingredient in the classroom. As Rosenblatt writes in her seminal text on reader-response, she intended Literature as Exploration to be "a philosophy for teachers who desire to help young people to gain the pleasures and the understanding that literature can yield" (1968, pp. xi-xii). Thus, this chapter which began with Dewey and his theory of experience ends with a connecting link to Rosenblatt who proposes an approach that is based on the experience in literature.

CHAPTER THREE

ROSENBLATT'S TRANSACTIONAL THEORY

Background on the Idea of Transaction

Introduction

In Chapter Three the aim is to take a closer look at the specific reader-response approach by Rosenblatt called *transactional theory*. An understanding of Rosenblatt's "transaction between the reader and the text" will clarify how she suggests that students can be put back in touch with literature. The examination of Rosenblatt's transactional theory is divided into three sections. They include the following discussions: a background on the idea of transaction, the distinguishing characteristics of transactional theory, and the limits of the transactional. Each of the three sections mark the various points that move the discussion from an analysis of her argument to the limits that her theory imposes on the experience.

First, the background on transaction begins with Rosenblatt's 1985 defense of the terms *transaction* and *transactional*. By taking a look at the historical roots of her terms, Rosenblatt establishes a relationship between Dewey's use of transaction and her own efforts to identify the transaction between the reader and the text as the heart of her theoretical views on experience. Rosenblatt suggests that the importance of the relationship between the subject (reader) and the object (text) is that they are distinguishable analytically but inseparable in living context. Therefore, what takes place between reader and the text is the focus of literary study and of classroom activities. Rosenblatt

argues also that because the transactional emphasizes an organic paradigm, it is not compatible with an interactive process based on a mechanistic paradigm.

Second, to understand Rosenblatt's organic paradigm in more detail, other terms that she uses to explain her theory will be examined. Rosenblatt makes significant distinctions between the *text*, the *poem* and the *reader*, and also between *efferent* and *aesthetic* reading. In explaining these terms her emphasis is on the participatory relationship of the reader with the text. Rosenblatt calls her methodology a "way of happening." Her sense of literature is that it is an event in which the reader crystallizes the images, thoughts, and feelings in memory (Rosenblatt, 1964, p. 126). She argues that literature as history, political interest, or genre may have a legitimate function, but these approaches are no substitute for the actual experience of a work of art (literature).

Rosenblatt's transactional theory calls for a change in methodology: an emphasis on experience or the literary experience as an event. Rosenblatt identifies the inadequacies of other educational theories that have distorted an emphasis on experience. Her example is Bruner's spiral curriculum. Rosenblatt notes that Bruner's progressive view of the curriculum encourages learning about literature without sufficient student input. She admonishes the literary critics, like Northrope Frye, who have applied what she calls "the basic pattern for spiraling complexity of analysis and classification" (p. 343). She argues that

learning comes about through the intuitive experience of the student with the text. The third section of this chapter deals with the limits of Rosenblatt's transactional theory. Although she emphasizes an organic process that includes the reader and the text, the circuit between the reader and the text is restricted by the verbal symbols that give intellectual and emotional meaning. Rosenblatt does take into account students' past experiences for participation in the literary event. However, the circuit that she describes is connected through verbal symbols. My thesis is that literary experience need not be expressed solely through verbal symbols but that for some students the transaction between reader and text can involve other meaningful symbol systems. Experience may also be well served by visual, musical, and physical responses to literature. Therefore, a student may perform not only through verbal symbols but through other symbols, such as visual, as well.

The basis for the transactional terminology

As recently as 1985 in "Viewpoints: Transaction Versus Interaction— A Terminological Rescue Operation" (Research in the Teaching of English), Rosenblatt defends her use of the terms *transaction* and *transactional* from increasingly frequent attempts to adopt her terminology for theoretical uses outside the field of literature. When defining her position within literary criticism, however, she also makes a clear distinction between herself and other theorists who, she maintains, have not kept both reader and text in focus. Examining

David Bleich's and Norman Holland's theories, for example, Rosenblatt finds that both critics have elaborated so much on the significance of the reader's personality that the text is no longer a crucial factor. Similarly, critics like Wolfgang Iser, who also use words suggesting a transactional process, are essentially interested in analyzing the text and finding that readers play a part only in so far as they fill in "gaps" (Rosenblatt 1985, 107). Such critics, according to Rosenblatt, are not subscribing to the position that the *transaction* is the making of meaning between text and reader, based upon an equal regard for both.

As a means of establishing what is specifically implied by the terms *transaction* and *transactional*, Rosenblatt traces the history of the terms in the above-mentioned article, as well as in two other sources written in the late sixties: The Reader, the Text, the Poem and "Towards a Transactional Theory of Reading." As she specifies in these and other works, the term *transaction* was developed by John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley, who in Knowing and the Known (1949) used it to differentiate between a *transaction* that describes an ongoing process in which aspects of a total situation condition each other and an *interaction* that is associated with a mechanistic model in which separate, self-contained entities act upon each other (Rosenblatt 1978, p. 17).

Even though Rosenblatt notes that it was Knowing and the Known that provided her with the specific workable transactional terminology (Rosenblatt 1978, p. xiv), she is quick to point out that Dewey had, in fact, written articles as early as 1896 in which he appeared to break

away from the mechanistic view with which the term *interaction* was associated (Rosenblatt 1985, p. 99). Moreover, she writes that the dynamics of the organic process known as *transactional* can be traced from Dewey even further back to the philosophical ideas of William James and Charles Sanders Peirce. Arthur Bentley describes the views he discovered in James as follows:

> For further study we differentiate between organism and environment, taking them in mutual interaction.
> We do not, however, take the organism and environment as if we could know about them separately in advance of our special inquiry, but we take their interaction itself as subject matter of study. We name this *transaction* to differentiate it from interaction. We inspect the thing-seen not as the operation of an organism upon an environment nor as the operation of an environment upon organism, but as itself as an event (Bentley 1954, p. 285)

Using these ideas, then, to counter the phrasing implied by the term *interaction*, Dewey and Bentley proposed the term *transaction* (Rosenblatt 1978, p. 17). Interaction suggested separate, self-contained entities acting on one another as do the balls in a game of billiards. Dewey and Bentley believed that the interplay between the individual and the environment were not to be examined separately but as equal participants in a situation such as a literary event.

This, then, according to Rosenblatt, is the background of *transaction*, a term that she adopted only in the later editions of

Literature as Exploration (in 1968, 1976, 1984) but that describes the literary theory that she had been developing since 1938. She states that her theory is opposed to dualistic separations, e.g., those advanced by Descartes and related to a mechanistic model. And she summons from the works of Dewey and Bentley a term that suggests an organic process emphasizing the interrelated elements working upon each other. As she writes in her earliest edition of Literature as Exploration, "throughout, I was concerned to reject such dualisms as form and content, social and esthetic, and to see them, though distinguishable analytically, as inseparable in their 'living context,' which required also recognition of a personal, social, and cultural matrix" (Rosenblatt 1985, p. 100).

Rosenblatt's brief historical background on the term *transaction* corroborates what Dewey himself wrote in Experience and Education. Although Rosenblatt credits Dewey and Bentley with developing the term in 1949 in Knowing and the Known, she notes that Dewey had established his criticism of the mechanistic view and the concept of interaction as the intersection between fixed entities much earlier. Clearly, in Experience and Education Dewey had moved away from the position of interaction. Although he uses the term *transaction* only once in the text, he argues for the organic quality of the environment and the individual rather than confirming them as fixed entities. As in Dewey's earlier writing, his argument throughout his 1938 text is on the continual state of flux of both the environment and the individual.

Implications of the transactional terminology

Aside from examining the background of the specific usage of *transaction*, various aspects of Rosenblatt's literary theory distinguish her position from that of others. To examine how involves finding out why, in her 1985 article, "Viewpoints," Rosenblatt felt compelled to rescue her terminology. Therefore, before discussing Rosenblatt's transactional theory, it may be beneficial to explain briefly what Rosenblatt finds so disturbing. Essentially, Rosenblatt argues that her views on transaction are not interchangeable with any of the following terms: interaction, the mechanistic paradigm, information processing, or schema theory.

First, as already pointed out on earlier in the section on the historical roots of the term *transaction*, Rosenblatt contends that her transactional theory is in opposition to the assumptions that support interaction. Interaction, as she emphatically notes, is associated with nineteenth-century ideas of phenomena based on the Newtonian paradigm and not on twentieth-century Einsteinian and subatomic developments that expose its limitations (1985, p. 97). Second, the mechanistic model which, as she believes, has driven behavioristic research and has undergirded dualistic Cartesian thinking suggests a relationship between the environment and the individual that is linear, separated into definable elements, and capable of identification by the action of one element upon the other. Rosenblatt's point is that another emerging paradigm based on more recent scientific developments by

scientists, such as Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg, and Thomas Kuhn, replaces the mechanistic model.

Third, the theory of transaction is not compatible with the concept of information processing because, in her view, this approach is still based on the mechanistic or electronic metaphor. Rosenblatt argues that such a view, no matter what kind of learning experience it defines and organizes, still demonstrates a mechanical rather than an organic process. Fourth, if schema and schemata are hypothesized as fixed entities rather than as fluid, nonlinear processes, they are in direct conflict with Rosenblatt's transactional theory. She maintains that research in literature needs to focus on the transactional framework, which is skeptical of static explanations based on fixed entities such as schemata. As Rosenblatt notes in her discussion regarding these obstacles,

> Instead of trying to plaster over the distinction between the dualistic, mechanistic, linear, interactional view, in which the text, on the one hand, and the personality of the reader, on the other, can be separately analyzed, with the impact of one on the other studied in a vacuum, we need to see the reading act as an event involving a particular individual and a particular text, happening at a particular time, under particular circumstances, in a particular social and cultural setting, and as part of the ongoing life of the individual and the group. We still can distinguish the elements, but as aspects or phases of a dynamic process, in which all elements

> take on their character as part of the organically interrelated situation. (Rosenblatt 1985, p. 100).

In this fashion, then, Rosenblatt finds the transactional emphasis on an organic paradigm incompatible with the interactive process based on a mechanistic paradigm. And as a result, she tries to rescue her terminology from those she considers to be misusing it in her field of criticism. Like Dewey, Rosenblatt is clearly interested in the fluid interaction between the environment and the individual in experience.

However, it must be noted that Rosenblatt's position on the above-mentioned theoretical questions is certainly debatable. For example, Constance Weaver who argued for the connection between Rosenblatt's transactional theory and scientific parallels notes that some cognitive psychologists such as F. C. Bartlett, Ulric Neisser, and Iran-Nejad and Ortony argue that schemata are transitory (1985, p. 306). As Bartlett writes, "The schemata are, we are told, living, constantly developing, affected by every bit of incoming sensational experience of a given kind (1932, p. 200). And as Neisser adds, cognitive schema is "a momentary state of the perceiver's nervous system (1976, p. 181).

Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels would remind readers and certainly Rosenblatt—who might indeed not be offended by their criticism—that theory should not be separated from practice. As they write,

> The theoretical impulse . . . always involves the attempt to separate things that should not be separated: on the ontological side, meaning from intention, language from

> speech acts; on the epistemological side, knowledge from true belief. Our point has been that the separated terms are in fact inseparable. It is tempting to end by saying that theory and practice too are inseparable. But this would be a mistake. Not because theory and practice (unlike the other terms) really are separate but because theory is nothing else but the attempt to escape practice. Meaning is just another name for expressed intention, knowledge just another name for true belief, but theory is not just another name for practice. It is the name for all the ways people have tried to stand outside practice in order to govern practice from without (Knapp and Michaels 1982, p. 742).

Rosenblatt, as one who criticizes the mechanistic model for its dualistic categories, needs to be questioned about her own theory, which also stands outside practice and lashes out against other theorists. To her credit, however, it may be argued that while publishing books and articles on reading and the purpose of literature, Rosenblatt has tried to avoid lengthy theoretical discussions. Therefore, while admitting that some of the issues that Rosenblatt raises are open for debate, the next step, if discussion is to continue, must be to develop the concepts that contribute to distinguishing the crucial elements in Rosenblatt's particular understanding. Thus Rosenblatt's ideas on the reader, text, and poem, will be examined, and the active, organic transactional process will be described.

Distinguishing Characteristics of Transactional Theory

The distinction between a text and a poem and the reader

To begin, Rosenblatt makes an important distinction between the terms *text* and *poem*. For her, the text is first "a stimulus activating elements of the reader's past experience—his/her experience with literature and life." Second, the text is a guide and serves as a "control" for reworking and ordering what is brought to the reader's conscious attention (Rosenblatt 1964, p. 126). Thus, as Rosenblatt notes in The Reader, the Text, the Poem, the text is a set or series of signs that can be interpreted as linguistic symbols and not merely inked marks on the page (p. 12). As a catalyst, the text charges readers' past experiences but also shapes the eventual structuring of the event which she calls *reading* .

In contrast to the text, described as an activating source of linguistically interpretable symbols, Rosenblatt defines the poem as the *event* from which the reader, under the guidance of the text, crystallizes the images, thoughts, and feelings in memory (Rosenblatt 1964, p. 126). The poem, then, as an event in time, is the interconnection of the reader's experience with the text. Again, as Rosenblatt defines the poem in The Reader, the Text the Poem, the poem or literary work is not an object but indeed the event or experience itself. In order to clarify the distinctions between her terms, she draws an analogy between a text and a musical score: the reader makes a poem from the text just as a performer makes music

from the score (Rosenblatt,1978). Thus, one of her primary concerns is for the literary experience in which the reader's engagement with the text becomes a poem.

The reader, the other important part of the "live circuit" between text and reader, is described in first chapter of The Reader, the Text, and the Poem. Rosenblatt laments the lack of attention paid to the reader, whom she finds to be as invisible as Ralph Ellison's hero in The Invisible Man. This invisible hero is comparable to the reader who has over the years been a mere shadow of the emphasis on the text (Rosenblatt 1978, p. 1). Although she acknowledges that the reader has been given more recent exposure, references to collective groups, such as "the audience" and "the reading public," still do not cast the reader in the central role of the reading process. Denouncing, therefore, both the New Critics and their emphasis on the text and the Freudians and their glorified subjectivism, Rosenblatt advocates in this book, as in all of her publications, finding the middle ground between these extremes.

The distinction between *efferent* and *aesthetic* reading

Due to her theoretical view of the literary experience as an event, Rosenblatt uses a special vocabulary to help describe the reader's involvement in the reading process. This vocabulary includes the terms *efferent* and *aesthetic* reading, which are defined in chapter three of The Reader, the Text, the Poem. The first, *efferent*, comes from the Latin *efferre*, which means "to carry away" (p. 24). She maintains that the reader's concern in efferent reading is for what can be taken away

from the reading: the information attained and that which is useful to reader. For example, as a reader reads a recipe or newspaper, the concepts, ideas, and knowledge are most important. The emphasis for Rosenblatt is on what is advantageous to the reader's actions after reading. Therefore, such a reading process is described as efferent.

Aesthetic reading, in contrast, finds the reader engaged with the experience of the reading itself. What happens during the actual reading event is what counts (p. 24). Thus, the significance of aesthetic reading is that when the reader reads a novel or poem, the reader is primarily concerned with the interrelationship of the text and him/herself. As Rosenblatt argues, "the aesthetic stance heightens awareness of the words as signs with particular visual and auditory characteristics *and* as symbols. What is lived through is felt constantly to be linked with the stimulus of the words" (p. 29).

