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Teaching Literatures in English: An Empirical Algerian University Experiment

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Applied Linguistics**

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To Aymen and Nora

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For a very long time, literary reading has been jailed in a set of conventions already decided by the theorist and said to be accessible by few bright minds capable of violating the obstacles imposed by the intricacies of the literary text. Hence, it goes without saying that ordinary readers, who wish to make an understanding of the literary text from their own perspective, feel alienated by the complexities of the established conventions, contributing once more to the serious decline of literary studies in academic settings. More dangerously is the fate of these readers in foreign language contexts considered most of the time as idiosyncratic to deserve worthy attention. Therefore, the objective of the present research is to examine empirically; through the collection of data; the responses, both cognitive and affective, of thirty three Algerian university students to a literary selection of texts in English language. Indeed, this same study attempts to demonstrate whether literary response springs from capacities that are intrinsic to these readers or from other extrinsic predispositions. It, then, raises four main issues: first, Are all kinds of literary texts able to generate an appreciation in the Algerian reader? Second, Is literary competence necessary for an Algerian reader to appreciate a text of literature in English? Third, Is foregrounding responsible for generating response in Algerian readers of literary texts in English? Fourth, Which kind of feeling does foregrounding generate in these readers? The study is divided into six chapters; the first three chapters highlight the importance of the empirical approach to literary reading at the expense of a review of the major reader-response theories as traditionally conceived and which point out the limitation of literary interpretation. The fourth chapter proposes an empirical experiment on thirty three Algerian university students/readers so as to depict their profile and their potential predispositions in engaging with literary texts in English. In the fifth chapter, readers' depth of appreciation of two short stories, one canonical and one contemporary, is measured and compared in order to demonstrate the importance of possessing a literary competence for a reader of a literary text in English. The sixth and last chapter carries on a last experiment which aims at measuring the impact of foregrounding on Algerian readers of literary texts in English and the kind of affect the latter generates in these same readers. The results of this study suggest that Algerian students/readers of literary texts in English are capable of generating a literary appreciation of all kinds of literary texts written in English and more particularly of short stories. The second main finding shows that these naïve and unsophisticated readers are sensitive to intrinsic values of the literary text that surpass any extrinsic impact, which is an indication that literary competence is not necessary for mere appreciation. Finally, the last finding shows that despite their appreciation of literary texts while responding to foregrounding features, these readers are unable to develop the adequate strategies of interpretation which help them build their own understandings.

List of Abbreviations

5 RR	<i>5 Readers Reading</i> by Norman Holland (1975)
CI	<i>The Critical I</i> by Norman Holland (1992)
SC	<i>Subjective Criticism</i> by David Bleich (1976)
IV	<i>Interpreting the “Variorum”</i> by Stanley Fish (1976)
CP	Cognitive poetics
FL	Foreign language
D.A.	Depth of appreciation
L.F.T.U.	<i>Letter from the Understudy</i> by Kathryn Simmonds (2007)
T.C.	<i>The Confession</i> by Guy de Maupassant

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

It is commonly agreed that reading literary texts contributes to enlighten and civilise the minds of its readers. Western traditions of literary reading, more particularly, have elevated the reputation of this process; making of it unique in its ability to violate the familiar vision of the real world. Unfortunately, these arguments no longer carry the conviction they used to have because these modern theorists hold an arbitrary set of assumptions to distinguish between literary reading and other kinds of readings. Reader-response theorists, for instance, from I. A. Richards to the most contemporary ones, have succeeded in advancing an interesting range of theoretical proposals on the issue at stake while considering literariness a social convention, a harassing point, as it were! Yet, those readers, far from Fish or Holland's views, still consider the experience of literary reading a unique moment, so, on which ground do these readers value the experiences that literary reading offers as distinctive? Is it actually socially bound?

From among the various discussions I had with my students and later participants in this investigation, I could deduce that reading literature is seriously endangered, both in academic and non-academic settings. When asked what image literary scholarship had in the students' minds, the answer was disappointing: no particular thought, few pompous names were collected with the least of details. While this study is not another lament for the decline of literary studies, I will make my own complaints about the treatment of literary reading by contemporary theorists and how the latter fail to consider the particularity of foreign language contexts.

The starting point of this study points out an interesting number of personal observations I could collect through the several years of my literature

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teaching at university. The experience, as actually taking place, seems to hold no promising prospects. At least these were my impressions since my early moments of the teaching experience. At the beginning, I questioned my ability to transmit some aspects of the subject, and to a certain extent it was a daily challenge for me to go beyond my capacities and surpass different obstacles in dealing with literature in front of students whose knowledge of the subject was very meagre. Yet, challenging myself was not enough. As my self-confidence acquired more maturity, as my frustration grew deeper. I first attributed the obstacles encountered to my personal immature experience, but then I noticed that despite the efforts made and the extensive readings and the continual research, literature subject remained unwelcome by my students.

With the assumption that literature facilitates the acquisition of a foreign language, English language in our case, and with the assumption that literature represents the repository of morals and values of the other that are necessarily reflected through the foreign language, I found and I still find it very odd that our students, Algerian ones then, feel rebutted and alienated when dealing with literary texts in English language, at such an extent that if offered the opportunity not to attend literature lectures, they would not. Actually what helped me conclude that literature is really not appreciated among learners of English as a foreign language is the alarming number of fourth year students willing to read for memoirs in literature, regardless of the kind of literature? Hence, my curiosity to discover the reasons behind grew steadily and stimulated my research in this direction.

Despite the huge number of investigations about the fate of literature in foreign language contexts, very few studies have attempted to examine the experiences of these actual readers, considering them most of the time too idiosyncratic to deserve worthy attention. Rather than speculating about the effects of reading, as traditional reader-response theories have attempted to propose for instance, the acute examination of these readers and their involvement while engaging with literary texts in a foreign language context deserves, to my sense, more attention.

Questions as: Are all kinds of readers idiosyncratic? What does it mean to engage empathically with a character in a novel? Is there such a quality as literariness? Do sound structures in literary texts systematically influence readers? Does reading literature perform some function for us that no other experience can provide? represent some of the issues that remain very obscure within the field of literary reading as traditionally perceived, both in the native and non-native language contexts. Hence, my turn towards an empirical approach could be justified by the collection of evidence from the examination of actual Algerian university readers of texts of literature in English. It goes without saying, on the other hand, that the present study does not aim at dismissing the importance of theory in the field. On the contrary, it is motivated by a will to sustain theoretical propositions with empirical investigations, for no one could exist without the other. Both are required in order to establish significant insights into the nature of literary reading.

Thus, what is distinctive about the present approach? And what does it tell us about literary reading that we did not already know? I will attempt to indicate

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the objectives of this study by an overall description of some of the major issues and their empirical implications.

My concern will fall on the examination of university readers of literary texts in English, since my experimental work is built on the voluntary participation of students of English language willing to experience the assumptions raised by my research. In this view of things, I suggest that in contrast to the contemporary view that literary reading depends upon the acquisition of the appropriate conventions, literariness is manifested by the special nature of the interaction between reader and text. Put differently, and while I do not dismiss the relevance of literary convention, I assume that literary texts' effect on readers is responsible for their literariness, and that could be attributed, to use the Russian Formalists' claim, to the identification of some formal features that appear to be confined largely to literary texts.

Second, as it has been pointed out by numerous investigations in the past, learners' responses to literature were primarily studied in the cognitive domain attempting simply to measure readers' knowledge or comprehension of a literary selection in terms of what is known about cognitive functions such as schemata and frames, figure and ground, theory of the mind, and the like. Research in response to literature in the affective domain seemed and still seems to be a sensitive area of exploration. Therefore, the purpose of this study will be to extend our store of knowledge of response to literature in the affective domain by describing the responses of Algerian university readers to a literary selection of texts in English language. Indeed, this same study aims to demonstrate whether

literary response springs from capacities that are intrinsic to the reader, as held by Miall & Kuiken (1994a), or from other predispositions?

Third, assuming that most readers aim at an understanding of what they read, the approach I am advocating favours an *experience* of literature rather than its *interpretation*. (Miall & Kuiken, 2002; Miall, 2005; Danaher, 2006) To focus on experience, therefore, would imply the depiction of responses to literary texts that emerge from personal interactions with these same texts. In other terms, the distinction *experience vs. interpretation* allows to distinguish between those ordinary and actual readers interested in the mere significance of literary texts they read and those scholars whose primary besetting preoccupation is to interpret these same texts. The attention to experience in an EFL context also provides specifically for an empirical approach, since it prompts us to ask what experiences of literary reading Algerian readers of texts in English have, and to what extent these are distinctively literary.

Fourth, I assume that the cultural differences which distinguish the Algerian readers from the texts they are reading are not responsible for this lack of appreciation and more dangerously for this indifference, for how could it be explained that these same learners do appreciate all that represents the other; the foreigner like its music, its fashion, and its language. I can advance, and in spite of their rarity, that across these teaching years, I have met very enthusiastic learners who actually attended my literature classes with great pleasure, an indication that other barriers appear to hamper the teaching of this literature in a foreign language not necessarily related to its cultural associations.

Thus, the investigation will be conducted then under the following assumptions:

- 1- The classroom is considered an appropriate research setting.
- 2- The literary texts selected for the investigation are unfamiliar ones of high interest and accessible vocabulary to all readers.
- 3- The literary texts selected are segmented textually to analyse the response of readers to the different deviations of language.
- 4- Readers' cultural background does not restrict their appreciation of the literary texts in the foreign language.
- 5- Literary discourse has a particular effect on the mind, refreshing and changing readers' mental representations of the world (Cook, 1994; Semino, 1997; Hakemulder, 2004) and feeling is a central part in the constructive work required by readers of literary texts (Miall & Kuiken, 1994)
- 6- Readers' literary competence is not necessary for the fulfilment of the research. (Van Peer, 1986. Miall & Kuiken, 1994; Fialho, 2007)

The issues raised above, then, motivate the discussions on offer throughout the dissertation and aim at answering the following questions:

- 1- What are the Algerian students' attitudes toward literature in English at university?
- 2- What are the teaching methods and activities Algerian students like the most at university?
- 3- What are the literary genres Algerian students like the most at university?

- 4- Are all kinds of literary texts able to generate an appreciation in the Algerian reader?
- 5- Is literary competence necessary for an Algerian reader to appreciate a text of literature in English?
- 6- Is foregrounding responsible for generating response in Algerian readers of literary texts written in English?
- 7- Which kind of feeling does foregrounding generate in these readers?

Overall, the first part including the first three chapters is designed to provide a survey of the theories, issues and methods that I have found important in my work. The reader unfamiliar with the empirical approach I am favouring in this work might wish to understand the reasons that have contributed to shape this line of thought from my own perspective. The second part including the three last chapters offers accompanying empirical experiments to all the theoretical concepts I have aimed at considering in an Algerian university context.

The first chapter entitled “Theoretical Review of Reader Response Theories” is not presented as a mere review of the most prominent theoretical contributions in the field of Reader response theory, rather it is aimed at pointing the limitations of this theory despite its central focus on the reader.

I start by arguing that literary works should be considered as no more than a form of language, thus, I point to the narrowness of reader-response theorists’ view of language, which does not appear to provide satisfactory elements in the understanding of literature, especially in an EFL context.

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In the second part of this same chapter, I point to the discrepancies of the Reader-response theory as it has traditionally been implemented in the teaching field and aim at discussing the reasons behind its decline.

Finally, I point to the role and place of the canon within literature and put the emphasis on the dangers of perpetuating these texts at the expense of failing teaching and learning experiences. This last issue is of a particular interest to my study since it remains among the most triggering questions that I raise and on which I will conduct an empirical experiment.

In the next chapter, “The Limitation of Interpretation,” I consider in some detail the problem of interpretation and its limitation, and appeal to the evidence of one of Henry James’ short stories. In “The Figure in the Carpet” the search for the ‘figure’ embedded in the literary text appears as an unreachable end and presents itself as an illusion. I point further to the contribution of the innovative cognitive poetics approach which carried on serving the objectives of interpretation. I point also to the disregard of feelings in the mechanisms of reading literary texts and how the latter are necessarily needed to complete cognitive processes already advanced by the proponents of schema theory.(Graesser, 1981; Cook, 1994; Semino, 1997)

In the third chapter, “On the Need of becoming Empirical,” I point to several studies which focused on the use of various methods of evaluating response to literature and populations of subjects. In this same review of earlier empirical works in North America, I aim at showing those researchers in the field as being primarily concerned with improving educational practices at the expense of mere literary appreciation. Then, I point to the need to reach a theoretical

consensus among scholars combining earlier empirical theories on literature with future expected satisfactory implications. Hence, I expose the empirical contributions of major researchers in the field as Groeben and Schmidt and point to the originality of Miall & Kuiken's approach and its possible relevance in an EFL context.

In the fourth chapter entitled: "Literary reading in an EFL context: an Algerian Empirical Experiment" I start by describing the major popular approaches implemented in the teaching of literature in EFL contexts thus highlighting the prominence of stylistic approaches in generating an affective engagement from the part of readers. I carry on by describing the status of literature in the syllabus of English at the level of the Algerian university and how the latter suffers drastically, both from the part of the teacher and the institution. In the second part of this chapter I propose an empirical experiment through which I aim at drawing a profile of the students/readers at university, their attitudes, their preferences and their expectations. The objective of this first stage is to depict students' predispositions in engaging with literary texts in English.

In the fifth chapter "Literary Competence: Key element or not in an EFL context?" I begin by reviewing scholars' views on the necessity for readers to be literary competent in order to engage with literary texts. However, I also put to the fore some empirical investigations which already demonstrated the importance yet not the necessity to possess neither literary nor generic competencies to appreciate literary texts. I propose, then, another experiment to be conducted on the same participants of the earlier stage. In it I expose the participants to two short stories, one canonical and another more contemporary, following a Rereading paradigm

as devised by Dixon and al. (1993) and whose objective is to measure the depth of appreciation of both short stories and proceed later to a concluding comparison.

In the last chapter entitled: “Foregrounding in the response to Literary texts: an Algerian Empirical Experience” I start by explaining the concept of foregrounding, its theoretical evolution and most importantly its implementation in practical studies like the ones of Van Peer (1986) and Miall & Kuiken (1994a) and others. Then I point to the limitation of the theory as advanced by some scholars. In the next point, I point to the effects of foregrounding and highlight one study in particular because the latter points out the crucial effect of affect in the response to literary texts. In the second part, I propose a third experiment made of two stages. In the first stage I expose an original and a segmented version of the short story *The Kiss* to both students and evaluators and proceed to a comparison about their respective findings. Finally, in the last stage, I collect the written protocols of the same students and devise the kind of feelings they have used while engaging with the literary text. The objective from this experiment is to measure the impact of foregrounding on Algerian readers of literary texts in English and the kind of affect the latter generates in these same readers.

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical Review of Reader Response Theories

Introduction

Whether oral or written, the productions of literature are meant to be interpreted, for meaning seems to represent the objective for which readers and critics strive to reach whatever the approach used. Yet, one noticeable feature is the fact that up to the present moment research in the domain has not agreed upon whether literature is ranged within a particular kind of discourse with special distinctive properties or simply is the result of a set of cultural conventions which have been institutionalised. (Miall, 2000: 321) For a very long time, the literary text has been approached from various perspectives, but which can be in fact, included within one of the two major traditions: either a hermeneutic approach, centred on the text or a contextual approach, which deals with the external factors that have contributed to the production of that literary text.

Relatively new, reader response theory, however, has revolutionised the already established traditions; in that, it has placed readers at the centre of interest and claimed the no more passive role they should have. This same theory has been used to describe a multiplicity of approaches which focus on the reading process. Put differently, this theory highlights the active role of readers, questions sharply the autonomy of the text, and insists on the construction of meaning rather than its discovery.

In the 1960s, Hans Robert Jauss, a German exponent of reception theory¹ and a precursor to reader response theory, used the term “horizon of expectations” to deny the universality of meaning. He stated that literary texts should be interpreted according to the period in which they were written and as such readers

¹ In the following part of my discussion, I will explain the conceptual difference between Reception theory and Reader response theory.

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over time would build new meanings which might largely differ from the intention of the author at the time they were produced (Holub, 1984). On the other hand, another major figure of reader response theory, Wolfgang Iser, held that readers engage in the reading of a literary text using their own values, experiences, and extra literary norms, thus, it is only through “the act of reading” that the text is completed. Therefore, both Iser and Jauss recognised the fact that many readers can produce as many readings as possible of the same text.

In his turn, Stanley Fish suggests that there is no meaning enclosed within a text. It is the reader or more exactly the reading communities, rather, that actually create meaning in the process of reading. Fish has granted readers a more serious responsibility than the one attributed by Iser and considered them as possessing full meaning of the text. In other terms, because of the unstable nature of meaning, Fish claims, the text could not bear it, only the reader could.

Hence, it is noteworthy to state that the proliferation of theoretical and practical investigations has not produced conceptual unanimity on what precisely is reception theory or what is meant by reader response theory. A major difficulty remains perhaps in determining exactly what the two concepts mean and how they overlap. Therefore, I will begin my discussion by pointing out a deliberate distinction between the two theories. This *discrimination* so far is done on purpose so as to justify the theoretical support selected in this study.

1.1. Reader Response Criticism vs. Reception Theory

How does *Rezeption* (reception) differ from *Wirkung* (usually rendered by “response” or “effect”)? Apparently, both terms have to do with the impact of the work on someone and it seems unclear that they can be separated completely; yet, they still represent one of the most persistent dilemmas in the literary community. Actually, the most frequent suggestion has been to view “reception” as related to the reader, while “response” is supposed to pertain to textual aspects and arrangements. (Holub: 1984)

As a striving endeavour to refine terminology, which in fact is not to be neglected or dismissed, theorists have attempted to simplify some of the possible confusions and adopted their own particular policy of definition. For Holub, for instance, “reception theory” refers “*throughout to a general shift in concern from the author and the work to the text and the reader.*”(1984: xii) He, therefore, used it as an *umbrella* term which encompassed both Jauss and Iser’s projects as well as empirical research and the traditional occupations with influences. In her turn, Patricia Harkin used the term “reception theory” to refer to an “*inquiry into a text’s effect on specific classes of readers.*”(2005: 411) By specific classes of readers, she addressed women, members of the working class in Liverpool, residents of formerly colonized areas, devotees of George Eliot, persons who enjoy hard-boiled detective stories, and so forth. (2005:411)

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Yet, the learner acquainted with recent American criticism² will be more likely to wonder how reception theory is related to what has become known as “reader-response criticism”. Holub carries on his policy of definition and sees the term “reader-response criticism” as another *umbrella* term that accommodates systems as diverse as Norman Holland’s “transactive criticism”, Johnathan Culler’s “structuralist poetics”, and Stanley Fish’ “affective stylistics”. Again, it refers to a general shift from the author of the work to the text-reader pole³. More acutely, Harkin defines it as the effort to provide an account of what happens when human beings engage in a process they call “reading”⁴. Such accounts are warranted in any of the several disciplines like psychoanalysis, linguistics, semiotics, phenomenology, etc. Harkin’s understanding of the term seems to offer a closer definition to that of millions of readers, since it attempts to provide tentative answers to the question: “*What happens when human beings encounter written texts?*”⁵

At a first level of discrimination, Holub appears to separate deliberately the German from the *other* groups of theorists dealing with similar issues, and explains that a number of important features is at the origin of this categorization. First, he points out the designation itself and which he explains has been applied *ex post facto* to a number of writers who had very little contact with or influence

² By recent American criticism, I refer to the bulk of theories that emerged during the late seventies and early eighties in the U.S. and which in fact gained the credit of being part of an interesting policy of teaching literature while developing an appropriate pedagogy.

³ Interestingly enough, Holub sees W.Iser an exception because ranged among the initiators of both reception theory and reader-response criticism.

⁴ Harkin (2005) distinguishes between the use of the term « reader-response criticism », a naming which categorizes such thinkers as Iser, who refers to a reading of a given text or texts, and the use of « reader-response theory » which refers to a general account of reading.

⁵ Harkin (2005) has translated the urge to understand what was nearly in every reader’s mind. She quoted G. Ettari & H.C. Easterling in “Reading and the Profession” Reader: Essays in Reader-Oriented Theory, Criticism, and Pedagogy (2002: 9/37)

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on one another. They do not form a school of thought or a unified trend; on the contrary, they seem to have responded independently with their proper methods to quite different predecessors and circumstances. More strikingly, is the fact that some of the critical views which gathered under the same label seem to provide great disparity of position, “*if reader-response criticism has become a critical force, as some would maintain, it is by virtue of the ingenuity of labelling rather than any commonality of effort.*”(Holub, 1984: xiii)

By contrast, “reception theory” is seen as more cohesive, conscious, and as the result of a collective enterprise. It emerged as a group of effort on both the institutional and critical levels, involving a productive exchange of ideas among its advocates. Besides, many proponents of the theory are associated with the University of Constance, either as professors or graduates⁶.

Finally, reception theory may be separated from reader-response criticism on the basis of lack of mutual influence. Apart from Iser whose writings received extensive approval among both sides, there has been practically no contact between the two groups.

Therefore, the relative value accorded in the academy to each category is clearly distinguished. It appears implicitly in J. Mashor and P. Goldstein’s *Reception Study* when they remark the following:

Since the mid-1980s collections and casebooks have re-examined the reception of Hamlet, Huckdeberry Finn, Pride and Prejudice....to mention just few titles, and major works, including Steven Mailloux’s Rhetorical Power and Reception Histories, Gary Taylor’s Re-inventing Shakespeare, Jane Tompkin’s Sensational Designs, and Peter Widdowson’s Hardy in History, have contributed markedly to Anglo-American reception criticism. Add to this work the reception studies in cultural studies-from Janice Radway’s Reading the

⁶ The advocates were also participants to biannual colloquia, whose proceedings were published under the series title *Poetik and Hermeneutik*. The core group of the participants has contributed most to the reorientation of West German literary theory that has gone under that name.

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Romance and Tony Bennett and Janet Wollacott's Bond and Beyond to Michael Bérubé's Public Access- as well as work in the history of the book, and it becomes apparent that reception study has been anything but marginal. (in Harkin, 2005:412)

While the issue at stake is not to debate which theory is better than the other, especially if we consider that the similarities in general critical perspective between reader-response criticism and reception theory are ultimately too superficial and too abstract for a merging point, my discussion, will revolve around reader-response criticism because of its pedagogical implications and the impact it has on the teaching field. For the first time, I need to stipulate, and as opposed to reception theory, reader-response theory sought to explain what happens when people read, *it made reading teachable* (Harkin, 2005:415). In *No One Afraid's of Wolfgang Iser* (1981), Fish points to the ease through which Iser's phenomenological account of reading acts could be co-opted into a set of instructions for producing new critical readings. A theory of reading was made accessible to the community of teaching at the expense of a disqualification from "high theory"⁷ - in the same way writing was to become professionalized⁸.

Marginalising the power of the authorial intention was not sufficient to provide answer to the question; "*how could readers decipher "hidden meanings"?*" Actually, there is much credit to be gained by perpetuating the mystery around "the figure in the carpet" by Iser since idiosyncratic readings, which represent the core of the theory of reading, render this same theory teachable- teachable in a way that was in the language of the eighties

⁷ I am borrowing the term from Harkin, who explains that: "*theories disappear- as theories- when they become naturalized- when they become (apparently) so easy to understand that they no longer serve to demarcate their adherents as more knowledgeable or more intrinsically intelligent than the average person.*" (2005: 416)

⁸ Harkin makes an interesting analogy between literary studies and composition studies, despite the variety of assumptions used at the beginning of the studies.

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“empowering”. (Harkin, 2005) To my sense, it is the teachability of this theory which has contributed to its survival, and contrary to Fish, I do see it neither a disqualification from ‘high’ status nor from seriousness. Interestingly enough, this same theory was amenable to a variety of courses which emphasized the importance of writing on topics that were literary; hence, the pedagogical aspects of Iser and Fish’s works, for instance, were examined more practically. The marriage between the literary community and the composition studies has contributed to help students read and write more competently rather than expound or apply the theory. It has also permitted if not obliged early reading theorists whose principal commitment was to *absolute* literary criticism to associate themselves to its pedagogical implications at the extent of *professionalisation*⁹.

Reader-response theory has certainly evolved to the degree of a pedagogical field that dominates the literary community, yet, the achievements should not have been realised at the expense of great theorist’ actions, which are, in fact, at the origin of the emergence of that pedagogy,

Bleich, Holland, Iser, Rosenblatt, and even Fish told us not merely that readers make meanings but also how. They taught us that accounts of reading acts need not dwindle sets of restrictive instructions in what particular texts mean. From their work, a pedagogy is still recuperable. (Harkin,2005:422)

In what follows, a review of the main reader response theorists’ contributions, which have allowed the emergence of a theory of reading, is presented.

1.2. Theoretical Review

The argument so far aims at discussing the theory that supports the view that different readers of the same literary work could produce different readings

⁹ By professionalisation, I refer to those groups of researchers who organised themselves as associations which share and develop a body of knowledge of its own. (See Richard Ohmann for more information)

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and therefore could generate different interpretations. It aims also at speculating on the extent to which that theory could fit an EFL context, where readers are not only different, but also ones dealing with texts of literature in a different language.