Essentially, then, Rosenblatt makes distinctions that can be understood as locations on a spectrum which depict the reading experience as efferent at one end and aesthetic at the other. The discriminating factor is the actual physical activity in which the reader engages. Arguing in The Reader, the Text, the Poem (pp.43-46) that the reader's selective attention is the critical concept, Rosenblatt expands upon the use of her terms in "Viewpoints." She notes the difference is that the efferent reader concentrates on "public meaning, abstracting what is to be retained after the reading," while the aesthetic reader focuses on what is lived through in terms of his own cognitive and affective experience (p. 102).

The active and organic process between reader and text

While noting that these distinctions are indeed important to understanding Rosenblatt's transactional theory, the primary concern of this overall discussion on Rosenblatt's transactional theory is describing the reciprocal relationship that Rosenblatt advocates, which is both an active and an organic process between the reader and the text. The "active" process is described by Rosenblatt, for example, in responses that she drew from a group of men and women who were asked to write down ideas on Robert Frost's quatrain, "It Bids Pretty Fair" (Rosenblatt 1969a, pp. 31-33). Rosenblatt compares their comments to the slow-motion effect in pictures of "stills." An example of a still reads as follows, " Sounds as if it [in reference to who is speaking] could be producer of a play giving encouragement to backers. . . I just got another idea: First line--the world will always be here. Second line—there will always be fighting. We shouldn't worry too much about it. Third line—worries about H-bomb" (p. 34).

As she notes, the range of commentary describing many different responses indicates that a reader is participating and that he/she is active. Of the reader, she writes, "he is not a blank tape registering a ready-made message. He is actively involved in building up a poem for himself out of the lines" (p. 34). The active condition is demonstrated by the participant selecting various referents in response to what occurs to him/her. Of these readers, then, Rosenblatt concludes that

> whatever the model, the reading of the poem is not a simple stimulus-response situation. There was not a simple additive process, one word-meaning added to another. There was an active, trial and error, tentative structuring of the responses elicited by the text, the building up of a context which was modified or rejected as more and more of the text was deciphered (p. 37).

Besides emphasizing the active reader as defined by Rosenblatt's transactional theory, the organic relationship between reader and text needs to be examined because it identifies her sense of the inseparability of the reading event into discrete parts. Rosenblatt finds it difficult to try to answer whether the reader interprets the text or the text produces a response in the reader. This standard phrasing, she argues, limits the dynamic nature of the reading event and pushes the discussion into an argument over which of these elements (reader or text) acts on the other. Her position is that this is not the appropriate focus of the debate because the reader and the text are not in a linear relationship. They make up "a situation, an event at a particular time and place in which each element conditions the other" (p. 43). In fact, as she notes," each of these phrasings, because it implies a single line of action by one separate element on another separate element, distorts the actual reading process (p. 43). For Rosenblatt, the reading process, as an organic process, is the living through of the stimulus of words by the reader.

A Way of Happening

Rosenblatt elaborates on the active participation of the reader in an article describing what she means by the term *literature*: the live circuit between reader and text (1969b). Called "A Way of Happening," Rosenblatt credits W. H. Auden with providing her with the title of her article. In his elegy on William Butler Yeats, Auden describes the essential quality of poetry as "a way of happening." This is not to be confused with the idea that poetry—or literature, as Rosenblatt observes—makes something happen; rather, the emphasis is on the idea that poetry is a participant in something happening. As Rosenblatt explains "the poem is a happening, an event, because of the participation of the reader or listener. The reader makes the poem happen by calling it forth from the text" (p. 340).

Expanding on the idea that literature is "a way of happening" Rosenblatt distinguishes between poetry as a particular way of happening and informational, expository, and argumentative writings, a point already made clear in the distinction between efferent and aesthetic reading. Her view is that informational, expository, and argumentative writings may be seen as tools or instruments that help accomplish a specific purpose. Reading informational writing, for example, involves the reader's focus on the outcome and a paraphrase may even be a useful substitute. In contrast, poetry is not the means to such ends but instead a happening. It is a unique experience that no one can participate in but ourselves. As Rosenblatt writes, "no one can

read a poem for us." A summary will not duplicate the exact same event, just as no one else can eat our dinner for us (p. 340).

Rosenblatt believes that the emphasis on active participation also distinguishes her methodology from other approaches in the classroom and other schools of critical theory that have dominated the second half of the twentieth century. These she identifies as the following approaches: the didactic and moralistic approach, the literary work as documentable history and biography, the literary work as reflecting political, social, and economic interests, the literary work as psychological study, the literary work as having literal meanings, the literary work as an example of specific genres, and the literary work as having thematic or analytical features. Each of these approaches Rosenblatt agrees may have a legitimate function in the teaching of literature but they are no substitute for the actual experience of the poem as a work of art (1969b, p. 340). For Rosenblatt, the actual *active participation* of the reader is the critical component of the literary experience and, therefore, should be the focus of the teacher. As she writes, "the task of teachers of literature is to foster this particular 'way of happening,' this mode of perceptive and personal response to words, this self-awareness in relation to a text" (p. 341).

Rosenblatt's debate with Bruner's spiral curriculum

In an effort to examine *active participation* as part of the methodology applied by teachers in classrooms even more closely, Rosenblatt describes why she rejects, in part, Jerome Bruner's notion of

the spiral curriculum. His spiral, she notes, conceived as the structuring of concepts around theoretical or intellectual concepts at increasingly complex levels, is based on his expressed assumption that the basic ideas of any discipline can be taught to any child at any level. Bruner's approach, according to Rosenblatt, has suggested to many literature teachers that the structuring concepts should be subjects, themes, and patterns that are based on types (genres) or methods that can be analyzed (1969b, p. 342). For example, the subjects may be divided by genres like poetry and nonfiction or the subjects may be organized by critical methods such as structuralism or subjectivism. Rosenblatt argues that for the field of literature there are no generally agreed-upon basic concepts and Bruner's idea has been interpreted to be "a progression based on concepts and information *about* literature apart from readers" (p. 343).

Furthermore, Rosenblatt notes that Bruner himself warned against overlooking the differences between literature and the sciences and offered only tentative applications to literature, e.g., comments on Moby Dick (p. 343). Her point is that Bruner's use of specific terms, e.g., *idea, principle,* or *basic* concept, is not transferable to literary studies without ample qualification. Noting that Bruner's "few warnings" have not been attended to, Rosenblatt attacks the New Critics and Northrope Frye for influencing literature programs to adopt "the basic pattern for spiraling complexity of analysis and classification" (p. 343).

Rather than asserting that the structure or sequence of theoretical concepts should be provided by analyzing literary works, Rosenblatt

argues vigorously that "the literature program should be seen primarily as a structure of modes of linguistic and literary experience" (p. 344). Therefore, experience should precede analysis. For example, prior to presenting the concept of satire, Rosenblatt notes that satire should be experienced first. The experience is a complex operation that focuses attention on ideas and emotional attitudes and is not only made up of operations including analysis and reason.

Denying that an analytical approach to structure or sequence of theoretical concepts should take precedence over experience, Rosenblatt suggests that a principle upon which literature studies should be built includes "intuitive acquisition of literary habits and literary insights" (Rosenblatt 1969b, p. 344). She compares this intuitive acquisition to the learning of language and her emphasis appears to be on the natural process of language development acquired through events and relationships in the environment. She explains the experiential learning process in the following manner:

> For the youth as for the young child, there should be a continuing reinforcement of habits of sensitive and responsible organization of literary experiences. The sequence to be generated in a literary program is thus a sequence of more and more complete, more and more sensitive, more and more complex experiences (p. 344).

Following up on her assertion that the experience is the basis of the literature curriculum, Rosenblatt in this context attacks the New Critics, who have been occupied with criticism of the literary work.

They have formulated, defined, labeled, analyzed, and evaluated the art object. In comparison, she suggests that "the sensitive intuitive experience in relation to the text" should be the object of criticism (p. 345).

Concluding her discussion of literature as "a way of happening," Rosenblatt argues that the literary experience should be an active process that is probably inductive in its acquisition and that is also a life activity. Noting that curriculum should be centered around the experiences of the child, teachers need to offer students works that can incorporate their preoccupations and linguistic experiences. Her attack on Bruner's spiral curriculum is motivated by her belief, like Dewey's, that the experience of the student has a higher priority than the "outside conditions" that traditional education tends to favor. Also like Dewey, Rosenblatt acknowledges the critical importance of the principle of continuity which states that what students bring to the literary engagement determines the fruitfulness of the experience.

Limits of the Transactional

As noted in the previous discussion, Rosenblatt is interested in the active and organic relationship between the reader and the text and she invests her efforts in establishing the reading event or the reading experience as the focal point of her theoretical position. The most important aspect in relation to students' literary experience is the event or "the way of happening." What is noteworthy in examining

Rosenblatt's frequent descriptions of the event is the emphasis on the personal nature of the transaction, on the social context in which the transaction takes place, and on the fluid, continually changing relation between the subject and literary text during the transaction. As has also been pointed out, there is a great similarity between her approach and that advocated by Dewey. Both argue for an organic process that describes the relationship between the environment and the individual and both prefer to think of this relationship as a transaction between what is outside and within the individual. Therefore they conclude that solving the problem of out how to put the individual back in touch with the art object (the literary text) implies returning her/his attention to experience.

In short, Rosenblatt's theory provides a means of understanding an interpretive position that seeks to rely equally on what the reader brings to the reading process as well as on what the text offers, but as previously noted, even this theory cannot escape criticism for trying "to govern practice from without." Notably absent is any attention to a transactional process that can be anything else but verbal. In describing the process Rosenblatt writes, "the literary work exists in the live circuit set up between reader and text: the reader infuses intellectual and emotional meanings into the pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel his thought and feelings" (1968, p. 25).

At the classroom level, however, what is to be made of the student who feels confined or limited by the verbal symbol system and thus cannot project meaning from the reading? It is conceivable that for

some students the transaction between text and reader involves other equally meaningful symbol systems and that intellectual, emotional, and active processes are also well served by visual, musical, and physical responses to literature. Assuming with Rosenblatt that the purpose of teaching literature is to help students "learn to perform in response to text" (1968, p. 280), her transactional theory and its practical application in the classroom should be extended and used to encourage students to utilize their past creative experiences in music, painting, sculpture, drama, and dance.

Therefore, my examination of the limitation of Rosenblatt's transaction between the reader and the text argues against using only verbal symbols for a response and argues for accepting the transformation of a response into other symbols. What students experience when they participate in a literary event need not be described solely in verbal terms. The visually-oriented can use lines and colors, the musically-inclined can integrate sounds, and the physically-talented student can introduce dance. The remaining discussion will open up Rosenblatt's framing of the verbal response process to include visual responses (primarily, in Chapters Five and Six).

The idea of involving the visual arts in a discussion of literature is not a new phenomenon. Teachers in the field of English literature may comment immediately that this topic has already received considerable attention by some teachers and may name specific innovators in this area. For example, Thomas Moore and Joseph Reynolds in "Poems and paintings: the writer's view" write of encouraging students to notice

how one work of art inspires another (1985). Students may interpret the relationship between Marcel Duchamp's and X. J. Kennedy's *Nude Descending a Staircase*; Vincent VanGogh's and Anne Sexton's *The Starry Night*; and Marc Chagall's *Equestrienne* and Lawrence Ferlinghetti's *Don't let that horse.*

Another example is elaborated upon in "Visual response to American literature" by Marg Reeg (1986). Reeg offers her students an independent study unit in which they may respond to a piece of American literature through a visual project. Students of all ability levels in art are involved and individual contracts are drawn up that describe the students' projects. Their interpretations include collages, photographs, and a variety of other two-and three-dimensional projects. Among the topics they have illustrated are Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird, and Willa Cather's short story "Paul's Case."

Yet another example is found in "The Natural: The English Teacher as Humanities Teacher" by Brooke Workman (1985). Workman describes projects that are completed as part of an experiment with a course entitled American Humanities. One of four projects that she describes is a series of Abstract Expressionist artworks painted by a student in the style of Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, Josef Albers, Willen de Kooning, and Jackson Pollock. A series of student lectures on each artist also accompanied the paintings.

By considering these examples and others, one can only agree that literature and the visual arts have been wed on some occasions in

lecture halls, seminar rooms, and around coffee tables. What may be unprecedented, however, is that the visual arts be incorporated as *part* of a reader-response approach available to teachers in the classroom. Thus, instead of translating a response to literature only into verbal symbols, it is possible to incorporate a visual symbolization process as well. Now the visual artifact and/or visual symbol process may be an alternative response that is not verbal, but acceptable as a means of demonstrating a literary experience.

While using examples to guide or to instruct interpretive strategies in lectures comparing texts with visual artifacts have been commonplace—as for the purpose of comparing historical concerns of a particular period—the idea of visual symbolization as a legitimate response to one's reading of a text certainly has not. Also, while the interpretation of texts identifying particular styles or schools such as impressionism and expressionism have perhaps been incorporated into lectures that make comparisons to the visual arts, the idea of the visual symbolization process as a practical application of one's understanding about such a style or school has not generally been considered to be an appropriate demonstration of one's ability to discern specific identifiable characteristics in literature.

Thus, while the visual arts have entered into many literary conversations through the discussion of visual artifacts that have helped illustrate connections, the visual symbolization process as a response has not been accepted on equal terms with the verbal response. Traditionally, the relationships with the visual arts in the English

classroom have had to be translatable into verbal symbols. Students who could not state their opinion in words, either written or oral, were considered to be deficient in understanding. Presumably they failed to impress the teacher with competencies that could be recognized, valued, and evaluated. How many students did such a system spurn and label unteachable?

Of course, one might reply, "Well, as a teacher of literature, Rosenblatt and other reader-response critics should obviously be concerned with the verbal symbol system." Chapter Four of this discussion is based on the position that it is not self-evident that a transaction between reader and text should culminate only in verbal symbols. While not underestimating the natural concern most English teachers have with encouraging verbal literacy, the following chapter will demonstrate that the emphasis on solely verbal symbols limits the full potential of the transaction process. Arguing that the transaction between the reader and the text includes what the individual brings to the literary experience as well as what is brought by the text, Rosenblatt limits the literary experience by speaking of only verbal responses to literature.

When we refer to Dewey's principle of continuity in Experience and Education, which emphasizes that "every experience enacted and undergone modifies . . . the quality of subsequent experiences," the educational philosopher makes the point that this principle "covers all the conditions that we meet in living" (p. 35). Therefore, it follows that all experiences, whatever they may be, also effect the literary

transaction that Rosenblatt describes. Consequently, the literary event, which Rosenblatt limits to a verbal one, is open to many experiences that may effect its "way of happening." Presumably, students will bring their past experiences in music, visual art, and dance, to the transaction that takes place with the student and the literary text.

CHAPTER FOUR EXPANDING THE RESPONSE

Multiple Aspects of Experience

Introduction

Chapter Four presents evidence that a broader interpretation of Rosenblatt's definition of experience is needed to include all of the conditions that Dewey argues impact on the individual. As Rosenblatt's transactional theory limits experience in literature to what can be expressed verbally, various examples in other disciplines will be presented to argue that a literary response may include visual, as well as other symbol systems, to describe experience. The various realities that are involved in experience will include discussions from the areas of psychology, aesthetics, pedagogy, and mathematics.

Chapter Four will begin with a section on Rosenblatt who resticts students' literary responses to verbal symbols. In this introductory part, Rosenblatt's transactional theory will be briefly reviewed in order to establish the connection between Rosenblatt's interpretation of experience and Dewey's principle of continuity. His principle identifies that a full range of experiences past and present are involved in the transaction between the subject and the environment. For Rosenblatt, the literary response and the performing of a literary work of art is verbal. Once the limitation in Rosenblatt's theory has been identified, the plurality that exists in perception will be described by using William James' interpretation of "sub-universes." His perspective will allow for

an expansion of the narrow verbal interpretation of experience that Rosenblatt's transactional theory presents.

The next section of this chapter centers on the discussion presented by the individuals in other fields who reveal that different realities require various cognitive learning styles and that these styles may involve various symbol systems. Howard Gardner maintains that the human mind is made up of multiple intelligences that are dependent upon the particular needs of individuals living in a specific cultural context. Virginia Woolf identifies multiple biographies and the multiple aspects of time as the manifestation of various realities that persist in the world of human experience. Maxine Greene focuses on multiple realities that make up the learning landscape: the different cultural worlds, the different individual biographies, and the different cognitive styles. The transaction in her larger context implies that the relationship between subject and object can include many forms of experience. Seymour Papert explores the possibility for multiple realities through a variety of objects-to-think-with. The concluding remarks relate the multiple realities of experience with teachers and students who can use "a full range of conditions" to increase their capacity for understanding literature.

Rosenblatt's limiting literary experience

Rosenblatt's 1985 article expressed indignation with interpretations of the word *transaction* in her own and other

disciplines that muddied her theoretical position and its specific intentions, based on the earlier idea of transaction as defined by Dewey and Bentley. Rosenblatt purposely clarifies the historical significance of the term *transaction* to refocus attention on the importance of experience in literature and the dynamic relationship between reader and text. Her distinctions, drawn between *efferent* and *aesthetic* reading and between *text* and *poem*, mark the crucial connection between the literary experience as an event and the personal response that engages the reader in activity.

Her most poignant criticism is that in the midst of interpretive theories that are based primarily on analysis and reason, the actual event that precipitated the initial inquiries has been neglected. As an example, she cites Jerome Bruner's spiral curriculum which emphasizes the structuring of basic concepts over what she calls "modes of linguistic and literary experience." What Rosenblatt teaches is that while many theoretical positions may enhance knowledge *about* a piece of literature, if one doesn't have the individual (reader) actively engaged in the performance (reading), the event is static. Careful analysis and clarification may be important, but many students are lost to the demands made by teachers for analysis before experience. Rosenblatt emphasizes that the energy of teachers should be concentrated on the personal engagement of readers (students) in the reading event. Theories aside, she argues that if the event is not

entertaining and meaningful, the students won't find the experience fruitful.

Teachers must help students create the moment-by-moment development of significance and understanding. Dewey supports this very concept with his principle of continuity. As he was quoted in Chapter Two of this overall argument, the critical quality of experience depends upon how experience effects later experience (p. 28). The principle of continuity is identified with that continually transforming aspect of experience which integrates the past with present experience. Therefore, what students bring to the literary event is of critical value. Rosenblatt makes this point in Chapter Three of Literature as Exploration when she argues that it is ridiculous for children whose past experiences have been conditioned by the village life and native culture of an Indian reservation to be expected to understand a Restoration play in English class (p. 57).

Rosenblatt continues to persuade teachers that students' past experiences are vital to the teaching and learning process in the following chapter of the same text. Her Chapter Four is devoted entirely to presenting evidence that the relationship between the past and present experience (Dewey's principle of continuity) must be encouraged among practicing teachers. Rosenblatt's quotation identifies her position clearly:

> Since he [the student] interprets the book or poem in terms of his fund of past experiences, it is equally possible and

> necessary that he come to reinterpret his old sense of things in the light of this new literary experience, in light of the new ways of thinking and feeling offered by the work of art. Only when this happens has there been a full interplay between book and reader, and hence a complete and rewarding literary experience" (p. 107).

The limitation of Rosenblatt's transactional theory, however, as suggested at the end of Chapter Three above is that she restricts students' literary responses to verbal symbols. The literary experience, in Rosenblatt's terms, is described as a transaction involving a live connection between the reader, who injects intellectual and affective meanings into verbal symbols, and the text, which guides his/her thoughts and feelings. If students' past experiences involve "all the conditions that we meet in living," as Dewey would argue, then limiting students in such a way restricts the continuity of their past experiences with what they can experience in class (1938, p. 35). Students can argue that the limitation to verbal symbols neglects other possible symbols that they use and experience. For example, students studying a poem by the German poet, Rilke, may experience it by hearing music or visualizing a dance. These other symbols, e.g., musical sounds or physical movements, may focus their attention or, at least, may be involved in the interpretation process. Therefore, diverse interpretations in other sets of symbols may describe the same event for students.

To examine these possibilites, we might turn first to William James, an empirical psychologist who argued that plurality is present in the perception of everyday reality. In The Principles of Psychology, Vol. II, James writes that there are various orders of reality. He calls them "sub-universes" and describes each as having its own unique style of existence. The various orders include the world of physical things, the world of science, the world of abstract truth, the world of the supernatural, and others. In most people's minds, according to James, there is no clearly defined relationship of one world to another, only that when attention is devoted to one particular world the others tend to be neglected. Each world is real only when it is attended to and its reality wanes with lack of attention (1981, p. 923). James maintains that the nucleus of the reality in the world is to be found in the "things of the sense." Therefore, the world of ultimate realities is, for him, constructed by the *dominant habits of attention* of individual thinkers using their senses.

The German sociologist Alfred Schutz studied the "sub-universes" that James described and notes that they are in essence "provinces of meaning" which can be explained as a certain set of experiences that include a specific cognitive style (1962, p. 230). The specific cognitive styles are uniquely attached to the "provinces of meaning." As Schutz writes, " To the cognitive style peculiar to each of these different provinces of meaning belongs, thus, a specific tension of consciousness and, consequently, also a specific *epoch*, a prevalent form of

spontaneity, a specific form of self-experience, a specific form of sociality, and a specific time perspective" (p. 232). Moreover, as noted by Maxine Greene, who also discusses these "provinces of meaning," each one of the provinces, whether they are literature, science, or music, consists of a set of experiences that will be interpreted with a characteristic cognitive style (1978, p. 16).

The relevant issue here is that some thinkers, researchers, and educators believe that there are a variety of realities ("provinces of meaning") in which students may be engaged and that these realities should be a focus of the learning process. In the examples that follow, Gardner, Woolf, Greene, and Papert all make the case that because they perceive the existence of a variety of realities, their theoretical positions also reflect this orientation in their respective fields of study. For Gardner multiple realities suggest multiple factors of intelligence; for Woolf they suggest the possibility of multiple biographies and multiple interpretations of time; for Greene they suggest multiple cultural environments that effect learning; and for Papert they suggest the multiple functions of a single object-to-think-with.

Examples to Support Multiple Interpretations of the Response

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence

While James argues for various forms of reality, among which he personally finds the world of the senses most persuasive, Howard

Gardner finds his empirical work suggests that intelligence reflects a pluralistic vision. He suggests that a potentially multidimensional approach to intelligence may lead to new ways to identify and evaluate various forms of intelligence. In Frames of Mind, he writes "that there is persuasive evidence for the existence of several relatively autonomous human intellectual competences. . ." (1983, p. 8). Gardner's position is that there are different worlds for which humans have specific innate abilities and that these "frames," as he calls them, are descriptive of multiple realities.

Gardner's first chapter on multiple intelligences begins with an analogy from ancient Greek literature. He borrows a distinction made by the poet Archilochus regarding the difference between hedgehogs and foxes (p. 7). Comparing the intelligence testing of Charles Spearman to the hedgehogs and L. L. Thurston's testing to the foxes, Gardner describes a major issue dividing researchers today regarding the testing of human intelligence testing: general intelligence versus factoral intelligence. Gardner, a fox, advocates that multiple factors govern human understanding; his opposition, the hedgehogs, maintain that a single form of intelligence describes the capabilities of the mind.

As a cognitive and developmental psychologist, Gardner's primary interest is in the biological and evolutionary basis of cognition. His focus on logical and/or linguistic problem solving, which builds somewhat upon Piaget and the information processing approach, emphasizes a "full range of symbol systems encompassing musical, bodily, spatial, and

even personal symbol systems" (p. 26). Gardner favors what he calls a symbol systems approach, one supported by the work of individuals such as David Feldman, David Olson, and Gavriel Salomon in the field of psychology. This approach is also supported by thinkers such as Ernst Cassirer, Susanne Langer, and Alfred North Whitehead in other fields (p. 25). The essential commonality among these researchers, Gardner argues, is the concern for the "various symbolic vehicles" with which human beings operate. Throughout Frames Of Mind, his point is that multiple intelligence is not a fact; rather, given the recent work of individuals such as those mentioned above and the new scientific paradigms that are reaching maturity in the twentieth century, multiple intelligence theories can more adequately explain what is known about human capabilities. As he notes,

> It is at least an open question, an empirical issue, whether operation of one symbol system such as language involves the same abilities and processes as such cognate systems as music, gesture, mathematics, or pictures. It is equally open whether information encountered in one medium (say, film) is the "same" information when transmitted by another medium (say, books) (p. 25).

Dividing intelligence up into seven categories (linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, plus inter-and intra-personal), Gardner explains these multiple factors of intelligence more specifically in Chapters Five to Ten. Looking more closely at the areas

of intelligence with which the investigation of an alternative approach to literature is concerned, Gardner would perhaps suggest that a differentiation between linguistic, spatial, and interpersonal intelligence would be especially useful. Individual students, he would maintain, vary in their abilities to use language, define space, and understand themselves in relationship to others. As a result, their specific intelligence in one or more of these areas may vary considerably.

In Chapter Thirteen, where Gardner applies his theory to the education of intelligences, he continues a narrative begun in the first chapter about three youths from different cultural environments during sequential stages of development: a Puluwat youth with extraordinary navigational skills, identified by his spatial intelligence; an Islamic youth with unique memorizing potential, identified by his linguistic intelligence; and a Parisian adolescent with computer literacy applied to music, identified by his logical-mathematical and musical intelligence (p. 331). Gardner's argument is that the prototypical learner of the nonliterate society, the learner of the traditional religious community, and the learner of the modern secularist society each values a different type of intelligence, one which is promoted in the teaching and learning situation, because their respective societies depend on different types of knowledge.

Specifically, Gardner notes that the nonliterate society benefits from interpersonal knowledge (particularly of spatial and bodily forms) that is passed down through practical communication by certain gifted

individuals within that society. The more literate, religiously-oriented community promotes linguistic knowledge that is aimed at the interpersonal but that also demonstrates significant abilities through logical-mathematical knowledge. Finally, the more recent secular community emphasizes logical-mathematical and linguistic competencies and values interpersonal knowledge much less than either the nonliterate or literate, religiously-oriented communities do. Thus, Gardner argues that education today "can be more properly carried out if it is tailored to the abilities and the needs of the particular individual involved" (p. 385). Just how Gardner proposes this is to be accomplished is only briefly considered in his text. (As an aside, the last chapter of this study will sketch some possible pedagogical techniques available to teachers interested in multiple intelligences and realities).

The significance of Gardner's argument for this discussion is that his theory of multiple intelligences acknowledges the variety of symbol systems that the human mind can use in understanding distinctly different perceptions of reality. The implication for the line of thinking being developed here is that teachers need to encourage students' experiences in various intellectual areas. Teaching strategies based, for example, on the subdivision into math and verbal abilities are not subtle enough to flesh out the unique characteristics that enable students to succeed in a variety of other cultural environments and/or disciplines. Moreover, an emphasis on linear thinking limits the development of

other intelligence factors currently considered less significant in this society. As Gardner argues, the limitation of specific intelligences is the case whether considering the spatial abilities of some cultures or the musical and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences in our own culture.

Virginia Woolf and multiple biographies

On the aesthetic and creative level, a second example emphasizing multiple perception can be found in Virginia Woolf's Orlando. Orlando, the protagonist, is the portrait of a character whose life spans three centuries and who changes from hero to heroine. In effect, to tell this story many short vignettes have been woven together to create a collection of multiple biographies about a single individual. As Woolf so aptly depicts Orlando's multiple selves, she notes with regret, "Nothing is any longer one thing. I take up a handbag and I think of an old bumboat woman frozen in the ice. Someone lights a pink candle and I see a girl in Russian trousers. When I step out doors--as I do now. . . I hear goat bells" (1956, p. 305).

The problem for Orlando, and clearly one for Woolf, who is aware of her own complex personality, is that the calling up of these different selves is a fragile enterprise. As she notes,

> these selves of which we are built up, one on top of another, as plates are piled on a waiter's hand, have attachments elsewhere, sympathies, little constitutions and rights of their own, call them what you will (and for many of these things

> there is not name) so that one will only come if it is raining, another in a room with green curtains, another when Mrs. Jones is not there, another if you can promise it a glass of wine--and so on; for everybody can multiply from his own experience the different terms which his different selves have made with him. . . (p. 308).

As Woolf speaks in this passage of Orlando's multiple selves, which are indeed fragile manifestations of different realities, she argues that the genre, known as biography, is painfully limited to exposing only a few of the realities present in the human experience. While the typical biography may have six or seven selves, for Woolf, a biography may have as many as a thousand or more personalities to reveal. Her view is clearly that many more possibilities should be explored.

Another dimension of the multiple realities that can be experienced, according to Woolf, is included in her descriptive interpretations of time. In a short exposition of the unique relationship of time to various forms of personal biography, Woolf writes the following lines, "For if there are (at a venture) seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once, how many different people are there not—Heaven help us—all having lodgment at one time or another in the human spirit. Some say two thousand and fifty-two" (p. 308). Again, while acknowledging the multiple possibilities in the perception of time, Woolf emphasizes with what difficulty they are all harnessed into an integrated understanding of the self. She writes,

> And indeed, it cannot be denied that the most successful practitioners of the art of life, often unknown people by the way, somehow contrive to synchronize the sixty or seventy different times which beat simultaneously in every normal human system so that when eleven strikes, all the rest chime in unison, and the present is neither a violent disruption nor completely forgotten in the past (p. 305).

Woolf's point is perhaps first that time ticks differently for the different people inside us and is extremely difficult to coordinate, as her reference to the symbolic eleven o'clock suggests. Second, as she notes in another passage, the different concepts of time are also confusing when personal social interactions are examined. For, as she writes, existence may appear as if it is already dead for some, others seem not to be born, and still others are hundreds of years old when really thirty-six. However, whatever disparity Woolf may find in the various interpretations of human experience, time is most importantly, as she says, "always a matter of dispute" (p. 306). Time cannot be measured in absolute terms that simplifies life into a space that is two-dimensional. Time also cannot be defined as a construction of moments that are strictly linear. Instead, as Woolf persists, time creates the sensation that many different clocks are ticking differently within us, and differently around us, and that time and space, as Einstein argues, are relative.

Maxine Greene's multiple realities in our culture

A third example, supporting the importance of multiple realities, can be found in Learning Landscapes by the educational philosopher, Maxine Greene. In the preface to her book, Greene writes that the purpose of her book is to "draw attention to the multiple realities of our culture in such a way as to arouse readers to pose critical questions of their own" (1978, p. 2). Using, among others, William James, Alfred Schutz, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to suggest various philosophers and thinkers who have elaborated on the significance of multiple realities, Greene intersperses her essays with examples as to how ideas on this subject of multiple realities affect individuals in our various cultures and how education can make use of this material to influence learning. Greene is particularly interested in the kinds of learning which involve a process of reflecting upon experiences and a process of making new connections through experience.

For Greene, integral to the process of studying experience is the understanding of the multiple realities that constitute the biographies of individuals, in this case of students and teachers. Their cumulative experience provides the basis upon which the learning environment is grounded. As she notes in the preface,

> It is important to hold in mind . . .that each of us achieved contact with the world from a particular vantage point in terms of a particular biography. All of this underlies our present perspectives and affects the way we look at things

> and talk about things and structure our realities. To be in touch with our landscapes is to be conscious of our evolving experiences, to be aware of the ways in which we encounter our world (p. 2).