The first point to highlight is that reader-response theories gain the credit of presenting a multitude of different interpretations as coming from different readers of the same literary texts. They succeeded in holding the conviction that different readers could produce different interpretations, yet, validating the conviction appeared to be a more complicated matter. A.I. Richards (1929) was one of the first practitioners who presented a selection of poems to a group of Cambridge undergraduate students, where he found the results just but “astonishing” in their variety and differences. Some years later, Norman Holland (1975) succeeded in supporting the above view and presented more evidence on the “idiosyncrasy” of responses in his experiment. He experienced the free associations of five readers of Faulkner’s *A Rose for Emily* and reached the conclusion that the difference in interpretations reflected each reader’s patterns of *defence* and *fantasy*. In his turn, David Bleich saw that a subjective motivation is at the origin of each individual interpretation and as such explained that responses spring from disharmonious feelings related to the reading experience.

Hence, the most striking point rests in the fact that despite the uniqueness and individuality of the interpretations of the literary works, it seems inherent that those critics would like to see people agree and join them in their understanding of the works. On the one hand, they claim openly that interpretation is proper to each individual reader; while on the other hand, their writings support major trends of understanding which would gather more than one unique reader, as if they want to

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generate common interpretations of the same literary work, a controversial issue, as it were.

From this view of things, which to my sense, has contributed to weaken the validity of the theory, I intend to have a close look at the assumptions and analyses of N.Holland, D.Bleich, as well as S.Fish and W.Iser¹⁰.

My first assumption aims at understanding literary works and considering them as no more than a form of language. Thus, I see in those theorists' view of language a problematic issue which does not offer solid foundation to the understanding of literature.

My second assumption goes to criticise contradictory views of these theorists who seem to present readers forming similar understanding of many aspects of a literary text while neglecting the power of the word in the text.

In "*I. A. Richards revisited: Do readers agree in their interpretations of Literature?*" (Martndale & Dailey, 1995), Richard's experiment was reproduced on 32 psychology¹¹ students who were asked to read the same poems. After 3mn reading, the results showed a high degree of agreement. (1995: 304) In the second part of the experiment, 11 psychology students were asked to read three of the poems by Richard's selection and write a short essay on each poem. The results were analysed by a computer as well as by the researchers who concluded that, "*most people extract a similar meaning or gist from a poem.*" (1995: 307)

¹⁰ I have not included Louise Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration*, originally published in 1938, since my interest falls on theorists' contributions after the 1970s and in spite of the popularity of her work which offered critics and even the community of teachers' insights on how meanings are constructed and contextualised by readers.

¹¹ The participants of the experiment were undergraduate women selected from psychology departments and not literature ones in order to demonstrate that ordinary readers as opposed to professional ones are those readers to whom Richards directed his experiment.

Far more interestingly, a similar study to the one by Martindale & Dailey was conducted by Therman (2003) and whose aim was to show, on one hand, the weaknesses of Richards' study, and on the other hand, the possibility to reinforce and supplement the study by the introduction of some prose texts. Actually, the selection of prose texts rather than poetry ones would offer a larger spectrum of responses, particularly to the learners of texts of literature in a foreign language¹². In addition, I see in Therman' study one of the first attempts to make non native readers meet texts of literature in a foreign language and point out some of the weaknesses of Richards' study.

After having repeated the experiment of Martindale & Dailey on herself, Therman ran through two problems. First, she discovered that she did not have ready criteria for assessing the poems through the terms of the rating "static", "tense", or "strong", and saw that it would have been more appropriate to read and analyse the various problems, and only after having proceeded to a comparison that she could say which kind of poem it is. Unfortunately, the time frame did permit such a procedure (3mn). The second problem was due to deficiencies in language skills from her part, yet, she did not forget to notice that even Richards' students, native speakers then, ran through similar difficulties in understanding the poems, and even those of Martindale & Dailey reported the same difficulty. She concluded then, that similarity in rating (choosing the same answers among the proposed ones) does not necessarily reflect similarity in opinions, thus these similar solutions could in fact be the result of the same reaction to the difficulties

¹² From a personal experience of a teacher of literature, experiencing poetry has always proved to be a fastidious exercise which could be accessed by very few minds. In addition, reading poetry is seen by a majority of approaches, whether stylistic, formalist or conventional, as constraining and being the property of a particular class of advanced learners. (See Hanauer, 1998 for more information)

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in understanding the poem. While analysing the second part of the experiment, she understood that there is much advantage to be drawn from the freely worded responses of the students. These responses seem to offer a wide range of explanations to the difficulties readers encounter while reading the literary texts. For instance, which kinds of associations to personal life readers do while interpreting the text? Which kind of external or internal factors affect interpretation? Which kind of details in the text form the interpretation of the reader?.....

I have chosen to examine the theories of N.Holland, D.Bleich, S.Fish, and W.Iser because to my sense they offer influential insights in the understanding of literature. Besides, these theories rest on four different approaches to explain reader-response criticism and appear interesting in the sense that each theory influenced the other and contributed to its growth. They are also interesting because of their assumptions related to the nature of language and the mechanisms that make communication possible.

Hence, explaining what is meant by *interpretation*, *formal feature*, *objectivity*, and *idiosyncrasy* is necessary.

When reading texts, we necessarily form an understanding of a multitude of things in the text and we do it at the same time. Everything is intertwined and mixed up in a flow of questions: What is behind the character's behaviour? What does he aim at? And Why? Why has the writer chosen such an environment?..... Hence, a multitude of possibilities is considered and that despite the fact that we are not obliged to choose among.

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We also necessarily proceed to an evaluation, how is the language of the text? Its composition, the characters, and what about the author? Thus, “*interpretation*” appears as an act of “construction” of an understanding among so many different possibilities. Not surprisingly, all of Holland, Bleich, Fish, and Iser highlight interpretation as an act of construction by the reader.

In his early works, Holland advanced that perception involves a subjective and “*objective*” component because people make use of the world around them to recreate their personal identity, while in his later works the main argument revolves around readings as being products of unique brain processes and how the latter cannot be achieved out of external reality. In his turn, Bleich suggests that readers can only know their own symbolisations of objects, and that urges us not to confuse these with real objects, which presumably we cannot know. Fish argues that readings cannot be objective because they are always tied to a particular point of view, but they are not subjective either because all available points of view are socially bound. (1980:335)

Fish seems to refer to some absolutely neutral point of view outside a particular social frame when he hints about “*objective*”. More interestingly, Holland and Bleich join Fish and argue that our knowledge is always limited to our point of view, while Iser seems to believe that literature is one means of freeing us from this point of view in order to gain new knowledge and holds that the moment we stop reading and building images, we “*find ourselves detached from our world, to which we are inextricably tied, and able to perceive it as an object*”(1978: 130), another contradiction it is, that which makes Holland, Bleich, and Fish point out the subjectivity of the literary response, and which, in fact, abandon the term

objective from its use. Besides, and again because the point of departure of this discussion which supposed an ambiguity behind the similarity in the readers' responses, we suggest that text are objective entities. Thus, even if readers differ in the process used to construct an understanding of a text or simply perceive it differently, they may agree on its outcome, because simply their perceptions are built and depend on common social definitions and criteria.

Central to Fish' argumentation, the term "***formal feature***" is defined as the points at which he would declare readers to have produced an interpretive act. (1976:476) In other words, since the points which have enabled readers to shape their interpretive act could only be identified by referring to words, the term "***formal feature***" may be seen as referring to words and the properties of arrangements of these words.

To end with concepts central to this discussion, the term "***idiosyncratic***" is often used by Holland and Bleich. The former suggests that perception relies on idiosyncratic processes while the latter argues that people have idiosyncratic language systems. Following the above definitions of the term idiosyncratic, it appears that neither the language nor the process is common to two readers, on the contrary, it is peculiar to each person and could be then very unique.

1.2.1. Norman Holland

Holland aimed at answering the question: Why do people interpret the same text differently? (1975). His first assumption rests on Freud's theory of psychoanalysis which he sees a good basis for understanding literature. His second assumption is that each individual has a unique unchanging core that

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guides all his dealings with the world. (1975: 53) This core consists of strategies with which the individual tries to gain maximum pleasure and ward off anxiety caused by conflicts between desires and demands of reality.(1975:55) These strategies remain the same throughout life, and Holland suggests that the constancy arising from them could be called the “identity theme”.(1975:56)

After having conducted a series of experiments on students’ responses to a story after having read it, he concluded that reading is governed by four principles:

- 1- style seeks itself
- 2- defences must be matched
- 3- fantasy projects fantasies
- 4- character transforms characteristically¹³

In this research (5RR), Holland suggests, on one hand, that texts are just dead signs “specks of carbon” (1975:12), which each reader moulds to fit the dictates of his or her unique defences and fantasies. On the other hand, he suggests that texts represent something shared; he called “a sharable promptuary”. (1975:282)

Thus, Holland seems to attribute differences in responses to the differences in the reader’s characteristic strategies for avoiding anxiety and seeking pleasure while the similarity would be due to “*the sameness used to create the experience*”.(1975:247)

¹³ First, the reader responds positively to a work or a part of it only when the latter fulfils his or her hopes towards the work. Second, the reader must find in the work something that corresponds to his or her way of defending against anxiety. Third, from the material that has matched his or her defences; the reader will create his or her typical wish-fulfilling fantasy. Finally, the reader will transform the fantasy into an “intellectual content” such as “literary point or theme”.(1975:113/22)

Yet, there seems to be aspects in Holland's work that could be challenged. Bleich, for instance, sees it unclear how Holland has determined what in a response represents defence and what determines fantasy. In other terms, Bleich criticises the use of personality tests which he considers as inconclusive and lacking persuasiveness in the result. For Bleich, the personality tests could not provide an independent reference point as Holland seems to pay little attention to the similarities in the answers of his students.

The second question Holland has raised is: What weight should we give to the unique aspects of responses? In other words; how are we to say whether the responses are unique or similar, is there a means?

In "A Rose for Emily" by W. Faulkner, Holland failed to explain the existing similarities in the answers of the readers depicting the "tableau".¹⁴ More exactly, Holland seemed to have deliberately concentrated on the idiosyncrasy of the readings and as such saw them the result of personal strategies. He seemed to have dismissed the similarities of the answers which could actually have shown the weaknesses of his own study. Therman(2003), in her turn, wonders whether it would be possible to explain how readers, who were different in defences and fantasies, assigned similar intellectual content to the word "horsewhip"¹⁵? Thus, in his failure or more exactly the failure of his theory to explain the similarities in responses, Therman proposes, instead, the view of L.Wittegentein, which suggests

¹⁴ In 5RR(1975), Holland was interested to see how each reader interpreted what might the image of the "tableau" mean. Interestingly enough, all readers and even Holland himself considered the tableau as an indication of what relationship between the father and the daughter was like, an indication, as it were, of an existing similarity among readers that Holland deliberately dismissed.

¹⁵ All readers of the experiment made relevant converging remarks around the horsewhip and associated a sense of control with the "tableau".

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that responses could come from habit, training, shared rules, and common understanding of human beings¹⁶.(2003:89)

Hence, in *The Critical I* (1992), Holland realises that similarities in responses should have deserved more attention than he had devoted in his earlier work. Identity is still central to his research, but instead of being the unique core of strategies used to gain pleasure and defend against anxiety, he defined it more trivially as: “*a construct, a way to represent the continuities we see in someone.*”(1992:27) Most importantly, he goes to advance that identity governs a person’s cognitive processes to build his responses while reading the literary text. (1992:28) Holland comes to realise, then, that words in themselves do not mean but people bring them to mean through mental processes of hypotheses formation, which are governed by identity. The rules of determining the meaning of a word are shared and rigid but their application varies, “*words mean different things to different people.*” (Therman, 2003:19)

Holland’s main shortcoming appears in the triviality of his explanation while making the reader sole responsible for the interpretation of the rule. Can a conventional interpretation reflect various identities? Is it sensible to try to explain it with identity rather than convention?

Interestingly enough, Holland’s view makes us necessarily think about the polysemy of words- when Wittgenstein explains that a word does have different uses, depending on the context of use, and if ever used out of context, it necessarily means different meanings that do not suggest that two readers are likely to generate two different meanings of the same word and thus produce two

¹⁶ Yet, Therman does not forget to explain that Wittgenstein’s view does not offer ground for psychological factors that are involved in the emotional response of the readers.

different responses.¹⁷ Indeed, Holland's view of language appears ambiguous and misleading. Initially, he suggested that words are essentially "dead specks of carbon" which gain meaning from the readers' mental operations. Later on, he included the notion of culturally shared rules for determining the meaning of words but every one applies them differently. Despite the fact that his assumption about language carries a shared basis of language, I think that it is insufficient to assign meanings to words according to the readers' psychological defences and fantasies rather than a common logic in applying the rules of determining the meaning of words, and which in fact implies the prominent role of convention in the interpretation of literary texts. Possibly, these psychological strategies could determine the meaning of words on the page and therefore deviate from the convention, but only exceptionally.