Once they have come in touch with what she calls their *learning landscapes*, she encourages teachers and students to become aware of the different worlds involved. As she explains, when "naming occurs, interpretations occur; meanings are built up; intersubjective relations entered into;" and "gradually, the embodied consciousness constitutes a world" (p. 103). These worlds, moreover, depend upon the particular language and the particular cognitive style of their inhabitants (p. 105). As a result, Greene advocates that teachers should be fluent and able to guide their students through these languages and cognitive styles.

While the topics for Greene's essays cover a wide range of ideas from a limited understanding of self created by a mystification of critical ideas to thinkers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who encourage an action-oriented consciousness, Greene is consistent in using imaginative literary examples to support her argument for understanding the importance of multiple realities. As she writes, our encounters with literary works of art "make it possible for us to come in contact with ourselves, to recover a lost spontaneity" (p. 2).

Greene also maintains that artistic-aesthetic considerations, the subject for the third section in her book, lead to many other beneficial results. As she notes, informed encounters with art works can lead to

the following learning experiences: new kinds of self-confrontations; recoveries of pre-reflective background; a fresh understanding of being in the world; an understanding of traditions and their role in individuals' lives; and an accessibility of heritages of the past (p. 106). Each of these, in turn, can also encourage the multiple realities available to students and teachers in various disciplines.

In Chapter Three Greene elaborates many suggestions for teachers. First, they should be able to expand the languages available to all those who are actively involved in the learning and teaching environment. This can be accomplished by encouraging students to use a variety of languages and cognitive styles. Second, since the naming and thinking process involves various languages, which, in turn, represent powerful relationships between the user of a particular language and the creation of ideas, "a conscious attempt should be made to examine together the implicit manipulativeness in classroom life" (p. 106). Greene advocates acknowledging the power relationship among participants in the classroom discussion. Paulo Freire expresses similar thoughts in Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Third, Greene's pedagogical methods encourage literary and aesthetic experiences which will stimulate the reflectiveness that she sees lacking in the present educational environment.

Seymour Papert's object-to-think-with

Aside from arguing that a variety of realities supports the richness of the reader's (subject's) experience, Seymour Papert argues that specific objects have potential for stimulating multiple ways to interpret experience. Mindstorms, written by Papert in 1980, presents the possibility for a computer language to increase the benefits of a less restrictive learning situation. As a mathematician and computer enthusiast, Papert has sought to revolutionize the way in which young students attend to powerful ideas. Specifically interested in the way in which new languages on the computer can be accessed, he advocates a non-traditional curriculum and a computer language called LOGO.

Papert argues that LOGO encourages students to think about knowledge itself, that is, to study epistemology and to be reflective. In contrast, Papert maintains that BASIC, another popular computer language, stifles students by being programmed as a system which locks out inventive thinking procedures and that, while easy to learn, it does not help to develop student-driven activity. In claiming LOGO as a superior learning language, Papert notes that the quality of the learning environment, including various study tools, is the key to more powerful learning experiences. His point is that more sophisticated instruments, such as computers with the LOGO language or computers based on what he calls mother structures (building blocks of learning based on various structures, e.g., order, topology, and algebra, rather than on the

separate disciplines in math), allow students to choose from among various cognitive styles to pursue particular problems (p. 27).

Aside from his interest in the LOGO language, Papert is particularly concerned with the quality of objects that create the learning environment. As a young child he came to understand many mathematical ideas because of his initial interest in gears. Reflecting on the importance of gears in his own intellectual development, Papert concludes that the objects with which individuals come to an understanding about formal, abstract concepts are significant. Thus his "object-to-think-with," which he also calls a "transitional object," suggests possibilities for connecting objects to a creative and dynamic learning environment. For example, in my experience specific art objects, such as Bleak House by Dickens or "Der Panther" by Rilke, served as transitional objects in much the same way as gears did for Papert.

While Rosenblatt, as she notes in her 1985 article, may not be particularly interested in sharing the rights to her terminology—and fortunately for Papert, he uses the term transitional—it is important for this discussion to note that whether students are learning mathematics or literature, they are actively engaged with the objects in their environment. And, like Rosenblatt, Papert advocates that students must have immediate and intimate access to the knowledge necessary for intellectual development. As he writes, "my interest is in the process of invention of 'objects-to-think-with,' objects in which there is an

intersection of cultural presence, embedded knowledge, and the possibility for personal identification" (p. 11).

Though he uses different terms, it is also important to note that Papert, like Rosenblatt, also emphasizes the fluid nature of learning, one opposed to the more restrictive conception of the accumulation of fixed ideas. For both writers, the process involves an everchanging system of relationships that is the responsibility of the learner. Papert's opposition to the traditional curriculum lies in his lack of confidence in a learning environment that structures for students certain fixed subject areas of study. Comparing his ideal learning environment to the natural setting of a child learning a native language or to a Samba school modeled after social clubs in Brazil, Papert hopes to move away from a curriculum that structures students into predetermined areas of learning and toward an environment in which students can invent structures and control their own learning. As he notes, "'teaching without a curriculum does not mean spontaneous, free-form classrooms or simply 'leaving the child alone.' It means supporting children as they build their own intellectual structures with material drawn from the surrounding culture" (p. 32).

Papert's specific contribution to the discussion here is that he explores a different symbol system (non-verbal) and maintains strong support for the personal response that engages the objects which he considers to be potentially so powerful. His voice adds strength to this study's position that various symbol systems can be employed in order

for students to study their environment. Whether with numbers, letters, notes, or lines, individuals learn about the world through identifying with a variety of perceptions about reality. And, as Howard Gardner argues, different cognitive abilities indicate that different intellectual qualities are needed to gain competence in particular areas.

Papert's use of gears as his structuring device for understanding the world of mathematics implies that teachers need to understand what symbols best help students interpret their world. For some students, numbers are the most accessible symbols; for others, alphabetical letters may be more employable; while still others may find musical notes clearly the most usable. Thus, when a student is asked to respond to literature, for example, the past experience that the individual brings to the literary event may include a personal understanding which uses a particular symbol system.

While disclaiming that what students learn should be only a matter of convenience, Dewey and others advocate that it is important to connect what the student already knows with the new experience. When appealing to teachers, therefore, it is necessary to ask them to consider the need for recognizing various symbol systems and to encourage them to help students become initiated into unfamiliar territory. For most teachers it is probably not good enough to understand only one symbol system. They must also understand how difficult it is to translate into another. Thus, teachers with a background in various symbol systems should be the ones who guide

students to expand beyond their current capacity. What is of greatest importance is that knowledge is *made* by each individual student. As Papert writes, "the actual job of getting to know an idea or a person cannot be done by a third party. Everyone must acquire skill at getting to know and a personal style for doing it" (p. 137). This means that the emphasis is on the individual student building something or making something with what he/she knows. While the teacher needs to consider the kind of knowing and how it is to be integrated into the student's learning experience, the important thing is first to refocus attention on the mere act of creating or, as Dewey would maintain, on the mere act of doing.

CHAPTER FIVE

EXEMPLA OF AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

Visual Interpretation and the Process

Introduction

In Chapter Five I support my thesis that literary experience can be expressed through nonverbal symbols. I will examine the process that describes how I move from the experience of the reader to an interpreter using visual symbols. I will support my argument for a visual response by showing how my interpretation of four literary works of art (English and German texts) describes my experience. My purpose is to explain how the transactional process works in a single individual and to show that as a reader I communicate more ably through visual symbols. I became a literary enthusiast because reading provided such limitless possibilities for my imagination. As a reader, I experienced the worlds of Dostoyevsky and Thoreau, for example, with such great intensity that I wanted to respond. My visual interpretation developed as a result of the need to verify my interpretation. Thus my argument is that Rosenblatt's transaction between the reader and the text can involve nonverbal symbols such as visual or musical symbols.

The connection between reader-response and my visual interpretations to literature is based on my own experience that I (the reader) do indeed play a crucial role in the dynamic process of reader and text interaction. When examining the elements that M. H. Abrams

describes as the universe (reality), the work (text), the artist (writer) and the audience (reader), my concern is for the reader's relationship with the text. In reader-response, I discovered that reader-response critics can be identified on a continuum between an objective approach (meaning resides solely in the text) and a subjective approach (meaning resides solely in the reader or subject). My perspective on the relationship of the reader to the text is one that corresponds to Rosenblatt's balanced concern for both the text and the reader. Rosenblatt's transactional theory places an emphasis on the participatory relationship of the reader with the text.

Examining Rosenblatt's theory led to my thesis that literary experience can be expressed through nonverbal symbols. I found that Rosenblatt stops short of describing the circuit between the reader and the text in other than verbal terms. Although she acknowledges that past and present experiences in literature include most everything which readers have found in their environment, she identifies the reader/text transaction with verbal symbol making. My experience with literary texts has been that a transaction need not be only a verbal relationship between the reader and the text. Rosenblatt's theoretical position does not take into account students who experience literature through hearing music, through physical expression, or through visual interpretations. Aren't these circuits between the reader and the text as valuable as a verbal transaction?

My support for nonverbal responses to literature is based on four criteria that describe my visual response. One, as the reader I am primarily interested in the interrelationship between the text and myself. Two, my interpretation is a nonverbal reworking of established symbols. Three, I am an active participant in the literary event. Four, my participation includes creating a visual artifact. These criteria follow Rosenblatt's transactional approach except for two distinct differences. As a participant in the literary event, I use visual symbols to describe my response and I create a visual artifact. To demonstrate that these criteria are, indeed, part of each of the four visual responses, I will examine their influence in the process described as visual interpretation.

The Process

The process of interpreting literature through visual symbols began with an intense passion for reading, particularly poetry. My earliest recollections involve wanting to read stories that transported me to foreign places. Along with my developing attraction to literature, I also remember being particularly frustrated that I could not memorize poetry. I wished that I could recall most of the poetry that I had read. I thought that my memory could restore the enjoyment that the first reading provided. These pleasurable moments of reading were so intense that I deeply regretted not having a reliable way to recover them. Emily Dickinson and Rainer Maria Rilke left me breathless, for

example, and unable to imagine living without being a participant in the reading event.

I needed to be able to return to the experiences that nurtured me. Like Wordsworth longing for places where he has been (in "Tintern Abbey"), I wanted to memorize poetry because the rereading would restore my sense of exhilaration and pleasure. Certain poems had such a powerful affect upon me that they were associated with experiences that I wanted to repeat over and over. Wordsworth notes that when such "wild ecstasies" mature, they bring pleasure, and the mind becomes a "mansion for all lovely forms." As he writes, "Thy memory be as a dwelling-place/ For all sweet sounds and harmonies. . ." (Hutchinson, p. 165).

The desire to return to poetry through memorization was significant. What I really sought was a way to regain the opportunity to use my imagination. While reading, I was able to bring together past and past experiences to help me interpret what stimulated me in the text. In Rosenblatt's sense of the meaning of transaction, I was reworking what I read and <u>making</u> it poetry. Without my active participation in translating written text into experience, the text remained ink blots on a page. My active involvement included the ability not only to perceive the text as poetry but to resymbolize it using my own verbal and visual knowledge and experience. A most critical part of the knowledge and experience that I bring to the making of poetry is my imagination. My action as performer is driven by it.

As my imagination and my sense of the performer developed, I began to insist on my unique individual experience. As the Romantics insisted in their literature, the "I" needs to take action and assert control over objective conditions. Part of my growth from reader to interpreter was the realization that my "I" must be strong and mature enough to be able to take action and make poetry. The necessary action is described by Rosenblatt as the active participation by the reader who translates the text into poetry. Similarly, educator Maxine Greene insists on action so that the individual can make the self. As she writes,

> No one's self is ready-made; each of us has to create a self by choice of action, action in the world. Such action, if it is to be meaningful, must be informed by critical reflection, because the one who is submerged, who cannot see, is likely to be caught in stasis, unable to move (Greene 1978, p. 18).

The more time I spent reading and actively being a part of the performance of making poetry, the more I felt that I also needed to find ways in which I was the performer.

No one in my immediate surroundings encouraged me or even knew that I read poetry. No one said, "Sonja, tell us about your reading." No one realized that I was a performer in reading events. I discovered for myself that carrying on an internal conversation about what I read was not entirely satisfying. I slowly recognized that to give meaning to what was happening inside me I needed to express myself some way, perhaps verbally or visually. I wanted to provide tangible evidence of

what I was thinking and feeling. Perhaps this desire grew with such intensity because my immediate environment at home and at school were not representative of my interior meditations. I found my exterior walls were unlike the dizzying flamboyant-patterned walls that Charlotte Perkins Gilman describes in The Yellow Wallpaper: mine were empty of any color, expression, or emotion.

In this relentlessly stark environment, I remember an unusually painful incident when I tried to convince my sister that the clouds in the sky were arranged into the shape of Dante's description of the devil in The Divine Comedy. She was not entertained by my interpretation of the shapes in the skies and found my description an amusing topic for dinner conversation with family. I knew then that my interpretations of Dante needed to be safely guarded from those who had no idea how literature could affect one's sensibilities. Yet I was determined to express myself so that my responses to what I read could be shared with others and somehow verified.

Curiously, in this relationship between reader and text, I found myself insisting upon the freedom to express my personal visual response. I could have written a response to poetry, for example, but my natural inclination, when the text engaged my imagination, was to create a visual response. I had always been interested in art and had taught myself a great deal about art while commuting to work several summers prior to entering college. Also, I visited art museums as often as I possibly could. Frequently, I knowingly created visual descriptions

of an experience I had as a performer during reading. Other times, a visual flash accompanied an interpretation that seemed to be influence by my activity on an unconscious level.

Eventually, I began to perform regularly as a visual interpeter of what I had being experiencing when I read literature. With the desire to paint and no formal training in art, I sketched my first abstract interpretation of a music stand. I used three colors, brown, blue, and yellow, and transferred my sketch, using oils, to a white piece of stretched canvas. It was fun but it did not express the ideas and feelings in which I had found meaning. Deciding quickly that I was too impatient for oils to dry and that if I was going to express myself through art I needed to paint about the literature that I adored, I began with a pen and ink drawing of poetry. From the pen and ink, I moved into mixed media: watercolors, color pencils, charcoal, pastels, and just about anything else with which I could experiment and express myself.

My first interpretive piece was a visual response to the German poet Rilke's "Der Panther." On a piece of acid-free paper I drew three circles and in the middle of each circle wrote one of the three stanzas of the poem. Surrounding the circles, I drew a green flower garden that was to envelop the metallic cage (represented by the circles) enclosing a panther that paced energetically in circles, displaying tremendous power. Rilke describes its futile, dance-like motion in the following lines,

> The padding gait of flexibly strong strides,

> that in the very smallest circle turns,
> is like a dance of strength around a center
> in which stupefied a great will stands (Norton,1938, p. 159).

Embellishing on the active frenzy of the animal, I choreographed rhythmic lines and geometric symbols inside the circles and intertwined these same lines and symbols throughout the green garden landscape. The painting, a mix of pen and ink, watercolors, and colored pencil described for me visually the musicality of Rilke's orthographic notation and the imaginative images that he had conceived.

In retrospect, Rilke's panther appears analogous to the human spirit which, if not given a sort of freedom, no longer takes any effective action. And for me the challenge was not to be that panther. As Rilke writes in the final stanza,

> Only sometimes the curtain of the pupil
> soundlessly parts—. Then an image enters,
> goes through the tensioned stillness of the limbs—
> and in the heart ceases to be (Norton 1938, p. 159).