1.2.2. David Bleich

Bleich's argumentation is summed up in the idea that all knowledge, whatever its nature, has a subjective motive.(1978: 65/69) He advances then, and after having examined the works of Freud on the interpretation of dreams, that rather than disclosing the actual cause of a dream, an interpretation reveals the interpreter's motive to join that interpretation.(1978:79) Hence, Bleich concludes that interpretation, in general, is,

motivated and organised by the conscious desires created by disharmonious feelings and/or self-images; the goal of these desires is increasing the individual's sense of psychological and social adaptability. (1978:83/4)

¹⁷ I support Wittgenstein's view which suggests that an association reveals the meaning of a word under the assumption that understanding is a matter of associating a word with its referent, and the object a word stands for its meaning.(For more information, see Therman (2003: 8/12))

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He assumes that when confronted with art, the impulse to interpret is triggered by a desire to understand the affect provoked by one's perception of an aesthetic object. He uses three concepts to explain our encounters with aesthetic objects:

- 1- response
- 2- symbolisation
- 3- resymbolisation (1978: 97)

Bleich assumes that response implies necessarily an evaluative perception of an object. The next step would be to attribute the evaluative perception of the object a symbolic perception he called "symbolisation." Finally, the conceptualisation of the whole process from its evaluative part to its symbolic one is called "resymbolisation" or, in more understandable words, interpretation. Thus, "interpretation" should be understood as resymbolisation that is driven by subjective motive to understand one's evaluative perception of an object. (1978: 39,89, 98)

Admittedly, Bleich holds that the three processes that are at the origin of his concept of interpretation are proper to each person, in that, "*the ordinary fact that when each person says what he sees, each statement will be substantially different*" (1978: 98) A thinking that made him join Holland and Fish in stressing the constructive nature of interpretation. He is, particularly, closer to Holland when they believe that because of the constructive part of perception, each person's perception is essentially unique, despite existing similarities, which seem most of the time dismissed by both theorists.

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Central to Bleich argumentation is the idea of understanding language through a close depiction of real human beings' behaviours. He, thus, assumes that feelings appear in close conjunction with the formulation of response statements¹⁸, yet, he does not completely believe that unconscious motivations control such thoughts and the free associations. On the contrary, he believes that the determining factor is whether the respondent feels a memory that reminds him of the feeling he had when he used or heard the same word and thus shapes his present feeling.¹⁹(1978: 150)

Again, Bleich's theory remains a reader-response theory which offers interesting challenges to be debated. If Bleich assumes that interpretation should be understood as the readers' attempts to explain disquieting emotions related to the reading experience, a set of interesting questions may be raised as: Does reading always evoke disharmonious feelings and an urge to understand them? Do reading experiences necessarily involve associations with personal life? and if the case; Do these associations appear unintentionally if the reader does not search for them? Apparently, Bleich's conclusions are too far-fetched since the inferences he draws are neither tangibly explained nor well supported.

Among the most serious of Bleich's shortcomings is the fact that he does not examine the relationship between the responses that the reader produces and

¹⁸ The response statements should “*record the perception of reading experience and its natural spontaneous consequences, among which feelings, or affect, peremptory memories and thoughts, or free associations*”(SC, 1978: 147)

¹⁹ Central to my discussion is the crucial role feelings play in shaping the response of actual readers of literary texts, thus, I find in Bleich's assumption an important issue, apart from being also a reader-response critic, since it foresaw the role of feeling in the reading process. Yet, to my sense, it privileged the importance of memories feelings over actual feelings, which offers much to criticism.

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the words on the page²⁰. Sometimes, for example, readers are astonished by the striking difference between their emotional response and their understanding of the text, thus that renders the interpretation of words on the page and the interpretation of one's emotional response two different matters. In addition to that, because Bleich stresses subjective motives and concerns in the perception of words and thus their interpretation, he does not offer solid ground for explanation as the one suggested by Holland²¹ and others for instance. Words seem to have a "secondary role in his theory" (Therman, 2003:33), a concern that diminished the credibility of his argumentation, despite its *avant-gardiste* vision.²²

The assumption that all reading experiences involve disharmonious feelings and evoke a desire to understand one's response also seems debatable. Possibly, Bleich is correct when he advances that reading experiences are responsible for enhancing particular kinds of emotions which might create conscious disharmonious feelings and an urge to explain them, but such a situation could be very rare. Therman argues on the issue advancing:

...one's interpretation of a text does not necessarily make one's response seem possible. The urge to understand one's emotional response is probably strongest when one perceives a discrepancy between one's interpretation of text and one's emotional response to it. (2003:34)

Far more interesting in the "discrepancy" to which Therman points, which, in fact, sheds light on Bleich's thinking as considering no frame for a person's emotional response and interpretation which, in their turn, do not fall within a set of framed

²⁰ There is a recurrent hint from my part to the fact that reader-response approaches should be examined in close conjunction with the weight of words on the page and the mechanisms that language plays.

²¹ Therman (2003) argues that Wittgenstein's framework, for instance, could explain the words through the linguistic training and the understanding of people in the same culture.

²² Bleich analysis of Ms K's reading of Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* is a good example of the fundamental problems of the roles and nature of men and women relationships.

responses for the situation suggested by the interpretation²³. Hence, the implication seems to point out Bleich's theory as quite misleading and one deserving closer attention.

To sum up, the main merit in Bleich's work is that he calls attention to the fact that associations with personal life and subjective motives can influence interpretation. He even holds that spontaneous associations with personal life do shape the reader's interpretation. However, the scarcity of these instances leads us to question whether these references to personal are searched for deliberately or found instantaneously as Bleich seems to suggest! More importantly is whether these disharmonious feelings and the urge to symbolise them are the unique driving force behind interpretation! The theory of Bleich highlights the subjectivity of interpretation and offers very little to explain the similarities that could exist in interpretation. The analysis of the data suggest that people with very different emotional responses have formed similar interpretations and thus the relationship between the emotional response and the interpretation seems anything but "*clear-cut.*" (Therman, 2003:40)

1.2.3. Stanley Fish

One of the main questions Fish addresses is: Do readers make meanings? His main argument is that reading is not a process of decoding or finding an author's intentions, but a process of creating. (1976: 484/85) He, thus, joins the reader-response critics in their quest of demystification of that process called reading. His particularity lays in the fact that he attributed interpretations to

²³ Apart from the shared educational background which can gather more than two readers' views, the associations with personal life are very few, at least from various attempts to analyse my own observations of my students' interpretations.

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communities. An interpretive community consists of people who agree on certain “marks”. (1976: 485) Interpretation is based on learnt conventions and texts as well as readers are moulded by the same conventions. (Fish: 1980, Mailloux: 1982) In addition, interpretations are never objective because they are produced from a point of view, and they cannot be subjective either because all available points of view are “social or institutional”. (Fish, 1980: 335) Hence, there is an implicit hint at the idea that in fact readers do produce meanings, however, the latter are themselves shaped by cultural conventions that restrict their meaning creation. (1980:336) Unfortunately, Fish does not provide a clear definition of the term “interpretive strategy”. For instance, in *Yet Once More* (1995), he suggests that when he refers to an interpretive community, he is not referring to,

*A collection of independent individuals who, in a moment of deliberation, **choose** to employ certain interpretive strategies, but rather to a set of practices those are defining of an enterprise and fill the consciousness of the enterprise’ members. (in Therman, 2003:24)*

Therefore, interpretive strategies seem to be practices, beliefs and understood goals; a form of life that necessarily leads the members of a community to the same conclusion. Yet, the meanings of words and rules are separate from this form of life. More interestingly, in Fish’s view, interpretation is a matter of applying certain strategies and does not have a practical consequence on the teaching and studying of literature.

When engaging with the text, readers are bound by the conventions that prevail in their community, thus Fish draws the following conclusions:

- 1- The text disappears as an objective entity (1976: 485)
- 2- Disagreement about the plausibility of different interpretations cannot be settled by referring to the formal features of a text because they are

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the product of the same interpretive strategies that underlie the interpretation.

- 3- Readers cannot make irresponsible interpretations because they are always constrained by conventions.

One major issue needs to be explained in detail. When Fish argues that a shared way of thinking is necessary to make communication possible; he seems to narrow the circle of his communities and as such runs into trouble that notion of interpretive strategies. For fish, two speakers can understand each other and communicate not because they share the same way of thinking. He seems to deny any possible communication that can emerge from disagreement while people need to agree together in order to belong to the same interpretive community. As stated previously, interpretation is a matter of choice among many possibilities, thus it is not a process where a given set of preconceptions inevitably leads to a particular conclusion, as Fish seems to imply in his works. (Therman, 2003)

Fish is again mistaken when he advances that the text disappears as an objective entity (1976:485) and that the plausibility of different readings cannot be evaluated by looking at the text. Actually, the text can disappear as an objective entity²⁴, only if the strategies used to produce these formal features are not shared. However, if formal features are understood as words and properties of the arrangement of these words, like line endings or alliterations, we can devise rules for which all readers should abide by, thus, different readers will have the

²⁴ “...*The objectivity of the text is an illusion and, moreover, a dangerous illusion, because it is so physically convincing.... A line of print so obviously there....that it seems to be the repository of whatever value and meaning we associate with it.*” (1980:333) To Fish, the poem cannot disappear because it was never actually there in the first place except as a reflection of the interpretive strategy used to approach it.

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same common heritage of understanding these words to evaluate the plausibility of alternative interpretations.

The most interesting issue to my sense and the one that deserves to be challenged is when Fish argues that interpretations cannot be irresponsible because readers are bound by conventions that limit their thinking. Actually, conventions do limit our thinking but not to the extent to which they would impose on us a set of predetermined and common behaviours. More particularly, is the weight of conventions in the literary interpretation and which translates responsible interpretation as the most preferable practice among practices, thus, Fish seems misguided in suggesting that conventions make it necessary to try to define the most desirable practice.

In sum, Fish appears to be holding a particular place in the sphere of theory, he is neither a structuralist nor a formalist, nor a stylist, yet he does not deny the validity of many of the premises of these trends. Essentially, Fish's position highlights the following:

- 1- reading is an activity
- 2- rather than being embedded in formal feature, the meaning of any text is brought to it by the reader's interpretative strategy
- 3- interpretative communities hold agreements on the meanings of texts
- 4- all acts of interpretations occur in some context

These seem to be straightforward and even obvious assertions, yet they seem to be frightening. Fish himself does not try to argue against this claim directly. In fact,

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at the end of IV(1976), Fish admits this uncertainty when discussing how can one know to which interpretive community one belongs, leaving greater confusion.

He holds:

If everyone is continually executing interpretive strategies, and in that act constituting Texts, intentions, speakers, and authors, how can anyone of us know whether or not he is member of the same interpretive community as any other of us? The answer is he can't, since any evidence brought forward to support the claim would itself be an interpretation....The only proof of membership is fellowship, the nod of recognition of someone from the same community, someone who says to you what neither of us could prove to a third party "we know." I say to you now, knowing full well that you will agree with me (that is, understand) if you already agree with me.(1976:485)

1.2.4. Wolfgang Iser

Wolfgang Iser stands among the most prominent theorists since he succeeded in marking both trends; the reception theory and the reader-response theory. Iser is of the opinion that meaning is constructed out of the text, thus for him the text does not hold it. (1978: 18) On another hand, he believes in the sensitive role the literary texts play while guiding the readers through inherent instructions. (1978:35/107) Put differently, Iser's conception of interpretation puts to the fore the interaction reader/text and emphasize the conditions of this interaction.(1978:18)

Iser carries on determining a set of criteria that guide the reader in his process of interpretation. First, autocorrelation²⁵ prevents readers from projecting their own meanings on the text. (1978: 120) Second, the passive syntheses are "guided by signals which 'project' themselves into [the reader]". (1978: 135) Third, Iser assumes that in reading "we think the thoughts of another person" (1978:126). Fourth, the reader may be led to produce inconsistencies in the

²⁵ Autocorrelation is a term borrowed from Moles and refers to the connection that exists prior to perception and independently of a reader's disposition. (1978: 120)

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gestalts. (1978: 130) Hence, the efforts to resolve such discrepancies heightens the readers' involvement in the text, therefore, the readers' habitual views retrieve in the background, which allows them have a new experience that 'restructures' past experiences,(1978: 131/32) and helps the readers "*see [themselves] being guided from without*". (1978: 134) Moreover, forming a gestalt always means choosing one interpretation among many possibilities. The excluded possibilities remain in the background challenging the chosen interpretation and this way constrain and guide the gestalt formation. (1978: 126)

Because a literary text is never to be understood at once, the reader travels with a wandering viewpoint, through different perspectives offered by the text. The perspective on which the readers concentrate at a particular moment is the theme. (1978: 97) The readers' attitude towards the theme is conditioned by the previous perspectives in which they have been situated. This background is called the *horizon*. Differences in the ability to remember previous parts of the text can cause differences in interpretation, but essentially the perspectives from an intersubjective structure which constrains and guides readers. (1978: 118)

Iser suggests that *indeterminacy* is responsible for the active involvement of the readers in the text. By indeterminacy, Iser refers to two types. First, the particularity of the literary text is that it does not present real objects, thus, the reader cannot compare his or her understanding of the text outside reality. Actually, this kind of indeterminacy contributes to distinguish literature from other kinds of writing. Second, indeterminacy can be enhanced with structural elements, such as blanks. Blanks are indeterminate connections between elements of the text, which induce a reader to participate in forming the imaginary object

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by filling them. (1978: 182) Differences in interpretation arise if the readers fill the blanks 'exclusively' with their own projections (1978: 167) instead of letting the text work on them. (1978: 153)

In the frame of the above theoretical conceptions, one would say that the blanks and the perspectives and even other structural elements form "*a network of response-inviting structure, which impels the reader to grasp a text*" (1978: 34) This structure Iser calls the *implied* reader. Iser seems to attribute the text a never seen potential, in that, he defines interpretation as springing from that potential. Thus, to my sense, the differences in the answers (of different readers) may be due to subjective differences in remembering previous parts of the text as the readers' *wandering viewpoint* travelled through the perspectives offered by the text, occasionally, a reader may also have projected his or her subjective norms on the text to reduce its indeterminacy. (Therman: 43)

The major weakness of Iser's theory could be attributed to his failure in explaining how the text controls reading, as Fish has pointed out. His assumptions could be questioned and largely debated. For instance, his notion that "*meaning is at the level of language where words do not belong,*"(1978: 120) presents a serious ambiguity. Presumably, words are arbitrary in the sense that a group of people can choose whatever combination of letters to stand for a particular thing, however, once they are laid down, the rules of using them, either through formal definition or by regularly using them in a particular way, contribute necessarily to their understanding.

Indeed, the idea that people think the thoughts of others while reading also appears unclear and rather curious. Actually, Iser had borrowed the notion from

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Poulet(1969) and does not offer a thorough explanation. I have myself borrowed the explanation offered by Therman when she explains Poulet's rationale,

A thought always needs a thinking subject, and while I read, I become the thinking subject of the thoughts expressed in a text. Poulet points out that "[w]henever I read, I mentally pronounce an I, and yet the I which I pronounce is not myself."(2003: 44)

Poulet seems to suggest that reading is analogous to hearing someone speaking his or her thoughts, memories and experiences, however, is there a close or direct relationship with the words' meaning in the text? and How are readers to assign the same meaning to the words? remain poorly answered.

In sum, Iser's basic assumption that the text guides readers seems sensible especially when supported by the agreement in the readers' answers. One may believe that the concepts theme, horizon, and wandering viewpoint can be useful in examining the composition of texts and in analysing how a reader may have reached a particular conclusion. Yet, because Iser holds that meaning is separate from words, he fails to explain how the text can guide readers.

Conclusion

All of Holland, Bleich, Fish, and Iser's theories have contributed to highlight interesting factors in understanding the response to literary texts, but in no way their reasoning was related to the nature of language and its formal features and the impact of the latter on the reader interpretive processes. Hence, because of the objective to examine the response of readers to texts of literature in a foreign language, I assume that the power of words in the text on readers and their ability to guide them in their process of reading would be the guiding principle in any reader-response theory that we would be likely to implement in

the further part of this investigation. Moreover, I assume too that the linguistic competence of these readers, who share common practices of the foreign language, is sufficient to build their process of understanding and shape converging yet not identical responses to the same literary text.

In what follows, I will point out the limitation of reader-response theory from another perspective; the latter being related to an unsuitable implementation in the teaching field.

1.3. The Limitation of the Theory

Introduction

The issue at stake aims at discussing the reasons behind the fall of the reader-response theory from high theory. While criticism of its shortcomings is highlighted in the following part of my discussion, I will not venture to dismiss its worthy contribution to the field of theory. Actually, the contribution of reader-response theorists from I.A.Richard through W.Iser to S.Fish has managed to offer an interesting range of proposals on the current issue, challenging most of the time and harassing in most cases. Surprisingly, all of them agreed to view literature as socially governed. A consensus has been reached: literariness is a social convention²⁶ highly guided by the power of the literary community, a statement that sharply reminds us Fish's *interpretive communities*.

Most often, those theorists' experiments were conducted on readers inside the academy, students then. Actually, our concern falls on such kind of readers²⁷,

²⁶ I will develop the concept of literariness more accurately in the next part of my discussion.

²⁷ There is a hint to the fact that readers do shape their readings according to their background, thus, there are many kinds of readers to which I will also, come back later on in my discussion.

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whose literary background represents a skill in the shaping of their interpretation. However, although our concern fits the primary steps in the experimentation, we should not forget the case of other readers, less equipped in coping with the reading experience of literature. Outside the *narrow*²⁸ sphere of theoretical studies, those who are not familiar with great names like Holland or Iser, still see literature as special and having distinctive qualities, thus disagreeing about its literariness. The literariness of literature is still debatable, one should not forget, and I think it will always remain an interesting issue opened to questioning. Nevertheless, the appropriate question would be: has one of these various and prominent theorists, who dealt with the response to literature, considered the case of ordinary readers?²⁹, most of them have seen them as *idiosyncratic*, is it really so?

To my sense, before speculating about the possibility of adopting another approach that would offer a wider range of results to the study of response to literature from the part of both ordinary and non ordinary readers, we have first to understand the discrepancies of the traditional reader response theory as it was implemented in the teaching field. Second, we will wonder whether the fall of the theory is part of a general decline of literature or it is particularly justified. Third, we will have a closer look to the dangers of perpetuating canonical texts.

²⁸ I use deliberately the word « narrow » referring to university frame, an exaggeration as it were, simply to point out the hugeness of the world outside it.

²⁹ D.S.Miall uses the term « actual » to refer to readers who do not belong to the academy, I have used « ordinary » as opposed to « special, equipped, experienced, or professional »

1.3.1. Literature and Professionalism: danger then decline

It is my contention that the decline of the reader-response theory has to do with the professionalism that has characterized literature in general and the theory in particular. I will start by showing how professionalism is *incontournable* yet unsatisfactory then I will point out the powerlessness of reader-response theory as taking part of a whole trend.

What is meant by professing literature then? And is it possible to render literature a professional field? The point of departure is linked, I think, to the time when there was a necessity to teach literature at universities. Up to that time (19th), literature was merely appreciated, enjoyed, and experienced, hardly, aimed at being transmitted. Unconsciously, literature has been seen to be deprived of its primary goal, that of appreciation³⁰ to a more achieving goal that of being delivered inside an academic frame i.e., taught. My belief is that such an end could be reached at whatsoever the means or the method, however, the path undertaken, or more precisely the kind of professionalism universities have reached by the end of the 20th century deserves close attention, in that, the decisions taken inside university teaching of literature did have considerable consequences outside it.

Teaching at university level is premised on continual reforms at the level of curriculum, each time offering new insights on what is most appropriately adequate. Similarly, the literature subject has undergone a series of serious reforms all along the preceding eras, unfortunately, rarely accompanied with suitable programmes for continuing education for those who represent the

³⁰ N. Frye advances: "*it is impossible to teach or learn literature: what one teaches or learns is criticism.*" (In Miall, 1996:463)

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professionals in the teaching of literature. Although literature was made professional, it did not benefit of the required equipment or training. Teachers of literature have often relied on their own interest in the field and the meagre undergraduate education they have received as sole components of a literary background, responsible for enhancing the love of literature in the student. That ill-match was not an obstacle to shape “specialised” teachers, on the contrary and as strange as it seems it gave birth to a new sample of teachers called professionals of literature.

Actually, I am not blaming those professionals, for, I am one of them and I am thoroughly conscious that I do contribute to the professionalism that is prevailing in the literary field. I also recognize that no one can blame the professionals for their seriousness while considering the issue of teaching literature, but I am convinced that it takes part of a whole process of fashion that aims at giving a framed and serious aspect to all fields, regardless of their nature,

The important thing is that professions are socially made categories, and processes. A group that is doing a particular kind of work organizes itself in professional; appropriates, shares, and develops a body of knowledge as its own; discredits other practitioners performing similar work; establishes definite routes of admission association; including but not limited to academic study; controls access; and gets recognition as the only group allowed to perform that kind of work, ideally with state power backing its monopoly.(in Harkin, 2005:420)

Professionalism in literary studies was inevitable then, since it is socially bound, yet, it did not dictate the state of “dictatorship” those professionals exercise inside their classrooms. Professing literature has become the property of certain teachers assuming they are untouchable in the field. The crisis, to my sense and which has nothing to do with the crisis literature went through at certain moments of history, has to do with the competence, performance, and most importantly too much self conceited attitudes those professionals show in teaching literature.

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Professionalism has proved to contribute to a social failure leading to an authentic crisis lived and perceived in our universities.³¹

At university level,³² the teaching of literature³³ is another and more complicated bargain, since this final stage of education represents the most sensitive stage that helps create critical minds responsible for building a balanced society. Unfortunately, it is at this stage that the failure is more perceived because once more it is teacher made. Problems of curriculum design, the attachment to theories out-of-date, the submission of career requisites of various projects far from the true needs and appeals of the teaching of literature, the autocracy of some professors in the ethics of reading literary text, the blind respect to hidden agendas of some departments of literature, and the difficulty teachers of literature meet in publishing their works are all hampering the transmission of literature.

Surprisingly, the problems of literary professionalism are the same everywhere regardless of the literature's origin. Perhaps, these problems are more persistent for the founders of the literary theories and major trends before what was considered as "minor literatures", because seen as mere processes of imitation and not capable of innovation. For instance, by 1950, the American New Criticism trend dominates the teaching of literature at university. Literary criticism, then, is indebted to the New Critics since their reputation has been gained to the profession. Several departments of English were created

³¹ Carlos Ceia(2000) has made analogous findings about the teaching of literature in his country Portugal, and concluded that professionalism in literary studies is chiefly responsible for the failure of the teaching of literature.

³² As my discussion has to do with readers of literature at university level, I do not see the necessity to discuss the kind of professionalism that exists at the primary and secondary level, which in fact is not to be dismissed, since it contributes to the shaping of professional teachers at university level.

³³ At this point of the discussion I do not dissociate the teaching of native literature from non native one. Later on, I will stipulate the distinction.

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everywhere, the demand for the professional study of literature increased, and programmes for teacher training were developed. There was an urge to cope with the requirements of a thirsty audience whose sole objective was: a literary *consumerism*.(Horton, 1989) As a result, everyone wrote and at any cost, regardless of the quality of writing. Those professionals then were motivated by personal objectives to collect a maximum of publications and forgot about genuine literary interpretation and reader-response criticism, so were they really professionals? In addition, those professionals of literature writings' are in general reproduced or revisited papers of already published works. Thus, there seems to be an implication to the fact that the unsteady world of literature does not belong to those teachers who call themselves professionals, on the contrary, be it inside or outside university, only a few ones could pretend at that professionalism!(Eagleton, 1983)

Apparently, because it is not a fixed and finite object of knowledge, literature cannot be taught in the way it is currently taught. Its actual transmission fails drastically in translating what happens when we read the literary text and comforts itself by a mere dissection of language mechanisms.

The dangers of the *publish or perish* rule go further and narrow the scopes of young teachers who have just come across the puzzle of teaching literature. Many critics devoted their interest to denounce the kind of professionalism which concentrated on very specific areas of literary studies. They condemn the motivation of such kind of writings and wonder on their impact on the new generations of professionals. Again and once more the social characteristic of literary professionalism is highly determining in the foundation of groups of

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experts, who decide what is to be taught and what is to be removed. These self-made experts appear to consider literature as a self enclosed entity and omit to regard it,

...as part of a larger cultural history that includes the other humanities as well as the sciences even while acknowledging that terms like 'humanities' , 'science', and 'history' are contested. (Graff, 1987:15)

In fact, if we consider the introduction of the new technologies in the teaching of literature, we could understand the necessity behind regarding literary education within a larger cultural history.

Graff's view concerning professing literature offers genuine insights about the teaching of literature; yet, the problems encountered in practice are ones that do not appear to have room in his ethical and epistemological vision. More down to earth problems are facing the professionals,

We still have to cope with several forms of authoritarianism: private affairs and interests lead to the shielded study of works and authors under the auspices of an illuminated master of all literary arts; teachers of all levels seldom open their classes to discussion with other colleagues in the profession; departments of literature dispute with each other the jurisdiction and influence of their ideology even in the same faculty; governments end up with new curriculum trends and laws without proper public debate; publishers do not dare changing the whole methodology of their textbooks, which they have been best-selling for many years, just because teachers will not change their own methodology. (Ceia, 2001:6)

and therefore making them turn towards trivialities rather than what represents the essence of the academy.