I wanted to translate my response into visual symbols. Had I been encouraged by a creative writing teacher to experience freedom through a verbal response, who knows, I might have responded differently. Nevertheless, I was encouraged by my first attempts at painting and I enjoyed the idea of creating a visual artifact that would represent my efforts to formalize my literary responses.

I do not consider my work as illustrations for a text. I do not paint in order to conjure up the specific images that an author describes in a text. Rather, I paint because the experience of reading is so fantastic—in the sense that it expands my knowing about the world in such different ways—that I just simply have to find a way of expressing the intensity of what I am thinking and feeling. I do not illustrate the author's intent of the poem. I interpret the experience that I have with poetry. I believe that my response is as valuable as the art object (text) itself.

My own development from reader to interpreter was not unlike the process that is described by Elizabeth Cussler who wanted to fuse her literature class with an experience in art. I agree with Elizabeth Cussler when she writes, "One of my objectives in teaching a survey of American Literature is to have students see the various currents of thought that occur and recur in our culture and are thus reflected in our art, both verbal and visual (1989, p. 28). Beginning her article with this statement, Cussler goes on to explain how her visit to a performance of *With a Poet's Eye*, a musical event inspired by the work of fifty poets who described works in the Tate Gallery in London, had stimulated her to provide her students with a literary experience that involved reacting to visual art. The question she asked herself after the performance was, "Why not adapt this for my students?" Arranging for her English classes to go the Minneapolis Institute of Art for their program, called "Writing in the Galleries," she organized her students into small groups that

were shown around by docents trained to explain the art exhibits; then, the individual students were provided time to study one work in particular.

The students were encouraged to bring to class the results of their art experience. Their responses included poetry, letters to the painters, interior monologues from the sitter's point of view, short narratives and dialogues between persons in the painting. Citing five examples as representative samples of what she collected from her classes, it is clear that, as she says, students found that they could relate to art and enjoyed new ways of reacting (p. 30). Moreover, as she notes, creating these responses provided "an alternative to the usual cut-and-dried approach": the assignment helped "recognize and accommodate the different learning styles of some students" (p. 28).

This emphasis on exploring different learning styles and various currents of thought in our culture is what I experienced through painting my interpretations of literature. The only difference was that I was moving from literature to the visual art experience, the reverse of what Cussler tried. Like Cussler's students, however, I was responding to an experience that included art and literature and was translating my interpretation from one symbolic medium to another. And like her students, I was also approaching the experience as an event that incorporated an alternate approach and accommodated a different learning style. Therefore, the experience that she provided for her students was very much like what I hoped to gain from responding to

works of literature: active participation in translating from one symbol system into another.

Four Visual Responses

Given this description of the process from reader to interpreter, I would like to discuss my visual responses to literature more specifically by introducing four of my art pieces. As I examine specific works, I will comment briefly on, first, what it was in a particular text that engaged me to act on my ideas; and, second, how I then created my interpretation with mixed media materials on watercolor paper. The four examples I will discuss are Virginia Woolf's Orlando, Charles Dickens' Bleak House, Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Circles," and Malcolm X's autobiography. Although I have done other paintings, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter, Thomas Mann's Tonio Kröger, Carl Sandburg's "City of Big Shoulders," Homer's Odysseus, and Jane Austen's Emma, I chose these four works as representative of my visual response to literature.

Orlando

My response to Orlando, by Virginia Woolf, was painted as a result of finding an unusual reference to multiple biographies and multiple levels of interpreting time in the text (see Figure 2). Having been particularly interested in the concept of time since encountering not

only ideas such as Einstein's theory of relativity (the interrelationship of time and space) but also paintings dealing with the subject, such as Salvadore Dali's Persistence of Memory. I found Woolf's hero, who changes to a heroine in a biography stretched over three hundred years, to be a singularly fascinating subject. Her challenge to readers seemed to be her perception that individuals carry within them a nearly infinite number of personalities and a time clock that accounts for minutes and hours in an altogether idiosyncratic manner.

Being initially intrigued by Woolf's lines about the selves which are built up on top of one another as plates are piled on a waiter's hand (Woolf, p. 308), I found the idea of a thousand biographies, not merely the six or seven generally described, generating visual images that I might shape into a visual work. Reading this passage, I could see a waiter clothed in a white apron and starched hat holding a pile of plates stacked as high as he could manage. With perfect concentration, he appeared to balance china plates with his neatly defined white gloves before an elegant crowded dining room. Ah, so much control over these seemingly fragile materials while in front of this large group of spectators. This visual conceptualization made me think about the people I meet who balance these sorts of intricate selves.

Just prior to this passage in Orlando, Woolf describes time. She discusses the idea that she may have overloaded her reader's capacity to follow Orlando's dramatic development: the his-to her biography and the sudden changes in time over several hundred of years. She writes

the sudden changes in time over several hundred of years. She writes about this confusion in the following manner:

> And, indeed, it cannot be denied that the most successful practitioners of the art of life, often unknown people by the way, somehow contrive to synchronize the sixty or seventy different times which beat simultaneously in every normal human system so that even when eleven strikes, all the rest chime in unison, and the present is neither a violent disruption nor completely forgotten in the past (p. 305).

This passage seemed to suggest to me that there are thousands of people I may see crossing the street or attending a musical event who perhaps at only one given moment know who they are. So, walking about may be all kinds of ordinary-looking individuals in the process of connecting one *self* to who knows how many others. My own mind started creating a visual interpretation of Woolf's words: the imaginary moment when separate selves and their different time orientations converge.

Underlining the passage for further study and potential visual interpretation, I actually began working on Orlando some weeks later. The painting was the first piece where I added extraneous materials to a sheet of watercolor paper. For the multiple possibilities of time and selves, I chose to use the punched edges of computer paper and to layer these strips of paper around two symbolic representations of the female and male. Dividing the rectangular-shaped paper diagonally, I covered

both halves with small orange and yellow robot-shaped figures moving in the same direction. Along the diagonal line, I wrote the symbols for the hours, and in the very center, I printed in over-sized numbers, eleven o'clock. Sensing that these were difficult and disturbing thoughts that I had collected onto this now yellow washed sheet of paper, I framed the top and bottom with a dark purple watercolor.

Bleak House

Having considered the multiple biographies and time that Woolf describes in Orlando, it does not seem difficult to make the connection to Charles Dickens, who could take a wide variety of characters and develop a uniquely interrelated group of individuals in a mysterious plot. In fact, this is precisely what attracted me to the idea of painting a picture of Bleak House (see Figure 3). Unlike my experience with Orlando, it was not a passage in the text that stimulated me to want to illustrate my thoughts. Rather, after I finished reading Bleak House, when I would think about the text in my leisure moments, several recurring images kept creeping into my imagination, and the mental images resisted my conscious dismissal. Bleak House became an idea for a white sheet of watercolor paper when I realized that Dickens' plot and character development reminded me of J. S. Bach's playful ability to write music upside down, backwards and starting at both ends at the same time. Like Dickens, Bach was a master contrapuntalist and could take two or more musical ideas, embellish them a hundred different

ways, and still create a musical whole recognizable throughout. A comparison to Bach did not produce a visual interpretation; however, it did eventually lead to my understanding Dickens as a master weaver of Oriental knots. Thinking about Dickens' wide array of humorous but, at the same time, often genuinely despicable caricatures, I visualized an Oriental carpet in which all the threads are woven into a masterful design that incorporates many detailed symbols yet retains a visually coherent pattern. This, for me, described Dickens' ability to create the spontaneously combustible Mr. Krook, the puffed-up, pillow-like Mr. and Mrs. Smallweed, and the crazy, bird-creature Miss Flite.

Dickens' Bleak House began with my knowing that each character's name, ninety-eight in total, would be written at the left and right side of the paper to suggest the fringes of the rug. In the center, the primary motif would highlight the name of the book in a sort of circular pattern. I studied Oriental carpets in books from the library to get a sense of the designs from which I might choose. In the end, however, I opted for a more free-form design rather than something based closely on a specific Oriental design. I just started working and a pattern emerged: the center depicted shapes one might find if one were to spill ink on a paper and fold it. Around the perimeter of the rug I placed large fiery flames in red and orange. The background of the carpet was an unevenly distributed gray, suggesting the London fog that descends over the Court of Chancery and the related darkness that spreads over the characters involved with it.

"Circles"

The belief in the potential for the diversity described by Woolf and by Dickens is found in the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson, another American writer whose work I chose to illustrate (see Figure 4). Emerson's call for action and his cry, "I make my circumstances" in "The Transcendentalist" (1981, p. 90), inspired me to paint. I wanted to surround myself with the energy of a mentor who would encourage a search for self-definition, diversity, and active response. His enthusiasm for endless combinations of original ideas and creative activity is expressed in his essays on "Nature," "Self-reliance," The American Scholar," and "Compensation." All these confirm his faith in individuals who are willing to express their own reflective thinking in action.

Focusing particularly on the infinite variety that Emerson found in nature, I found myself forced to wrestle with Emersonian lines such as, "All good is eternally reproductive. The beauty of nature re-forms itself in the mind, and not for barren contemplation, but for new creation" (1981, p. 13). This sense of possibility and nourishment was best described for me in a passage in "Circles." The following lines describe what I wanted to paint:

> But besides this general grace diffused over nature, almost all individual forms are agreeable to the eye, as is proved by our endless imitations of some of them, as the acorn, the grape, the pine-cone, the wheat-ear, the egg, the wings, and forms

> of most birds, the lion's claw, the forms of many trees, as the palm (Emerson 1981, p. 9).

As I projected Emerson's sense of the boundless possibilities of nature onto a blank sheet of paper, I drew the movement of exploding comets in an ever-widening circular horizon. These purple-blue comets that lighted into various rays of the color spectrum swirled around as streaks that bore some of my favorite quotes. Their black, red and orange tails seemed to represent Emerson's fire-like energy that ignited young readers, like myself. The horizon upon which I painted the volatile comets included many half-light-and-dark blue and green circles that were themselves divided into horizons. In some of the circles, I drew the acorn, grape, wheat-ear, and birds, described as the individual forms that were so agreeable to Emerson's vision. Amidst the comets and circles that swirl in clock-like repetitive motion, I painted the *eye* which is at the center of Emerson's universe and the first line of "Circles." It reads, "The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature the primary figure is repeated without end" (p. 263).

Malcolm X

In stark contrast to Emerson's optimistic meditations on nature and its potential for renewal, Malcolm X takes the reader into his perspective of human brutality. Sparing no details about the cruel and uncivilized nature of inner-city ghettos, Malcolm X tells the story of his

own life and education. He describes the horrors of his young years enveloped by the grisly murders of his relatives, particularly the male descendants. He describes the dangerous race for money and power and then his arrest for dealing with drugs. He describes his studies in the penitentiary and his subsequent prison conversion to Black Muslimism. Finally, Malcolm X describes his political work for his new-found religion in the civil rights movement.

Again feeling a creative urgency to respond to the story of an extraordinary individual, I decided to paint what I thought was one of Malcolm X's most difficult moments (see Figure 5). I wanted to illustrate a conflict between his religion and his family because a fascinating paradox resulted from Malcolm X trying both to adhere to a demanding ideology and to maintain his personal commitments. The conflict between his obedience to religious commandments and the humane treatment of his brother seemed to me to be the point at which Malcolm described the frustration with life's battles most poignantly. Interestingly, the religious fervor that made possible Malcolm's transformation from drug dealer to civil rights activist also seemed to demand the ruthless and senseless abandonment and eventual early death of his own brother, Reginald. This sacrifice was what I believe Malcolm X, who as a child had lost so many male relatives, found ultimately intolerable.

After reading Malcolm X, I was particularly impressed by the significance that he ascribed to his red curly hair. It seemed symbolic

of his identity, of his place in the family, and of the larger struggle for self-definition among his people. Therefore, his red hair was to be a focus of the work, as was the shape of his torso, which I decided to compare to a heroic Greek figure. Keeping in mind the idea of a stylized torso and head, I imagined the sculptures of Brancusi with their sleek, shining cylindrical shapes that had inspired me on other occasions. I thought about how Malcolm X would appear if Brancusi were to paint him.

When I made the connection from Malcolm X to the Brancusi sculpture, however, I also envisioned what I would write on the painting. A piece of parchment, as fragile as birch bark paper, seemed to suggest to me the surface on which I could recall some of the specific lines from the book. On this surface I intended to express the background from which Malcolm came: his struggle against inhumanity as a young child, his vulnerability that had fractured his sense of family, and his shock at his "anchor giving way"(1965, p. 19).

In conclusion, each of the four paintings that I have examined represents an attempt to describe my personal interpretation of a particular literary text. With the current emphasis on a variety of critical approaches, there may be little time in the classroom to encourage student's interpretations, like my own, that are nonverbal. This possibility challenged me to think about an alternative approach to teaching literature. Therefore in the following chapter, I will address an approach to literature that can involve students who may use visual or

Painting of Malcolm X

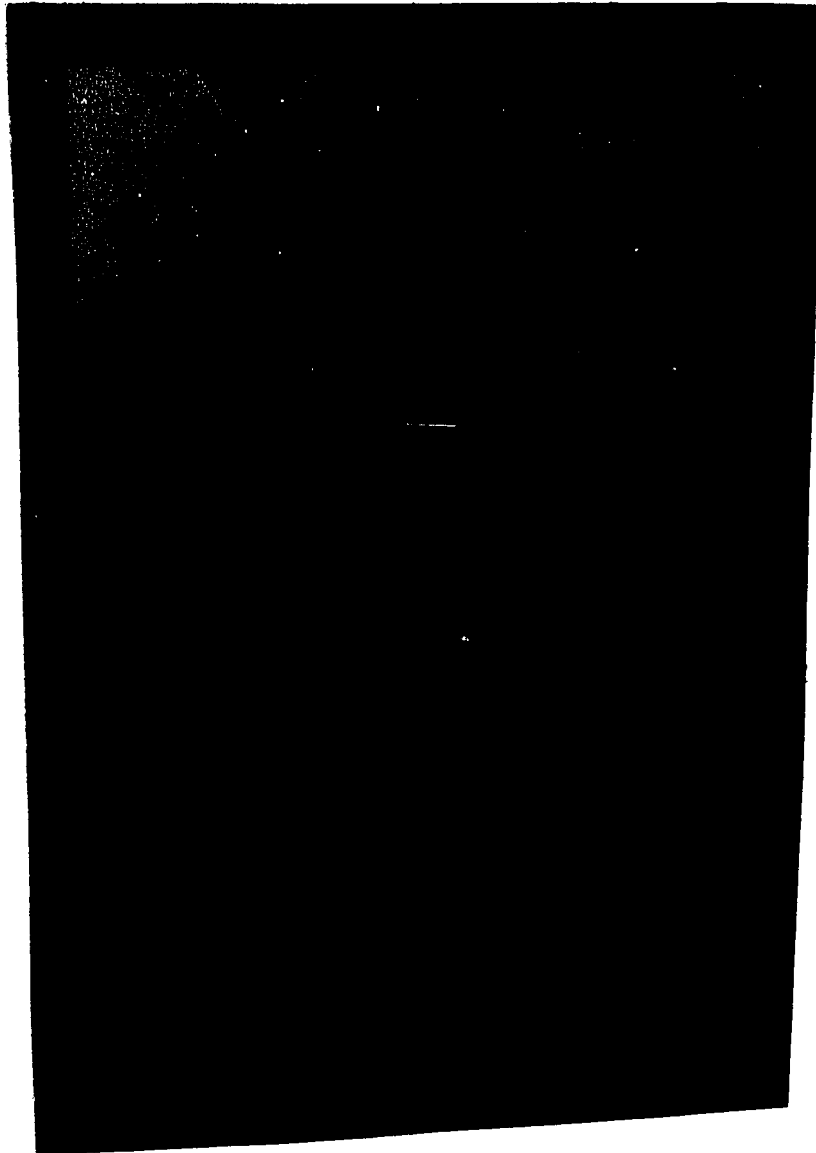


Figure 5. Malcolm X by Sonja Darlington

or perhaps other nonverbal symbols to express themselves. Hopefully, by incorporating a variety of techniques to encourage individual student performance some responses to literature will also be visual or musical.