I have stated in the preceding section³⁴ that reader response-theory has gained the institution of teaching at the expense of its status in the "High Theory", and that thanks to its pedagogical worth. Nevertheless, I have stated openly that because that theory was made teachable that does not disqualify it from the "high theory". Let me first explain what in Fish's words is meant by disqualifying? I

³⁴ See the section "On Reader Response Criticism as teachable"

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have succeeded in understanding Fish's view only when I came across professionalism in literary studies. At first sight, the relationship appears too far fetched, but having a deeper look, I noticed the flagrant divorce between research and teaching at university. While they are supposed to live together and be complementary, research and teaching appear to be victims of a system of professionalism which deliberately lead the teacher to concentrate only on teaching and a few administrative tasks and forget about research which is in the view of the teachers the prerogative of theorists. With the assumption that professionalism should start right from the association **teacher researcher** and **author** of literature, new perspectives may occur. If teachers of literature understand that they have got the duty to undertake research as well as manage to produce a work of their property, they will succeed in overcoming the predominant myth over the community of literary studies. Once more I share the opinion that reader-response theory declined because a whole system was and is still ruled by non academic values.

Since reader response theory has been found to facilitate the engagement with literature, it has had a positive effect on the classroom. More interestingly, this same theory has been much credited for its ability to validate the individuality of the learner. By decentring the work and the author as locus of meaning, it makes the experience of the individual central to the reading experience. Thus, what is the individual reader supposed to do inside the classroom, where more than one individual reading of the same text interacts? While by reader, I necessarily refer to students who are supposed to reinforce their personal experience of reading often by balancing or altering it in accordance with the

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dominant classroom interpretation, the “personalist”³⁵ dangers of reading should not be neglected, however. Such kind of readings, for instance, are ones that involve identification of oneself in the text with what one understands or rejection of what one finds simply because boring, frustrating or not worth reading.

Hence, comes the role of the teacher who in addition of facilitating personal textual exploration of the text should assume a more urgent responsibility. In fact, he is first supposed to make students develop a critical consciousness about texts that give voice to the dominant or operative forces of one’s culture i.e., the reader, then the teacher would challenge the already established understandings of the major works that gain the mandate³⁶ (Johnston, 2000). From this view of things, one of the major problems with reader-response teaching lies in the fact that reader response tends to assume that the act of reading involves an “*immediately measurable, meaningful, and productive “event”*.”(Ibid: 2). We are just but reminded of Horton’s *consumerism* (1989) and which in fact reduces the above claimed individuality of the reader highlighted by this same theory,

Reader response criticism, which arrived in the early 1970s with a liberating “power to the people/readers” whiff about it, can in retrospect more easily be seen as a subtle version of consumerism. The inevitable result of the application of the Fish-ian question “What does that X do?” is not primarily a description or affirmation of some personal emotion or psychological response to work of art so much as it is the enactment of one of the economic principles of a late- capitalist society: If it does not do anything, it’s not worth anything. Or to push a bit harder, “my” response becomes an enactment by one member of a privatised society carefully taught both inside and outside the academy that a private anything, including response, is the only kind of thing worth having (p.281)

³⁵ The idea has been promoted by G.C.Spivak, see (Martin, 1997)

³⁶ At this point of the discussion there is a deliberate analysis of the reader response shortcomings within the reading of the native literature. Later, I will point out its shortcomings in the context of non native literature.

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Horton's insightful commentary offers interesting points of discussion. At first, there is an explicit determination of literature by capital to such an extent that she speaks about a "consumerist education". Reader response becomes for Horton the "*intellectual 'fast food' easily digested and passed from hand to hand*"(1989:281). Thus, we are confronted to new values gained by literary reading, as if they were a productive force, a privatised ownership, and something viable. In the light of reader response, the literary work becomes immediately able to generate response in the audience it addresses, and thus again the individuality of the response seems to find no room in this shared stock of potential meanings that one can compare and measure according to the valued readings of a peer reader, the teacher then.

Admittedly, inside the classroom, private readings are monitored by classroom discussion and by the teacher's evaluation of the student's interpretation of the work or of the student's participation. Added to the 'cultural capital' notion of literature as advanced by Horton, we can but confirm Shafer's view about interpretation of the literary text as emerging from "*the personal and political currents of the setting in which it is read.*"(1997:66) From this view of things, we can advance that the limitations of reader response is seen in its aim toward the standardization of acceptable meanings in literature, not because these meanings are proper to the work, but because the works are approached in the institutionalised atmosphere of the educational environment.

In his critical comments as presented in his essay "Is there a text in this class?," Fish argues in favour of the view that meanings exist in "institutional nesting" (Fish, 1986:627). Put another way, Fish reinforces his idea of the necessity of

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having a shared basis of agreement responsible for guiding interpretation or at least deciding among the different interpretations.

Once more we are but reminded of the crucial role the institution plays to manipulate the theory according to its needs and requirements. Professionalism is again responsible for this decline since instead of calling attention to the necessity to become more self-consciously professional, it simply perpetuates the same mistakes,

Criticism must become more scientific or precise and systematic, and this means that it must be developed by the collective and sustained effort of learned persons-which means that its proper seat is the universities. (in Ceia,2001:8)

Put simply, the key problem with professionalism today seems to be the oversimplification of culture thinking, the adoption of a literary culture based on unchanging and predetermined values and rules, and the oversight of a true culture of permanent thinking. It is true that teachers of literature tend to support their subjectivity or the subjectivity of their readers, yet they seem to forget that literary reading should start first by criticism of these individual readings rather than imposing a dominant viewpoint that does neither permit discussion nor questioning. Metaphorically, Ciega compares literary criticism to a song that everyone can sing and as such denies the existence of literary criticism.(2001: 9)

1.3.2. The Myth of the Canon

In this frame, the canons' role may complicate things further. Literary canons are widely read, respected, included in university syllabus and thought as invincible. They are the ones which dominate the history of literature and enjoy power over the new texts which have not become canons yet. But comparing one text to another appears an act devoid of sense, as there is no standard to measure

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art. One cannot say Austen's novel is better than Woolf's novel or vice versa. Yet, it actually happens, consciously or deliberately, we don't know! For instance, Shakespeare is never omitted from any syllabus of English studies, as if Shakespeare may convey universal truths throughout ages and nations and even different cultures! And most surprisingly, canons of the same kinds and for the same reasons are included in syllabuses despite their inaccessibility for readers of today, who consider them as obsolete in their use of language, among other things. In fact, it is assumed that language became more or less "modern" only in the late 17th and early 18th century, at such a degree that the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama and even metaphysical poetry are hardly understood by the present reader. Bakhtin explains:

Canonization is a process towards which all literary genres have a tendency, in which temporary norms and conventions become hardened into universal ones so that evaluations too are considered to reflect universal rather than culture-or-time-bound values. (in Shaifur, 2008:2)

These sorts of canons do not exist in English literature only, but they are common to other literatures in other languages around the world. This leads us to wonder whether such a representation of texts is built around the literary qualities inherent to the text or other factors far from the literary academy. Most strikingly, is that even readers, whatever their literary background, prefer to carry on dealing with canonical texts because the latter have gained the fame and prestige of the "people-in-the-culture," (Shavit, 1991)

The argument so far is that the body of literary texts that form the canon could be regarded as an institutionalised variety of interpretations. To this extent, we cannot do without a canon. This is confirmed by the fact that change in the canon is not autonomous, but rather due to influences external to literature.

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Whatever it may be, the canon is certainly not something given or eternal, whose origin and nature cannot be sought, but who makes, changes, and maintains the canon?

Actually, the function is attributed to some groups of literary professionals whose practice has serious consequences on numerous communities. They represent institutions, power, and thus seem to have decisive influence in the process of forming the canon.

On the one hand, it could be argued that the institutional perpetuation of the canonical texts is one possible explanation for the survival of eminent works such as those by Homer, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, or Dickens; however, other explanations should also be considered, especially when questions as: Why should we regard a canon formed by a special community of professional as the only one important? Why are canonical texts passed on from one generation to another? find no immediate answer. Clearly, the canon appears to be subject to arbitrariness, and thus this brings us to the conclusion that the selection of texts worth studying, the body of literature to be interpreted is itself the result of explicit or implicit rules, theoretical considerations, and value preferences which, in turn, can be described as a system beyond or within the objects in question, which, as a consequence, are no longer objects-in-themselves, but products of subjectivity, performed by interpretation.

*What seemed to be an incarnate 'nature' turns out to be a pure construction...
We now know that the institution of art is, in the truest sense of the word,
groundless. (In Miall, 2006:14)*

Overall, not surprisingly, even the canonical literary texts taught at universities are formed by the professional powers. Therefore, the canon gain the curricula and impose itself on the communities of education, regardless of the accessibility

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of “Great Works” by the learners of literature. The body of esteemed literary works, then, reflects, necessarily, high authority predominance as Shavit advances:

The dominant institution gains the mandate, which has nothing what-so-ever to do with ‘poetic justice’ nor with the question of the value of the texts....A text gains a high status not because it is valuable, but becausesomeone has the political-cultural power to grant the text the status they believe it deserves. (1991:233)

This, in turn represents a danger, in that, texts which are qualified as canonical are the result of theorists and critics’ views at a particular moment of time and in a particular place. Yet, one should not forget that they have gained that status because they were responsible for a change in the period in which they appeared. Dickens or Hardy’s works, for instance, represent *avenues of emancipation* before being instruments of social change. According to Rose (in Miall, 2006:16) these works have been canonised because they succeeded in enhancing the working class readers to see new worlds and recognise a common humanity in the figure of David Copperfield or Jude Fawley, and which in fact, empowered them to change their lives and the lives of those around them. Thus, the danger remains in the refusal to offer these texts another context of interpretation. Put differently, the learner of literature asked to interpret a Spencerian poem or a Shakespearean sonnet on the basis that the themes they convey are universal, and may lead themselves to accessibility even for a 21st century learner, is not a convincing argument. Love, hatred, revenge, and death represent universal themes but how about the socio-cultural context in which they were produced and canonised and which is, in fact, far remote from the learner’s.

On the other hand, the cannon could survive by renewing itself through being re-interpreted and re-experienced. (Miall: 2006) New interpretations

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generally compete with extant rival views, suggesting widespread disagreement over what a given text “means”. This phenomenon argues against institutional determination of the literary canon, but the renewal of interpretation itself points to the need for continual repositioning of a given text in relation to contemporary historical and social conditions. Reinterpretation is thus a sign of the inexhaustible vigour of the canonical texts at issue, “.....a canon is not fixed, but can be extended, enriched, and modified.”(Kàlmàm, 2008: 4). This brings us to an interesting point, the assumption that a text is part of the canon together with its interpretations, could lead other texts, which in some way resemble the first to be interpreted much more easily and so incorporated into the canon.(Laist, 2009) Innovation is attributed a place of experimentation at the expense of the survival of eminent works of literature. The issue at stake deserves more attention, especially if considering the agents of education struggling against the prevailing conservatism that dominates the syllabuses of literature teaching,

The canon should be revised and questions of method or theory should acquire prime importance, in ways often disdainful of established common literary sense and at the risk of great difficulties from the point of view of teaching.(Varsos, 2008:9)

Most of the time, despite the fact that the curriculum is formed by professionals in power, those not in power, teachers then, often challenge this sort of canon and create their own canons, in which they disregard the obligatory readings as the most valuable works and what they read most is quite different from that canon.

Conclusion

The discussion so far has attempted to show that in spite of its popularity among the teaching field, reader response theory has suffered from external factors that prevented its suitable implementation. The so called professional teacher of literature has failed to fulfil his mission because impeded by his own interests and also because of his struggle to maintain the survival of *timeless* texts. In the following part of my discussion, I will attempt to highlight a further serious concern; that of interpretation. *Is interpreting literary texts feasible?* Is one of the major questions to which I will try to provide answers.

CHAPTER TWO

The Limitation of Interpretation

Introduction

I am well aware of the potential difficulties involved in trying to explain that phenomenon called interpretation¹ and I will not attempt to find clues to that mysterious concept. For the purposes of this research, I will describe the undeniable link that exists between interpretation and cognitivism and how the latter's contribution has changed the vision of the theorists. Evidently, the question: *what are literary texts for?* persists and imposes itself despite the already mentioned ambiguities that characterize it. On the other hand, the inclusion of the professional and educational discourses about literature and the recent emergence of cognitive approaches to literature led to a re-examination of interpretation and shed light on new mechanisms amenable to understand literary appreciation. Consequently, these approaches started to develop powerful tools for the formal analysis of texts, yet it remained impossible to validate them empirically, another bargain for which they have been seriously criticised.

II.1. Interpretation

Actually, literary scholarship aimed at resolving the problem of interpretation especially as literature became a discipline of study at universities. The change in status made researchers concentrate on the most appropriate approaches to its teaching, therefore one may advance that interpretation is credited for an interesting number of achievements, from among them, the historical contextualisation of literary texts. Hence, another question comes to

¹ In the preceding part of this research, I have attempted to provide the different theoretical approaches to the explanation of interpretation and I have tried to illustrate that as understood by those theorists, interpretation of literary texts remains a utopia.

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mind: has interpretation been always the primary aim of literary reading²? The answer has fed mainstream research and is I believe at the origin of an endless debate.

There seems to be a predominance of conventions in the process of interpretation. The text while being interpreted suggests the search for something that does not exist in it, or at least this is the way we have been trained or taught to think about interpretation (Rabinowitz, 1996). Rather, and following Miall's assumption, ordinary readers would prefer to stick to the text, its characters, its plot, its stylistic features and that would maybe satisfy their inquiries as their aim is to *experience*³ the text rather than wonder about its meaning,

....my main purpose will be to put forward three perspectives which I believe cognition critics should now consider....the perspectives in question can be summarised in three words, all of which, as it happens, begin with the letter E: Empiricism; Evolution; Emotion. And I can add a fourth word, since the main approach to literature I will emphasise focuses on [E]xperiencing literature rather than interpreting it.(2005:133)

Henry James' short story "The Figure in the Carpet"⁴(1937) succeeds in showing the opposition *interpreting* vs. *experiencing* the literary text. In this short story, H.James shows the responses of two critics to a distinguished author of several novels, Hugh Vereker. The narrator, a writer for a literary journal, produces what he thinks is a clever review of Vereker's latest novel. He believes

² The above question reminds me of Conrad's words in the preface of *The Nigger and the Narcissus* when he advances: "-- My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel -- it is, before all, to make you see. That -- and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm -- all you demand; and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask." Available at: <http://conrad.classicauthors.net/Narcissus/Narcissus1.html>.

³ I am borrowing D.S.Miall's terminology. In the same context, D.S. Danaher uses the opposition *understanding* vs. *explaining* literary texts to point out the limitation of the traditional view of interpretation.

⁴ The online short story version by James, H. (1937) 2001, available at: <http://www.hn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/hjames.htm>.

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he has “got at” him, unveiled his mystery (2001: 6), and he looks forward to hearing Vereker confirm his cleverness when he meets him at a house party shortly after his review is published. To his apprehension, Vereker, not knowing who the reviewer is, during dinner calls the review “*the usual twaddle*” (Id: 8). Later that evening, Vereker visits the narrator to apologize for his insulting comment. He goes on to explain that no reviewer has ever understood his work, his “*little point,*” “*the particular thing I’ve written my boos most for*” (Id: 10), the “*idea in my work without which I wouldn’t have given a straw for the whole job*” (Id: 11). Hearing this fires up the narrator to find out what the mysterious point is. “*Is it a kind of esoteric message?*” he asks. But Vereker dismisses this idea as “*cheap journalese*” (Id: 12). In a second meeting with Vereker, the narrator seems to come closer in his description: “*It was something, I guessed, in the primal plan; something like a complex figure in a Persian carpet. He highly approved of this image when I used it, and he used another himself. ‘It’s the very string,’ he said, ‘that my pearls are strung on!’*” (Id: 18/19). But the narrator, despite a month’s intense labour, fails to discover what Vereker’s secret is: “*it proved a dead loss. After all I had always, as he had himself noted, liked him; and what now occurred was simply that my new intelligence and vain preoccupation damaged my liking*” (Id: 15). As he puts it later, because of his failed quest, “*Not only had I lost the books, but I had lost the man himself: they and their author had been alike spoiled for me.*” (Id: 19)

In the meantime, however, the narrator has revealed Vereker’s account of the secret to his colleague, Corvick. Now Corvick, with his fiancée Gwendolen, sets himself to go through Vereker’s work in pursuit of the secret. Some months

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later, Corvick has to leave for a journey in India to write articles on the country for a London paper. After several months of absence, Gwendolen receives a telegram from Corvick: "*He has got it!*" she tells the narrator. All the cable says is: "*Eureka. Immense.*" (Id: 25) She reports that Corvick had not been working on it, had in fact left the matter strictly alone; it "*has simply sprung out at him like a tigress out of the jungle*"(Ibid). Corvick then returns from India via Rapallo in Italy, where Vereker is now living, in order to check his insight with the author. He writes in another telegram, "*Just seen Vereker – not a note wrong. Pressed me to his bosom- keeps me a month*" (Id: 27). On his return to England, Corvick divulges the secret to no one, saying he will publish it in a long article, but before he can even start this he marries Gwendolen and on their honeymoon is accidentally killed. This leaves Gwendolen alone. The narrator supposes Corvick must have confided the secret to her. When he writes to ask her if, during her brief time with Corvick, she heard the secret, she writes back, "*I heard everything,.....and I mean to keep it to myself!*"(Id: 32). He falls to wondering "*if I should have to marry Mrs. Corvick to get what I wanted*"(Id: 34) The narrator hopes to see Vereker again, but he and his wife are soon dead too. Gwendolen marries again after several years, another critic called Drayton Deane. But after Gwendolen herself unexpectedly dies, then the narrator eventually asks Deane if he had been told the secret, and finds out that he hadn't. Thus the secret dies with Gwendolen. The reader of the short story is left in the dark about the supposed "figure in the carpet" just as much as the unenlightened narrator.

The story has, as one might expect, aroused a good deal of interpretative commentary. Apparently, with the image of the "figure" H. James associates an

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unreachable end, and in spite of these ambiguities, all the characters strive to embark upon that dangerous and fruitless enterprise and all of them die before holding the *truth*.

The short story of *The Figure in the Carpet* seems to hold an unmistakable warning on the absolute absence of interpretation, evidence that did not prevent critics to violate the self contained warning in the story,

...criticism...is a search for truth, not its revelation- the quest for the treasure rather the treasure itself, for, the treasure can only be absent. Thus, once we have finished this 'reading' of James, we must begin to read him, and throw ourselves into the quest for the sense of his work, though knowing as we do that this sense is nothing other than the quest itself. (Todorov in Birch, 1989:128)

This same short story enlightened the clues of one of the most prominent reader response theorists, namely Wolfgang Iser who stated that interpretation is understood by the narrator of the story as the core of the work which can be removed out of the text. He carries on warning on the dangers of current literary criticism which aims at extracting a mere meaning from the text, thus reducing its scopes of projection. This kind of approach, Iser reminds, is fatal both to literature and criticism. The complex figure in the Persian carpet is metaphorically compared to a secret but as strange as it seems Vereker seems to neglect the fact that a secret whatever its importance is never to be revealed and as such the significance of Vereker's work dies with him. The implication behind Iser's theory is that meaning is the product of an interaction between the textual signals and the reader's acts of comprehension, thus meaning is no longer an object to be defined, but is an effect to be experienced. (1978:27) Experiencing the literary text is the most interesting clue in Iser's theory, where, it is no longer a question of reaching the meaning whatever the means used but merely experiencing that

interaction and appreciating what comes after. In a very wise way, we are but reminded of the reductive and narrow role of interpretation as seen by Vereker who is so impatient with the narrator's blundering attempts to name the secret- an "esoteric message," "some idea about life", "a preference for the letter P!"(2001: 13/14)

The hints about the gloom of criticism are powerfully present in "*The figure in the Carpet*". From James' determination to maintain the mystery, we may understand a will to place an interdiction on critical activities as proposed by Iser and many scholars, and leave open a wide domain to mere appreciation.

II.2. Cognitivism

Recent literary research seems more promising and appears to find interesting clues to the domain of literary reading. Cognitivism is distinguishable, for it aims at explaining the mechanism behind the readers' understanding and appreciation of literary texts. In more accurate words cognitivism stands for the application of discoveries in cognitive linguistics or cognitive sciences about language and the mind to textual analysis (Danaher 2006)⁵. Because of the interests of the present discussion, however, I will be limiting its application to literary analysis, thus, excluding certain approaches that fall outside of what might be considered as mainstream understanding of cognitive poetics.

It is noteworthy to consider the strong claims made by the advocates of cognitive poetics and which allude to the value of CP for literary studies. For instance, it has been long suggested that an approach which relies heavily on

⁵ For more information see Culpeper & Semino (2002), P.Stockwell (2002), and Garvin & Steen (2003).

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cognitive theory will soon revolutionize literary criticism. In his famous book *Cognitive Poetics*, has written CP, Stockwell claims: “*[cognitivism] is not simply a shift in analysis, but it is a radical reevaluation of the whole process of literary activity*” (2002: 5), he carries on advancing that it represents, “*a democratization of literary study and a new science of literature and reading.*”(2002:11)

Actually, Stockwell’s view appears to install itself aggressively in the domain of literary theory despite considerable discrepancies that apparently did not disturb the proponents of the theory at that time. Again, as each theory, the value of certain aspects of CP for the study of literature is undeniable, for it has put the finger on human mechanisms that could explain the how and why literary texts are appreciated, yet, the shortcomings as seen by traditionalist literary analysts do represent rich arguments on the following grounds:

1- Criticism falls first on the revolutionary aspect of the theory which is seen as overstated (Gross: 2002 in Danaher: 2006).

Gross explains that the strategy behind the marketability of the theory is simply due to the fact that CP theorists aim to introduce a new paradigm for literary studies. The major attack goes to the fact that more than one decade after its appearance, CP theory still repeats the same claims, as if necessary to convince the community of practitioners instead of finding empirical justification

2- CP theory attributes cognitive labels to concepts that have already been tackled by the long tradition of literary criticism without in fact adding or changing significant power or content to them.

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Again Gross questions the originality of the cognitive theory and wonders whether CP conceptualizes in a way that is productive to literary criticism or merely “cognitimize”⁶ the discussion?

3- CP practice has shown its reductionist aspects and has proven its incapacity for enhancing appreciation of literariness.

In the light of the limiting contribution of CP in literary analysis and education, Mark Edmundson has focused on the value of reading and teaching literature and wrote: “*Virtually every critic or school of criticism that matters has worked to reduce literary experience, vast and varied as it is, into a set of simple terms*” (In Danaher, 2006:185). Therefore, the claim of the theory to “revolutionize” and “radically re-evaluate” literature falls into trouble!

In this same spirit, Miall warns on the dangers of the theory and claims it at risks of making two other disabling mistakes:

- 1- Unable to justify the distinctiveness of literature when the issue of literariness is to be proved empirically.
- 2- Unable to inquire into the reader’s experience of literature especially when the processes of feelings are to be considered, components, according to Miall central to literary reading.⁷

More dangerously, and since the cognitivist approach has placed itself as a model for a new kind of educational engagements with literature and school practices,

⁶ The following term has been used by Gross 2002, and it actually hints to the fact that the whole process takes part of a trend that has gained fame and recognition in a certain period of time.(Danaher,2006:184)

⁷ It is purposeless to remind that Miall’s theory supports the whole of my experiment. I have noticed the neglect of feeling in the preceding theories implemented in the classroom and I see in Miall’s reconsideration of the component of feeling a fitting argument for the success of a genuine experience of literary texts for whatever kinds of readers

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this trend appears to go back to the heart of the classroom placing interpretation at the centre and warning about its undesirable effects⁸.

In fact, asking students what a literary text means distracts them from the experience that the text may offer and may lead to dispiriting games in the classroom, where the student is supposed to guess what the teacher or examiner has in mind(Miall: 1996)⁹.

Evidently, the crisis of literature is a serious and real one and the question to be asked is: is the cognitive approach to literature likely to remedy some of the problems we now face in literary scholarship? in his waged war to install CP, Stockwell again advances that CP,

has the potential to make the discipline and the institution of literature more accessible and more connected with the world outside university and college life.(2002:11)

The implication from the above statement does present a positive point to the assumptions of the present study, in the sense that ordinary readers are more to have a place in that approach. Throughout his book, Stockwell repeatedly emphasises the focus of CP as being on the reader, yet, had he considered the reader as a real entity, not as earlier reader response theories which only made suppositions about the processes thought to be engaged by the reader.

In addition to its focus on interpretation and its non consideration of the reader as a real entity, CP adopted a model of cognition that, surprisingly in the present stage of psychological research, is almost entirely restricted to information

⁸ I have presented strong arguments on the fact that the primary aim of literary reading is not interpretation, yet, with the advent of CP, there seems to be a coming back to its initial position and as such the possibility to generate unexpected effects in the domain.

⁹ Miall has noticed that the decline of literature in the US particularly goes back to the emergence of major schools of thought there, yet, as strange as it seems, the crisis is not proper to the US, it is everywhere and appears pedagogically bound.

processing issues; in other words, the role of feeling has been neglected. In the following part, I will attempt to consider other perspectives whose objective would be to complete the cognitive approach.

II.3. The limitation of interpretation and the need to transcend it

Cognitive poetics claims, as stated previously, to examine all the cognitive processes that occur while reading literary texts. It, deliberately, endorses the marginalizing role of interpretation proposed by J. Culler (1975:5), and repeats Turner's objection to interpretation, (1991:7) and in spite of this, interpretation keeps creeping back in. (Steen & Garvin, 2003).