CHAPTER SIX

STRATEGIES FOR AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

The Risk-Taking Situation

The final section of this dissertation argues for an alternative approach to teaching literature in the secondary classroom. After having examined the issue in Chapter One of how to put students back in touch with literature, the argument focused on clearing the confusion of the various approaches with Dewey's and Rosenblatt's emphasis on experience. The student's experience became the theme for putting students back in touch with literature when Dewey's educational theory in Experience and Education was applied. Considering Dewey's theoretical views, the 1988 NCTE text contributed to the failure of reconnecting students with literature because the various approaches were essentially "outside conditions" that implied something more important than students' experiences. Rosenblatt was central to the entire argument because as one of the seminal pedagogical leaders and reader-response critics since the '40s, she focused on experience to define the relationship between the reader and the text.

Rosenblatt's transactional theory made it possible to focus on readers' participation in the literary event through past and present experience. As a practical consequence, the emphasis on experience implied that students' participation in the literary event was not to be

overshadowed by issues about the environment or the text. In addition, the distinctions that Rosenblatt described in Literature and Exploration and The Reader, The Text, and The Poem clarified that experience led the way to understanding the difference between a text and between a poem and an efferent and an aesthetic reading. With experience defined as "a way of happening," the participation of the performer became valuable because he/she contributed to making a poem.

Rather than assigning primary significance to an efferent reader who could gather information from literature and apply it elsewhere, as many theoretical and practical approaches suggest, Rosenblatt established the primary significance of the reader who could create a poem from a text by contributing personal feelings, knowledge, and background to create an event. The important difference is that when attention is concentrated on sensing, feeling, and ordering, *imaginative* literature is established (Rosenblatt 1968, p. 279). Ann Berthoff argues that because of the way in which Rosenblatt finds the literary experience to be active and creative, she supports a theory of imagination that can be found in Coleridge's definition of the imagination. Berthoff writes," her theory could be said to bear about the same relationship to *affective stylistics* and *subjective criticism* as imagination does to Fancy (1988, p. 43).

Alan Purves argues that Rosenblatt's emphasis on the aesthetic reader is a critical aspect of her theoretical writings, particularly in

The Reader, the Text, the Poem (1978), and it is clearly one of the reasons Rosenblatt defends her use of *transactional* in her 1985 article on terminology. Purves notes that aesthetic reading focuses on the text as a "self-contained artifact" that incorporates both message and form, so that the reader experiences the totality without the purpose of seeking specific knowledge or consequent action. Literary texts are therefore imaginative and not "schema-driven" (1988, pp. 70-73). Whereas schema theory emphasizes schemata in terms of content, Rosenblatt maintains that the prior knowledge that is brought to literary works is also what is being sensed, felt, thought about, and ordered in regard to the whole literary work (Rosenblatt 1968, p. 279). As Purves states, Rosenblatt would insist that the prior knowledge depends upon "the particular circumstances of the text, the situation of the reader, or the setting in which the transaction occurs" (p. 71). Thus, the aesthetic stance is her significant contribution to literary theory and practice.

In examining Rosenblatt's transactional perspective, however, one finds a limitation in that her discussion of the literary event emphasizes only verbal responses. Maintaining that the relationship between the reader and the text is generally verbal, Rosenblatt overlooks the possibility that for some students a literary event may involve significant, nonverbal experiences. Arguing that verbal responses restrict the literary experience unnecessarily, other individuals who promote other perspectives on experience became

relevant to the discussion. Therefore, Chapter Four examined Gardner's, Woolf's, Greene's, and Papert's multiple perspectives and Chapter Five presented exempla of the literary event expressed in visual symbols.

Having established the central argument for using Dewey and Rosenblatt to put the student back in touch with literature, then, the purpose of this final chapter is to suggest what can be done in the secondary classroom to broaden Rosenblatt's limited focus on the verbal response to experience. What follows will be divided into two sections: strategies for a new approach organized by Garber's three principles, and the possibilities for evaluation. These discussions will be introduced by a brief look at the literary event as a risk-taking activity. As the topic develops, it is hoped that the suggestions presented will generate ideas that will indeed stimulate the secondary teacher to consider the possibility of nonverbal expression, e.g., visual interpretation, as part of the literary experience. Therefore, the next section begins with examining a short poem that suggests the risks involved in an approach that emphasizes student performance.

When presenting an alternative approach that concentrates on the literary experience in the classroom, a course might well begin with a short poem by Lawrence Ferlinghetti entitled "Constantly Risking Absurdity." (see Figure 6.) The title itself suggests to students just what their relationship with literature in the classroom will require. In the poem, Ferlinghetti compares the poet to a highwire acrobat who,

performing his dare-devil act, must balance above the heads of his audience and still inch toward a "higher perch where Beauty stands and waits." He elaborates that the acrobat and the poet are both charleychaplin men who may or may not catch her [Beauty] form "spreadeagled in the empty air of existence." Thus, the poet is portrayed as an individual who risks absurdity and, though attempting a death-defying feat, may be no nearer his goal, however serious it may be, than a comedy figure like Charley Chaplin.

Throughout the poem Ferlinghetti makes significant observations about the life of a poet. First, the poet risks everything as super realist who is forced to experience "taut truth" (p. 137, lines 20-21). Second, he lives in a world in which he seemingly advances toward Beauty step-by-step (lines 9-25). Third, he is a comedy character full of "high theatrics" who may or may not succeed at his goal while risking his life (lines 1-15). In a sense, the poet's image of himself as an acrobat becomes a metaphor for students who take risks when they are involved in literary activities. Similar to the poet/acrobat, the student who participates in the literary event may risk everything to perceive truth. He may advance toward an aesthetic understanding only after painstakingly experiencing truth. And as a vaudeville character, he may or may not succeed at finding aesthetic understanding after a spreadeagle position that may involve failure or death.

(Ferlinghetti 1985, 137)

Figure 6. Ferlinghetti's "Constantly Risking Absurdity"

For Ferlinghetti's poet, there is neither a fixed attainable goal nor a guarantee of success. Using an approach based on Dewey and Rosenblatt, students are also not offered a fixed goal and may actually be in a free falling position during the experience. As Ferlinghetti notes in his title, the poet is *constantly* risking absurdity and death. And while a literary experience does not explicitly describe a death-defying situation, it does implicitly suggest that when a participant is not active and creative, he/she is in a sense nonactive and, therefore, dead to the moment in which experience could occur. This noncompromising stance makes it no less risky than the situation for the acrobat.

Alternative Strategies Involving Three Literary Principles

Thus, in literature activities in the classroom, teachers need to concentrate on strategies that encourage risk-taking, and the alternative approach to be presented here can help insure that these risks are present in the literary experience. As Ferlinghetti's poem suggests, the potential for free-falling is an ever-present challenge to the performer involved with literature. Keeping this demanding condition in mind, the following discussion will elaborate ways in which teachers can encourage student performance and yet at the same time open up the literary experience to challenging perspectives that are also risky. As an example, when students come to class with

preconceived ideas about a specific piece of literature or an author that they do not like, it is very difficult to develop students' appreciation in this area. The teacher's sensitivity to students' self- expression and their unique perspective are of utmost importance, and yet the teacher's concern must be that the student is also receptive to other perspectives and a deeper understanding. Therefore, the suggestions in the next section try to help teachers with how to encourage student involvement in spite of such obstacles. Three organizing principles will be introduced for examining useful strategies.

Eugene Garber states three fundamental principles of interpretation in his introduction to a NCTE monograph on reader-response in the classroom. The first principle is that understanding and interpreting a work of art must be "preceded by engagement--an imaginative, emotional, even visceral experience of impact" (Garber 1986, p. ii). The next principle is that "students cannot fully understand a work of art or make it truly their own until they have viewed it carefully from a variety of perspectives." Finally, the third principle is that "students cannot convincingly verify for themselves or for others that they fully understand a work of art until they can resymbolize it in other terms, usually verbal" (p. ii). Agreeing with Garber that these are useful guidelines for the *event* (Rosenblatt's term for the literary experience) that takes place in the literature classroom, I will adopt them as the rudimentary principles from which to review

current classroom practices and to present my strategies for each of the principles.

The engagement

One cannot deny that much has already been written about the methods for stimulating engagement (the initial experience with literature). Some of the possibilities have been developed by the critics and teachers who have been considered in this study thus far. For example, as Rosenblatt notes in the second chapter of Literature as Exploration, what a work communicates to a reader depends upon what is brought to the initial encounter: "personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition" (p. 30). Her point is clearly that these one-of-a-kind combinations set the conditions for the engagement. She advocates that the initial personal experience is the crucial catalyst that either makes a satisfactory literary experience possible or impedes most chances of involving students in a life-long affair with literature. It can include in-class activities such as writing brief anonymous comments on a work or unstructured questions to open up discussion (1968, pp. 70-71)

Aside from Rosenblatt, who as early as 1938 in Literature as Exploration defended the reader's participation in the transaction between reader and text and elaborated on the personal, social, and cultural implications of the engagement, other reader-response

theorists have been suggesting methods for encouraging teachers to develop techniques for eliciting initial responses from students. For instance, David Bleich in the first chapter of Readings and Feelings describes some techniques for evincing responses from students (1975, pp. 7-15). A particularly useful idea is that classroom teachers begin by asking students to find the most important word, sentence, or passage in a text and then to explain their choice.

Like Rosenblatt and Bleich, Probst in Response and Analysis also argues that the literary experience must first be an experience that is personally significant. As he organizes the different aspects of this personal event in his book, Probst emphasizes that the reader must first make the poem, then see himself in the reading, reshape his thinking, and finally, above all, be active and responsible throughout the response process (1988, pp. 23-24). Even as Probst elaborates the character of the response, he again argues that the range of response, whether personal (a focus on oneself), topical (a focus on the issues), interpretive (a focus on judgments of significance); or formal (a focus on forms), always begins with the initial personal engagement (pp. 56-59). He suggests this engagement may be established through strategies such as creative drama, e.g., pantomime, improvisation, role-playing, or encouraging students to discuss readings with each other (pp. 62-63).

Similarly, in Reader-Response in the Classroom, teacher Patricia Hansbury begins with the personal response. Borrowing from David

Bleich and Russell Hunt, for example, she advocates that students write their initial responses in journals. She also notes specifically that teachers may want to direct certain questions to elicit responses in journals and that discussing the responses at the time of an in-class reading may also stimulate the development of personal responses (p. 109). Although James Davis is addressing his comments to a foreign language-oriented audience in "The Act of Reading in the Foreign Language," he suggests using a technique known as Thinking-Out-Loud (TOL) to "encourage awareness of the reading processes" (1989, p. 425). Using this approach, students are asked to verbalize what they are thinking about while reading a passage. The aim of the teacher's subsequent discussions is to develop strategies for *how* to think during the formulation of a response.

As these examples show, engagement as a personal, emotional and imaginative experience is addressed by the reader-response theorist and practitioner alike. However, what has <u>not</u> received enough attention is teachers' descriptions of their own "experience of impact" (Garber's term), elucidating just how they themselves become actively involved in literary events. Therefore, my suggestion for a strategy would include teachers emphasizing not only the engagement of students but also sharing their own "experience of impact." I believe that a teacher of literature who hopes to create an atmosphere of literary engagement must first have experienced the thrill of a literary

event herself and then be able to communicate this event to her students.

One of my favorite recent examples of talking about just one aspect of the initial engagement process comes from a writing teacher I encountered in a class at the university. The example was a professor in a composition class who described the problem of how one begins the writing task. Asking students to describe their own ritual when they write, each class member commented on the procrastination efforts made when first confronting a blank piece of paper. As each participant discussed his/her own peculiar habits, it became evident to everyone that to begin writing was indeed difficult business. While many had thought they were all alone in their struggle, it became obvious through these discussions that many were experiencing similar anxieties of how to cope with a blank piece of paper. The professor further demystified students' imaginary thoughts about a potentially blissful experience by describing his own laborious process. Portraying even the simple task of writing a note to his wife for the refrigerator door as a multi-step process of no less than two rewrites, students began to appreciate the delicacy of the task involved. The professor had put the experience of writing into proportions to which students could relate.

A second example comes from my own visual examples describing my imaginative and emotional reactions to poetry. I realized that in order for me to capture the experience of poetry more permanently, I

had to find a means of keeping my enthusiasm and interpretation alive. So I began painting to relive the experience of poetry. My interpretations which hang on the walls rekindle the initial engagement with pieces like "I'm Nobody Who Are You?" by Emily Dickinson and "Der Panther" by Rainer Maria Rilke. This engagement process is one that I have described to my students many times. Also, my relationship with these works has encouraged me to invite students to my home to share what I discovered. As a teacher, the goal is to encourage students to use their literary experiences as springboards to various forms of expression that cast lifelong shadows.

A third example comes from another personal engagement experience with literature. One of my first attempts using visual symbols was a means to avoid studying for an exam on Odysseus in undergraduate school. I knew that I didn't want to analyze the travels which led the hero to Ithaca, but that I did want to relive the imaginative experience. So, I decided to paint the places Odysseus visited in a visual shorthand the night before the test. Using pen and ink, I cryptically organized all the adventures around an abstract tent that symbolized home and labelled the various places in small letters. Enjoying the experience much more than if I had prepared a copious analysis for an essay, I recognized my artistic endeavor as a very pleasurable learning activity which allowed me the freedom to explore and reflect on my reactions to specific ideas in the text.

Naturally, because the visual response has been such a satisfactory experience, I believe that students' responses—just like mine—need to be guided toward a record of the event in which they choose to perform. When considering the initial "imaginative, emotional, even visceral experience of impact" that Garber describes as a first principle in the teaching of literature, I cannot resist encouraging personal recreations of the imaginative and emotional engagement with literature. Therefore, I would suggest reenacting descriptions of the initial engagement in literature, utilizing other modes of expression, e.g., visual, spatial, and physical. Specific possibilities may include painting, modern dancing, and musical performances.

In addition, however, I believe that teachers need to express their own engagement with literature with a great deal of flourish and pomp. I have found that often the better the tale of experience, the more likely students will consider the teacher's experience in their own response. I do not advocate untruths, but then by retelling the story over and over, as any folklorist might note, the story should get better--hyberboles included. For example, Kathleen McCormick argues that her telling of James Joyce's Ulysses is intimately connected to her early reactions. Encouraging her students to enjoy Chapter X, "Wandering Rocks," depends on her ability to expand students' repertoires of reading pleasures (1988, p. 53).

As Maxine Greene says, "No one's self is ready-made; each of us has to create a self by choice of action, action in the world (1978, p. 18). I

conclude from her words that this would imply that teachers' selves are not imprinted in a one-time act of creation. Rather, teachers, once students themselves, also had to learn to become engaged in literature as active participants. The question to be asked is why teachers do not describe it, as one might describe, say, a wedding. Surely a teacher of English must own documents, such as poems, essays, and journal entries, that verify an initial love affair, engagement, even a wedding ceremony. My experience has been that students respect our telling them just how passionately we fell in love with literature. They want the details, too, with whom, how, when, and where. If it is assumed that the event itself is what is at the heart of the literary experience, as Rosenblatt emphatically articulates, then it seems quite clear that teachers need to share with students the event that led them to be teachers of English in the first place.

From the engagement to a variety of perspectives

Moving students from a personal response to involvement with a variety of perspectives during the literary event is another difficult aspect of teaching literature. How can teachers encourage students to view a work of art from a variety of perspectives in order to fully understand it and make it their own? Obviously, to transform individual perspectives is a challenge that teachers in many disciplines besides literature face on a daily basis. Many probing questions are involved in this discussion. How can the reality that students perceive

individually be broadened to involve a group? Or involve those with more experience? Or involve those with another cultural bias? The issue that will be focused upon next is how students can assimilate a broader basis for their perspective?

The principle of a variety of perspectives has been addressed in Chapter Four of this discussion. The contributions by Gardner, Woolf, Greene, and Papert suggested that experience provides multiple perspectives in a variety of different subject areas. In literature, for example, Woolf suggested that multiple biographies demonstrate how a single individual can perceive him/herself so differently over time. Woolf described the complexities that multiple perspectives presented and convincingly argued that the integration of multiple perspectives is very difficult and may happen only for a brief moment. Her symbolic eleven o'clock represents the elusiveness of integrated perspectives.

As distinct from the multiple perspectives presented by the above- mentioned individuals, my contribution to the variety of perspectives incorporates several suggestions from a research study by George Posner, Kenneth Strike, Peter Hewson and William Gertzog reported in a 1982 article in Science Education entitled "Accommodation of a Scientific Conception: Toward a Theory of Conceptual Change." Posner et al. reached some conclusions regarding conceptual change by testing college physics students on two problems,—the first about the workings of a light clock and the subsequent implications for the concept of time, and the second about

the simultaneity and the synchronization of distant clocks and points of view. Describing conceptual change as a two-phase process of assimilation (the use of existing concepts to deal with new phenomena) and accommodation (the more radical replacement or reorganization of concepts), Posner et al. suggest among others, three strategies for conceptual change: one, more emphasis on assimilation and accommodation than on content coverage; two, developing activities which can be used to create cognitive conflict; and three, making sense of content by representing it in multiple modes, e.g., verbal, mathematical, pictorial, concrete-practical (1982, pp. 225-226).

The first strategy encourages teachers to concentrate on assimilation and accommodation over content. This is possible if student experiences in the classroom emphasize integrating new concepts and also replacing some concepts with other concepts. Generally, teaching is aimed at explaining, clarifying, recalling, demonstrating, and applying the content. Much of this activity takes place in a lecture format that concentrates on individual learning. In my literature classes little time was spent on lectures and a significant amount of time was used for conversation. The dialogue between students and myself focused on the participation of everyone in the class and our purpose in these discussions was to develop an increased understanding of our literary experiences and to share some of the multitiple perspectives that were possible. Several educators such as Mortimer Adler and Paulo Freire have written on the benefit of

conversations in the classroom and their ideas can be used as a means of expanding perspectives and incorporating new concepts.

In The Paideia Proposal (1982), for example, Adler notes that of the three kinds of learning that he advocates, Socratic questioning is the basis for enlarging understanding. The Socratic method encourages discussions among students for the purpose of a dynamic exchange of ideas. Comparing the Socratic method to midwifery, Adler is interested in teachers assisting the labor of students and colleagues in giving birth to ideas. Unlike didactic instruction that takes place in the lecture format, or coaching that develops intellectual skills on a one-to-one relationship, the understanding of ideas and values, according to Adler, must be approached primarily through conversation about works of art. Using Rosenblatt's theories on literature as a basis, the dialogue between students and the teacher can focus on the moment-to-moment experiences that make the integration or replacement of new concepts possible. As Adler notes, in a discussion, the teacher must be keenly aware of the ways in which insights occur to enlarge understanding—ways that differ from individual to individual (Adler 1982, p. 53).

In a more intense and confrontational delivery regarding conversation as the backbone of the educational experience, Paulo Freire advocates in Chapter Three of Pedagogy of the Oppressed that education move away from what he calls its *narration sickness* where the subject (teacher) narrates and the (object) students listen (1967,

pp. 57-58). He argues that conversation between students and teachers must be dialogues in which both use their critical consciousness to transform the world by naming it and becoming active participants. Discourse must never become burdened by talk about things that have little or nothing to do with "the preoccupations, doubts, hopes, and fears" of those involved in the conversation. Freire writes that, "authentic education is not carried on by 'A' *for* 'B' or by 'A' *about* 'B,' but rather by 'A' *with* 'B,' mediated by the world--a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to view or opinions about it" (p. 82). Thus, Freire strengthens the argument that conversation is for the purpose of sharing perspectives and integrating and replacing concepts.

My own experience has taught me that with a little encouragement, students can converse about poets, novelists, and playwriters even in a non-native language. In my German classes, for example, students who had never enjoyed literature, wrote German stories or short essays because we made an effort together to make literature accessible. Categorizations by particular genres or poetic meters were not scary concepts that devalued students' own sense of knowing. They were simply incorporated into the discussion but they were not the focus. As Rosenblatt writes against substituting the analysis and categorization of knowledge *about* literature for the experience *with* literature, so, too, the analytical terms did not become surrogates for the German literary experience. Essentially, therefore,

classroom conversations centered on the experience *with* literature. And assimilation and accommodation were critical aspects of this conversation.

For example, while teaching third year students about German literature, I made an effort to engage students as participants in integrating new experiences with primary reading material in German. I played down the daily after-class searches in the glossary for the correct English translation and tried to relate what the text provided with students' past and present experiences. At the beginning of the language learning experience, the task of reading in another language is formidable. I imagined their German language difficulties as Caspar David Friedrich's pictorial depiction of icebergs. Their English vocabularies were the solid obstacles in their path because this knowledge often interfered with what they knew in German. However, I believed that the passage to understanding was not inpenetrable; therefore, stimulating students' conversations among themselves and with myself was a goal for helping us enjoy the benefits of reading in another language.

A second strategy for multiple perspectives is based on Posner et al.'s concept of cognitive conflict in the classroom. One of the ways in which cognitive conflict can be achieved is to include the use of anomalies. An anomaly is the failure of a given idea to make sense or fit into an existing network of conceptions (Posner 1982, p. 220). Arguably, the more students become involved with the anomaly, the

more dissatisfied they will probably be with the existing network of concepts with which they are engaged. Therefore, if the anomaly is taken seriously, it provides "the sort of cognitive conflict (like a Kuhnian state of *crisis*)" that creates the circumstances for the student to reorganize or replace existing concepts (p. 224).

Relating anomalies to literature, I find it helpful to consider the work of Alfred Schutz, whose description of the *shock experience* seems to connect a discussion of anomalies to Graber's second principle of variety of perspectives. Schutz's point is that it takes a shock of some sort to make people break through one province of meaning to another or to relate one reality to another (1962, p. 231). A shock may be perceived as a strong stimulant, but it hints at the reluctance of some individuals to experience ideas, places, or events that are unfamiliar. While not always pleasant, a shock is an act of provocation, Schutz would argue, that makes seeing or acting in an alternative way possible. In relating the anomaly to the literary experience, therefore, discussions may concentrate on the concepts of reality that the individual student meets when confronting such devices as paradoxes and irony.

For example, the dialects of Mark Twain's characters in Huckleberry Finn may generate a discussion about what Huck says that would not have the same effect were he to use Standard English. The teacher may ask, "What perspectives does Twain wish to present in the story so that he chooses the protagonist to express himself in the local

dialect?" What would be the nature of their social environments if students were to speak like Huck Finn? Would their perceptions be altered? A presentation of the theories of ethnocentricity ("a viewpoint that puts one variety of language at the center of things and ranges all other varieties more or less distant from that variety"--Bolton 1982, p. 23) and cultural relativism (a viewpoint that focuses on variety and not one "real" standard--Bolton, p. 25) could illustrate conflicts arising from the belief that there is one correct standard of spoken and written English. Discussion could move toward the various perspectives that individual dialect groups exemplify and into the conflict and paradoxes within society due to these various viewpoints.

Using the theories of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism to present a kind of anomaly, I incorporated another strategy while teaching German literature. To bring about cognitive conflict, I introduced students to the German short story, "Ein Tisch ist Ein Tisch" (Bichsel, 1969). This is a story about a man who refuses to use German words, as they are applied by the society around him; instead, he relearns German vocabulary by assigning new meanings to old words. Eventually, he masters his own idiolect (every person's individual language variety) so completely that in the end no one can understand what he is saying and he is only able to communicate with himself. After reading this story, class discussions focused on how and why a society should agree upon dialects and standard forms of a

language. What are the conflicts and the perspectives that result from such developments?

To incorporate other linguistic concepts, such as monogenesis (single origin) and polygenesis (multiple origin), and to consider their historical implications in literature, as well as issues of conflict, I also suggested to students that they create their own language. Besides learning what the creation of a language involves, I wanted students to consider the relationship between written symbols and spoken language. Students were asked to develop their own alphabet and then write a poem or short paragraph in their new orthographical system. When all the samples had been collected, students exchanged projects and explained their new notations to the class. I found that students used all kinds of geometric shapes, hieroglyphics and letter patterns, and through the experience began to learn to appreciate the process of communicating through written symbols.

Besides the suggestions offered so far, another way to create cognitive conflict in literature classes is by introducing irony. In "Bombs and Other Exciting Devices, Or The Problem of Teaching Irony," Lori Chamberlain suggests that too few teachers spend time discussing the trope called *irony.* She speculates that this may be because irony is a politically thorny subject. Irony, she finds, defines political relationships between the users and the audience (included or excluded); it suggests ideas of hierarchy and subordination; and it tends to be subversive. The power of irony, she argues, however, lies

in its being used to refer to dissonance at many levels, from the linguistic to the metaphysical (1989, pp. 29-30). As Chamberlain writes in her conclusion, a curriculum that includes the problem of irony will have to deal with the conflicts that arise as a result of having to discuss the social dimension of writing and reading, the power relations involved in the acts of reading and writing, and the non-neutral stance of language as a medium of communication (p. 38).

Using my third year German class again to provide an example, I would suggest including "Das Wort Mensch" by Johannes Bobrowski for a discussion on irony (see Figure 7). Bobrowski's fifteen-line poem in four stanzas examines the significance of the word *man*. Bobrowski describes it as located among other words in the dictionary, as fitting into the physical reality of the times, and as included in the conversation of the people around him. While it appears that the meaning of the word *man* is straightforword and that Bobrowski may be even praising the idea of *man* in the first twelve lines of the poem, Bobrowski's last two lines suggest a sharp but subtle contrast. Noting that wherever love does not exist, the word should not be spoken, Bobrowski implies that his fellow countrymen can be blamed for misusing the word. What seems to be praise for humanity is, in fact, a condemnation. Bobrowski's concern for man, cryptically depicted in the last two lines, suggests the dissonance that Chamberlain describes as the power of irony. Irony is significant in this piece because it

suggests that there are many subtle levels of meaning and that language is definitely a non-neutral form of communication.

Although the examples of anomaly and irony in the study of literature are applications that Posner et al. would perhaps support, the overall concept of cognitive conflict as a specific teaching strategy is difficult and its consequences unpredictable. Especially in the field of literature where the study of literature depends upon the unique personal involvement between reader and text, conflict can be a sensitive issue. The work of Rosenblatt, Bleich and Probst suggests this concern for the personal. Thus, for cognitive conflict to be a fruitful part of the learning experience, it needs to take place in an environment that allows for mistakes. Trial and error must be insured as a viable process in which students are given considerable freedom to develop their various perspectives. Confronting alternative viewpoints must take place in a setting that supports taking the risks which Ferlinghetti describes in "Constantly Risking Absurdity.".

If conflicts arise, students must be able to feel comfortable with ensuing discussions about the tough issues. A useful model for such an environment is described in Mindstorms by Seymour Papert. While promoting the advantages of LOGO, he makes the point that debugging is a major part of the learning environment associated with computers, and it is, in his opinion, precisely what helps makes this particular computer program so accessible to learning. The computer language is programmed so that it does not say, "You're wrong." Students learn to

Figure 7. Johannes Bobrowski's "The Word Man"

find their own errors. Similarly, for guiding students with experiences in literature it is also important to allow for mistakes. It is critical to the development of multiple viewpoints that deficiencies in thinking are seen as a help to learning.

A third strategy for helping students make sense of multiple perspectives is by representing content in multiple modes, e.g., verbal, mathematical, pictorial, and by helping students translate from one mode of representation to another. Clearly, the whole purpose of arguing for an alternative approach to literature that incorporates the visual perspective fits into Posner et al.'s third suggestion. When literature is presented through film, for example, many students who may otherwise not become involved with a specific piece of literature may be encouraged to read and interpret a text. In another example, it is possible for some students to come to understand and enjoy literature through visual art or music. In an earlier discussion in Chapter Three on the integration of art and literature several examples were given for the cross-pollination of certain works, e.g., The Starry Night and Nude Descending a Staircase.

Resymbolization

This final section focusing on the strategies for an alternative approach to literature incorporates Garber's third principle. This principle is that for students to verify that they understand a work of art, they must resymbolize it. David Bleich distinguishes between

symbolization as "the perception and identification of experiences" and resymbolization as the explanation for the first acts of perception and identification (1978, p. 39). Thus, symbolization involves initial perception and resymbolization suggests the process of reworking established symbols (p. 66). Assuming that in speaking of resymbolizing a work of art Garber uses the term *resymbolization* in Bleich's sense, then, a discussion may follow on how teachers can best help students to rework established symbols.

First, it is important to establish that resymbolization means a verbal reworking. Garber, like Rosenblatt in her emphasis on a transaction which uses "verbal symbols," focuses on the cognitive process of linguistic control over the literary experience. As Garber notes, students' resymbolization is "usually verbal." However, my contention is that while the perception of verbal symbols and their resymbolization are key ingredients in the literary experience, what is neglected is the idea that resymbolization may take place using nonverbal symbols. Therefore, I would argue that students should be encouraged to think of resymbolization as a process that can incorporate more than what is possible using verbal symbols.

Second, my experience has been that students are asked to write poems, essays, exposition papers, short biographies, argumentative papers, and journals, yet they are not encouraged to consider their own resymbolization as works of art. Too often this approach is saved for what happens in art class, and the literature class, which could be a

likely place for students to think of themselves as being engaged in the making of art, deals with other aspects of the literary experience. At the secondary level, students create music, they choreograph dances, they dramatize plays, and they give dramatic readings. In many of these activities, however, they are rarely encouraged to think of themselves as being engaged in creating a work of art.

In my own experience, when I asked German students to write German books, many students reluctantly got involved. Daily practice of verbs and vocabulary had convinced them they had a lot to learn. However, as a culminating third-year activity, I felt they needed to be able to enjoy what they had mastered. Thus, each student was asked to write a book in German for any level of reader that he/she wished. In addition, students were asked to illustrate their books. Many students believed that they did not have any artistic talent, but I rejected this as pure nonsense. Anyone could put together an interesting collage.

The final result was an extremely diverse group of German books for first-year students. The illustrations were highly imaginative, and the texts, I might add, were in many cases superior to anything found on the commercial market. As part of the emphasis on the art object and its enjoyment, students invited first-year students to class and read them their books. The importance of the event was that students in both age groups could express themselves through literature: one in the original making of the object and the other in the performance. Time was also allocated for talking about the language learning

experience and enjoying some German pastries. The exchange made the school newspapers and my students said the experience was enormously successful.

The resymbolization that Garber describes in the third principle, therefore, can be realized in practical terms by emphasizing that students create their own art objects and share them with the another age group. In addition, teachers like myself set the example by creating their own tangible work that they can also share. The creation of individual art objects may suggest to students that something of quality has been attempted and it may also suggest to them that the creation of something meaningful and valuable is worth the attention and admiration of not only their teacher but also their peers.

My point is that if teachers hope to engage students in the literary event, they must encourage students to understand that their resymbolization culminates in activities that lead to making an art object. Students, like the expert writers and poets they read, are participants in the aesthetic experience. And, in spite of the difficulty of measuring up to the standards for what is valued as art, it is a necessary step. Helen Vendler, the president of MLA in 1984, gave that organization an introductory speech on the study and teaching of literature. Beginning with an acknowledgement that the only true thing she could probably say about her topic was that is was an impossible goal, Vendler went on to describe the new forms of critical fashion that regularly debunk the thinking of previous years. She

concluded her remarks on this difficult topic with these words: "I would be satisfied if our students left our classes with that image of the artist [as the hardest of workers at the hardest of work], realizing, as with the feeling of a debt owed, that it is by the work of the artist that a culture lives on after its death" (p. 981). In terms of the approach to literature for which I am arguing, students should be also encouraged to think they are the artists who work so diligently.

In my own experience, the reason for painting visual interpretations of literature was that in a very real sense I wanted to respond to what I recognized as the literary art object. By painting my own interpretations, I felt that I was actually engaged in the experience of responding to the author as an equal participant in a meaningful conversation. I could not have painted had I thought Dickens, Rilke, Woolf, and Emerson were the artists and that I was merely a reader, interpreter, or classifier of knowledge. Therefore, I maintain that at the moment students are asked to become engaged with literature, they must be encouraged to feel that their resymbolization has the potential of being considered a work of art. For at any given moment, the inspiration they feel may be the critical impetus for their artistic endeavor in literature, a resymbolization that may be indeed worthy of being regarded as an art object.

Too often what happens, however, is that experiencing and making art is omitted from students' everyday experience in various disciplines. Thus, works of art, while praised by most teachers as

having extraordinary value, are actually devalued because students are taught that their experiences and performances cannot match the so called "art works." It is no surprise, therefore, why students resent being told to study or experience works of art. Jerry Neapolitan in "Art as Quality of Interaction Experience" argues this very point. He notes that "the value of a created work lies in the quality of experience resulting from creation and use and in the effects of creation and use on people's meaning and selves" (1983, p. 347). According to Neapolitan, the evaluation of the aesthetic experience is determined by utilitarian, physical, psychological, spiritual, and intellectual categories of experience. In addition, evaluation is rooted in the interaction of the creator and the raw material, the creator and the completed work, and the completed work and user of the work. Since these criteria determine the ultimate value of the work, Neapolitan urges that students should not be denied this kind of interactive experience.

The idea of introducing aesthetics into the literature curriculum scares many teachers. However, Donald Arnstine in "The Aesthetic as a Context for General Education" suggests that an interdisciplinary approach to aesthetics is actually preferable to the art courses that are organized specifically to study works of art. His projections for a new awareness of aesthetics follows closely the definition he cites in the first sentence of his article: "Aesthetic education will be used very broadly. . . to indicate whatever conditions might increase sensitivity to the artistic features of the world and to the aesthetic qualities of

experience and whatever might increase the understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of those features and qualities" (1966, p. 13). He denounces the limiting of the aesthetic concern only to art courses and insists that aesthetics is of importance to every aspect of experience.

In addition, David Swanger also challenges us to provide a more integrated aesthetic experience. Swanger suggests three areas of attack: one, art educators must support the uniquely provocative nature of the arts; two, art should demand that students be active interpreters of meaning and significance; and three, art should attune minds to a multiplicity of viewpoints (Swanger 1982, p. 269). Swanger's points bear a strong resemblance to Posner et al.'s emphasis on reordering and replacing existing concepts, developing activities to create cognitive conflict and representing content in multiple modes. For example, just as Posner et al. argue for investigating conceptual change through accommodation, Swanger argues for wrestling with strategies that will replace worn-out paradigms and useless structures. He urges that aesthetic education presents a rigorous, action-oriented agenda that develops the *how* of thinking about this topic more than *what*.

To conclude the discussion on Garber's three principles of engagement, multiple perspectives, and resymbolization, the final paragraphs in this section will focus on the aesthetic stance. Clearly, the emphasis on the literary event and the experience have shifted the attention away from analysis and categorization of literary content.

What is actually happening during engagement, during the broadening of interpretation through multiple perspectives, and during resymbolization is of critical significance. Student participation in these stages brings back the image of Nelms' Chinese boxes, which represent the development from one stage of appreciation to another. Nelms compares the series of boxes to four stages: evocation, response, interpretation, and criticism. The experience of literature, he says is a "process of four recursive stages or activities" (1988, p. 5). However, the box image suggests that the content in literature can be packaged into a four-dimensional container and may therefore be fixed. Moreover, because the larger boxes envelop smaller ones, larger may be better. Thus, the series of Chinese boxes may be appropriate as a symbol for the literary approach that supports knowledge *about* content and a perspective that supports a hierarchy among ideas.

However, given that the argument throughout this discussion has been for a literary approach that encourages the transaction between the reader and the text and for a perspective that encourages the experience with ideas, another image may be more beneficial. Therefore, I suggest using the Roman fountain described in a short poem by the German writer, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (see Figure 8). The Roman fountain is a three-tiered fountain made up of three marble basins that continually refill each other with water. Describing the process of the water rising up and falling into the first tier and then

Figure 8. Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's "The Roman Fountain"

overflowing into the second and into the third, Meyer writes in the last two lines that each basin gives and takes and rests and flows.
The movement at each stage is one that suggests the flow and balance of the water. As an image for the stages defined by either Nelms or Graber, the Roman fountain suggests fluidity and a recursive process that is continually in motion. Unlike the boxes, using the fountain image there can be no mistaking resymbolization or criticism as the final stage (or largest box) of the literary experience. The fountain underscores the importance of the fundamentally recursive quality of the experience.

Evaluation

Typically evaluation takes place at the last level, resymbolization, where students are asked to provide evidence that they have indeed expanded their knowledge base *about* literature. Probst points out that if information about literature is the most important aspect of the literary curriculum, then the standards provided, for example, by the New Critics, make testing and grading fairly manageable (1988, p. 221). After all, a right reading implies that definitive right and wrong answers to literary questions exist and, therefore, deserve superior and inferior grades. However, Probst goes on to argue that the lack of complexity often enforced by clear standards also creates situations of meaningless simplicity. He cites the example of a pilot in training who

is unable to land a plane successfully yet still receives a "C " (p. 224). This foolishness misrepresents the precision needed for the endeavor. Passengers flying want assurance that any given pilot can land his/her craft under many different kinds of circumstances, e.g., inclement weather, mechanical failures. A letter grade provides insufficient detail in evaluating the situation. In the evaluation process, what went wrong and how the pilot can improve are most critical and grading appears to mask the meaningful complexity.

A similar argument can be made for the testing and evaluation involved for the student learning to read and appreciate literature. If Dewey's and Rosenblatt's perspective on the transaction between the reader and text are recognized as the most significant aspect of the literary event, then that experience is what must be examined. And a single reading or interpretation has little to do with what should be evaluated. Probst suggests, for example, that teachers base their evaluations on whether students participate in discussions, whether students are able to change their minds, whether students can articulate new insights or different opinions, whether students can relate the literary work to other human experience, and whether students can distinguish between their thoughts and feelings brought to a literary work and those attributed to the text.

For example, when I introduced Franz Kafka's "Brief an den Vater" to my third year German students, they had trouble moving beyond the cynicism of Kafka's feelings toward his father. They wondered aloud

about the purpose of their involvement with such a depressing piece of literature. As we began to study the story, I was particularly interested in students recognizing the benefit of such a letter in German literature. My evaluation during classroom discussions included frequent judgments of students' attitudes and understanding of Kafka's severe criticisms. I also asked questions during our discussions that focused on who had changed their minds on Kafka's relationship with his father and why. In addition, students were also asked to write an essay addressed to their own fathers discussing their relationship. My purpose was to evaluate how students could relate their own relationship with their fathers to Kafka's text and what became significant when comparing and/or contrasting the two. To my surprise the first time I made this assignment, students wrote some of their most thoughtful German prose. I received excellent descriptions of their often enigmatic relationships with their fathers. The design of such an exercise can be related to the tradition in "authentic assessment" developed by Grant Wiggins who emphasizes that assessment should be responsive to individual students and the school context (Wiggins 1989, p. 704).

To clarify my evaluation and grading procedures, however, I need to briefly comment on what some may call a psychological approach to Kafka. Although, I used students' penetrating insights into their personal relationships with their fathers and the comparison to Kafka as a basis for discussion, my grading focused on their ability to use

language. Frequently students repeat memorized phrases and sentences in place of constructing language that reflects what they are actually thinking, feeling, and experiencing. As a result, finding topics about which they may be stimulated to compose, necessitates an emphasis on the personal. While these kinds of activities, e.g., Kafkaesque letter, can be seen as techniques to encourage students to take the complex process of constructing meaningful ideas seriously, the more formal aspects of schooling often requires that the process be evaluated on a relatively simple scale. Thus, I evaluated the letters by how students express themselves through language, e.g., vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. And similarly, in the books that these students wrote and illustrated, I evaluated how students expressed their experience through language and visual symbols.

Clearly, these examples demonstrate that evaluation can be based on some of Probst's questions and that the focus need not be solely on content but also on students' experiences with text. Problems surfacing when the context is the primary source of evaluation is one of the controversies that surrounds the Disciplined-Based Art Education (DBAE) program advocated by Elliot Eisner. Eisner promotes the study of art in four areas: production of art, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics. He supports the evaluation of three subject matters: the curriculum itself, the quality of teaching and the outcome of programs. Margaret Moorman's article in Art News on "The Great Art Education Debate" (1989), is about the controversies surrounding DBAE, one of

which centers around art as a sequentially organized discipline that supports the same kinds of measurement techniques applied in the behavioral or physical sciences. One of the primary concerns is that this interpretation of evaluation encourages more rigidity in the teaching of art.

As Lois Lord, a teacher and professor at New York's Bank Street College of Education comments, "My concern is that system wide, prescribed curricular sequences with necessary emphases in art history, art criticism, and aesthetics will result in greater rigidities and a more intimidating climate for the teaching of art (Moorman 1989, p. 129). Another Chicago leader in art education echoes this concern. Ronne Hatfield, director of Urban Gateways, a program that utilizes 200 artists and a budget of $3 million, argues that the sequential and measurable aspects of DBAE neglects valuable experiences that are difficult to measure. For example, it is difficult to measure the benefit of the work of a Ghanian artist who discussed symbol systems and block-printed fabrics, funeral clothes, and funeral rituals with Chicago students. As Hatfield notes, he had a "special dimension as a role model--a historical model in a way--for the children" (Moorman 1989, p. 128). Such an experience is troublesome to integrate and to evaluate in a rigidly structured curriculum.

In an article by Vincent Lanier on the role of disciplined-based art in Art Education (1987), Lanier also discusses evaluation. Noting that evaluation is an important part of DBAE, he writes two rather

interesting paragraphs in a section on the role of evaluation in art education. First, he tries to persuade the art educator that evaluation should include teachers making evaluative judgments all of the time. He writes, "In a sense, each task and each question asked of and raised by a student is a *test* (p. 43). Second, he argues that students should have a larger role in evaluating their work. For example, they should be encouraged to compare their earlier works with later works and evaluate the progress. While both suggestions promote an evaluation of art with which Rosenblatt and Dewey would probably agree, a problem arises when an art education program is organized towards a structured curriculum. While these suggestions make good sense in terms of students' art experiences, they will not become a significant part of the evaluation process if DBAE programs are primarily emphasizing content.

Rosenblatt's work in literary theory and as a practitioner is based on refuting the stronghold of *what* is taught in the classroom and encouraging teachers to examine the *how*. In supporting a move in this direction, she offers her aesthetic stance as a way of understanding the difference between experiences whose value lies in what can be taken away, e.g., information useful for particular actions, and experiences whose value lies in creating moments of enjoyment and personal development. Just as the interrogatives *how* and *what* ask different questions and require different replies, she argues, so, too, do experiences that include efferent and aesthetic stances involve

different questions and means of evaluation. Rosenblatt argues that confusion occurs, for example, when the purpose of literature is solely the acquisition of knowledge that can be extracted and applied elsewhere. She asks the question, "Is it not a deception to induce the child's interest through a narrative and then, in the effort to make sure it has been (literally, efferently) understood, to raise questions that imply that only an efferent reading was necessary?" (1982, p. 274).

In rejecting content as the sole basis for literature studies, Rosenblatt moves towards emphasizing students' past and present experiences, attitudes, and sensitivities. If aesthetic experience is the *raison d'etre* for what happens in the literature classroom, then it follows that this is what needs to be evaluated. Thus, the questions aimed at students' experiences should also make judgments regarding aesthetic qualities. Using the features that Ralph Smith identifies in the work of Monroe Beardsley (1984, p. 144), for example, students' experiences can be evaluated for their departure from everyday concerns (What freedom does the literary experience bring to students' mental development?). Or students' experience can be evaluated by the constructive mental activity resulting from the conflicting stimuli (What kind of active discovery was made possible?). Or students' experiences can be evaluated for a sense of integration (How did the student perceive a sense of restored wholeness and corresponding contentment as a person?).

One of the methods of evaluation that I prefer, however, is that students be evaluated on the basis of an art object that they create or a performance they give. Just as my German students were asked to write and illustrate a language text or to produce and perform a German short story on video, I would advocate that teachers spend more time encouraging students to combine the stages of engagement, multiple perspectives, and resymbolization into an art object or final performance. Students' literary events could include, for example, readings of their poetry or other writings for peers or parents. Students could also perform a dance or piece of music that was the result of literary engagement in the classroom. Or students could become involved with writing *Belles Letters* about works of literature.

As in the exempla that I presented in the previous chapter, pictorial symbols are a means of focusing on engagement, multiple perspectives and resymbolization. Essentially, students indicate engagement by demonstrating that they can become involved in creating a new work; students establish multiple perspectives when they translate from one mode to another (e.g., verbal to visual); and students resymbolize through a new art object which expresses their perspective. Throughout the process of creating an art object the critical ingredients are the past and present experiences that students can bring to the making of art, and it seems a most suitable task to encourage students in this direction.

While not advocating that literary content is unimportant, the focus on students staging an event or creating an art object for the purpose of evaluation is to concentrate on students' experiences as aesthetic activities. Too often students are merely relegated to recalling and analyzing information. If students are to synthesize the relationship between the student (reader) and the art object (text), then the activity involved in the making of literature should involve them in the total process of maker and interpreter. Putting students back in touch with literature means that students are participants in the doing and making. Eisner's views on knowledge are supportive of the connection between the making of the object and aesthetic experience. He notes that if our culture appreciated the constructing of knowledge more than the discovering of knowledge, then there "might be a greater likelihood that its aesthetic dimensions would be appreciated" (1985, p. 32).

Throughout this chapter on strategies that may be considered in the classroom, my argument has not been based on an either-or position towards a process or product approach to literature. Rather, as I examined more closely what happens to students who read literature, I found that both the way literature is experienced and the literary object are valuable. Therefore, I would argue that both the process and/or the product may also be the basis for evaluation. By using my own visual response to literature, I am suggesting that literary experience and its evaluation are extremely open-ended. For example,

a teacher may decide that a student does not need to provide a verbal analysis of his/her own work to verify what has already been demonstrated through a visual response. The student's art object may simply stand by itself and represent a meaningful literary experience. Indeed, as part of putting students back in touch with literature, there may be multiple ways in which to stimulate participation in literary experiences and then evaluate the relationships between the reader and the text.

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