In Cognitive Poetics, Stockwell raises the issue clearly in spite of his confusion in the use of the key term "reading". In his early pages, he cites four lines from Browning's poem about Wordsworth, "*The Lost Leader*." He first urges that we need to reflect on what happens when we are reading it. He refers to "*understanding what we do when we engage in reading literature*"; then he adds that we need "*many different readings*," and the "*particular readings are important for us*." Stockwell might have been concerned by the study of some actual readers' responses to the poem, had he not turned his study and wondered: "*What are they [lines] about? and What do they mean?*"(2002:2) Consciously or

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not, Stockwell has moved from experiencing the literary text to interpreting it and has, as such, failed to go outside the traditional *myth* of interpretation¹⁰.

What might be noticed through Stockwell's analysis of the cognitive processes that underlie reading is that the latter do not necessarily lead to interpretation. In other words, I would like to highlight the place of convention¹¹ in reading literary texts. Many studies of literary reading and mostly empirical ones have relied their studies on the assumption that readers read for meaning, what they have called *point-driven* readers. In doing so, researchers' instructions to readers may *deselect* those features that are most characteristic of literary reading. For instance, the readers studied by Olson, Mack, & Duffy (1981) were told before reading that later they would be asked on how well they understood each story. It is not to be neglected the engagement of CP with educational settings, therefore one of the first aims of CP was to provide new, alternative methods for classroom discussion of texts, so, being asked to read for a meaning was found a rich stimulus for readers' engagement. In this respect, Elena Semino asks in a chapter entitled "Suggestions for further analysis", where she considers a poem by Seamus Heaney: "*What main schemata need to be activated in order to interpret a text?*" (1997: 225) and wonders on the mechanisms used behind interpretation. Even, Susan Sontag told us long ago that interpretation of literary texts is no more needed, what is needed is an erotic of art, an attention first and

¹⁰ In his discussion of Stockwell's limitations, Miall comments : « *'Reading' a poem considered as a cognitive process is not the same as a 'reading' of the poem that accounts for its meaning [Stockwell slips from the verb to the noun form of the word]*» (2006: 42)

¹¹ We are reminded by Fish' principle of interpretive communities, which places convention at the apex of their exigencies.

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foremost to its sensuous, formal qualities. To quote her daring words: “*interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art.*”(1938:98)

Therefore, it might be considered that the promotion of CP for classroom practice is very great but somehow premature since it has not succeeded in providing empirical evidence for its hypotheses. Studies like the one of Seilman & Larsen (1989), whose findings demonstrated that during the reading of a literary text compared with an expository text, the memories prompted by the literary text contained twice as many actor-perspective memories as the expository text, which mainly prompted observer memories(Miall, 2006), are evidence of the worth of CP. The implication is that the literary text functions differently,¹² thus inviting readers to cast themselves as agents amenable to interact with their environment.

II.4. Literariness

Introduction

What is literature ? The present question which appears at the centre of all kinds of literary studies and more importantly as the major object of the theory of literature, could be understood differently. First as a question which aims at understanding the general nature of literature, in other terms which kind of activity it is? What is its use? Why is it an object of study? Which position does it hold in the diversity of human activities? Seen from this perspective, it becomes a question that does not aim at mere definition, but at characterisation, and it is only in this respect that it calls for the interest of all those who want to study

¹² Deictic indicators are properties of texts, whatever their genre, they invite the reader to cast himself as agent responsible for interaction with his environment.

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literature bearing in mind the reasons behind embarking upon that activity rather than another one.

This same question would also call for those qualities which distinguish it from other domains: what does distinguish it from other texts or discourses or even representations? What does distinguish it from the other productions of the human spirit or other practices? Hence to raise the question of the distinctive qualities is to raise the question of literariness: what are these criteria that make of something literature?

It is not my contention to arrive at a satisfactory definition of literariness, for; prominent theorists and researchers diverged widely when addressing this central issue. Besides, the sensitive characteristic it bears disabled them to agree on common assertions. However, I will attempt to trace back the evolution of literariness and how the journey it undertook appears interesting in the sense that it has highlighted the contribution of other schools of thought and theories to ripen the concept and offer testable data to modern research.

Actually, the reasons for such inconclusiveness are so numerous and necessarily lead to realise that difficulties are of two kinds; those of principle as well as those of empirical concern. Despite the wide range of literary productions, it could easily be found that a novel like *Jane Eyre*, for instance, may more resemble an autobiography rather than a sonnet and a poem by Burns is closer to songs rather than to a drama by Sophocle. Therefore, a first problem would be to check the existence of interesting attributes in the so called literary productions¹³ that could distinguish them from non literary productions to which they manifest

¹³ I refer to the arbitrariness that characterise literature and to which I have pointed in the preceding sections of my work.

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close resemblances¹⁴. In his vision on literariness, Culler refers to those modern poems which at other periods could not have been considered as literature. He points particularly to the Talk Poems by the American poet David Antin whose language does not show the least of complexity of vocabulary or structures, which are devoid of rhyme or rhythm, devoid of figures of speech and ones that contain all the hesitations and the repetitions of ordinary discourse. He adds further that a wide number of critics and readers saw the constructions of the French novel in its most glorious days without characters and plotless and considered it as non literature. For them these texts could not have aspired at a place within the genre of the novel in the 20th century. (Angenot et al., 1989: 32)

The arbitrariness of literature and the culture bound characteristic that overshadow it lead us to consider literariness not as an object of theoretical analysis but simply as object of a historical research whose sole aim would be to clarify the different criteria used by the different groups which are interested in literature. Actually these ambiguities lead theorists to deepen their research not because they want to know which discourse they might include or exclude from literature, nor because they want to explain the criteria which have governed the inclusions or exclusions of other cultures or historical moments, but because they wonder on the most important aspects of literature and determine how to study a text and consider it as literature. In short, the definitions of literariness are important not as criteria amenable to identify what is and what is not literary, but as instruments of theoretical and methodological orientations which highlight the

¹⁴ These resemblances make the issue of literariness more difficult to be defined even in a historical perspective. According to a famous poet, “ *la frontière qui sépare l’œuvre poétique de ce qui n’est pas poétique est plus instable que la frontière des territoires administratifs de la Chine*” (in Angenot et al. 1989: 114)

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fundamental aspects of literature and which finally constitute guidelines for the literary studies.

The term literariness has been first coined by Jakobson in 1921(Erlich, 1981), yet the conceptions of literature that imply its distinctiveness from other types of texts go back to discussion by Plato, who wished to banish literature from his Republic, and Aristotle up to Coleridge and beyond. Recent theorists, however, have argued that literary texts are distinctive by virtue of specific features. Eagleton, for instance, advances that, “*Anything can be literature*” or “*can cease to be literature*”(1983:10) depending on the doctrine currently in force. In his turn, Fish(1989) has objected to the notion that literary texts contain distinctive formal features. He argues that formal aspects of language cannot guarantee stable meanings as students of stylistics had tried to claim. He goes further and holds that there are no formal aspects of language, these are simply illusions.

In the empirical domain, similar claims have been made by prominent scholars. Van Dijk (1979), for instance, suggests that all the cognitive processes shown to underlie text comprehension may be applied to all discourse including literature. He explains that since the mechanisms used are the same, there is no “specific” nature of so-called literary interpretation, and suggests that the differences as they are, stand in the pragmatic and social functions of literature. In his constructivist approach, Schmidt suggests that locating the attributes of literariness in the surface features of a text is an “*ontological fallacy*”; it is “*the human processes performed on such features that define the attributes in question.*”(1982:90)

The present discussion about literariness seems to be framed as a contrast between conventionalist and traditionalist approaches. In other words, it wavers between a definition of the attributes of a text or the organization of a text and a definition of the different conventions used to approach a literary text. The argument is a problematic one, however, the two positions focus on different aspects of the reading process. While the conventionalist examines reading for the effects of prior cognitive frames, whether prototypes, genres, or schemata (e.g., Schmidt, 1982: 135/6), the traditionalist focuses on specific text features such as metre or personification, and attributes changes in readers' feelings or evaluative responses to the source (e.g., Hunt & Vipond, 1986). This might suggest that two different systems of response are at issue, one based on cognitive processes, the other on affective processes¹⁵. The cognitive processes or the conventionalist approach has proved being ill equipped to respond to the uniqueness of the literary reading, yet even the affective processes do appear to be sometimes victims of convention, a harassing point as it were. Thus, convention may find a place in the traditionalist approach, though in a less apparent and measurable form.

II.4.1. CP & Literariness

According to Stockwell, cognitive poetics “*models the processes by which intuitive interpretations are formed into expressible meanings, and it presents the same framework as a means of describing and accounting for those readings.*”

(Stockwell, 2002: 8). While one cannot but admire the valuable contribution of CP both to scholarship and teaching, one cannot also but question the latter role in

¹⁵ Miall(2006) seems to favour the affective processes over the cognitive ones, the former he considers more appropriate for embodying what [if anything] is unique in literary processing

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re-evaluating the whole process of literary activity¹⁶. It is clear that CP, as it has generally been practised to date, has failed to achieve such a radical re-evaluation, perhaps partly because it largely fails to address the question of literariness,

*CP has been used to **explain** literature rather than to contribute to an **understanding** of it; it has failed to meet its stated goal because it has foregrounded the “cognitive” at the expense of, and not in service of, the “poetic.” (Danaher, 2006: 187)*

The aim so far is to briefly illustrate CP’s contribution through a critical account of the essays in the book *Cognitive Poetics in Practice* (Garvin & Steen 2003), the companion volume of Stockwell (2002). The volume contains an introductory survey of the CP field that emphasises its diversity while at the same time making some of the same strong claims about CP that I have cited earlier. In addition, there are eleven individual essays written by different contributors that are meant to represent “master-class” analyses in the CP line (Stockwell 2002:165). Of these eleven essays, two are written by cognitive scientists, and both of these make use of literature to discuss aspects of the mind.

Of the remaining eight essays, five could be said to profile the cognitive over the poetic. One of these borrows the notion of profiling from cognitive grammar to analyse a single poem, and the editors notes that it provides “a practical illustration of some of our most basic and cognitive processes at work in our experience of literary texts”(Garvin & Steen, 2003:55). Another “explores the nature of the knowledge structures needed by readers during their interpretation of love poetry in its numerous forms”(Id:67), and the emphasis in the contribution

¹⁶ I have earlier stated the limitation of CP to literary criticism, thus, it may appear that the repetition sounds redundant but it is done purposefully.

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is almost entirely on cognitive modelling. Two essays are concerned with text-worlds and with “*understanding how readers build and maintain complex mental representations of their narratives*” (Id:129), and another is an application of possible worlds-theory and mental-space theory to a short story by Hemingway that is concerned less with the story itself than with alternate theories of text modelling, although the author does provide insightful analysis of semantic detail. Besides, five of the eight essays fail to contextualize the CP analysis in literary-critical terms: they make only minimal attempts, or no attempt, to cite existing critical treatments of the literature under discussion. For example three essays discuss surrealism, a sonnet by Shakespeare, and a poem by D.H.Lawrence, and all of these topics must surely have been written about at length, but the CP analyses offered in the volume do not situate themselves in any extended literary discussion.

All things considered, Danaher (2006) sees that these “master-class” examples of CP disappoint as literary-critical analyses. Again he confirms the three main criticisms of CP,

- (1) *The analyses do not represent radical re-evaluations of the literature being discussed. Indeed, with the exception of the chapter on surrealism, none is particularly ambitious in a literary critical sense. At the very least, the claim that CP revolutionizes literary studies has not been proven.*
- (2) *On the whole, the analyses offer more relabeling than reconceptualizing; the cognitive is the figure. A claim about the advantages of “cognitively grounded” analyses appears, in one form or another, in many CP critical treatments. While frequently stated, it is almost never proven by explicit argumentation. Moreover, it erroneously suggests that “traditional” literary-critical notions have always been devoid of cognitive content or “cognitively ungrounded.”*
- (3) *Literariness is not particularly well addressed. Most of the essays emphasize cognitive **explaining** (dissection of the text on the basis of how the mind works), and only a few enhance, in strategic ways, our **understanding** of the literature that they discuss. Most of them also seem to have been written under the assumption that nothing else is required for poetic analysis other than what has*

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been undertaken, as if cognitive science had already so revolutionized literary studies that “traditional” modes of criticism (including all previous critical discussion of the literature being analyzed) have been rendered irrelevant.(2006:189)

Danaher concludes that the major drawback of CP's role in the analysis of these literary essays is the fact that literature is not considered as a living entity, he goes further and advances that their [essays] *aesthetic gestalts* or their sense as works of art is diminished if not lost at all, “ *CP is used to define (in Pierce's sense) the literary and to reduce its manifestation to a set of fundamental cognitive principles.*”(Id:190)

He seems to suggest, as a cognitivist scientist, that there is a need to use the valuable principles that CP offers to literary studies strategically and warns on the dangers of limiting the world literature to a mere set of mechanisms of the mind. He, urgently, wonders on the ill balance cognitive / poetic ! and does not forget to remind that the poetic does have a substantial position in the appreciation of literature¹⁷.

II.5. The Absence of Feeling¹⁸

I have earlier stipulated that the objective of this literature review is to show, and according to Miall's assumption, the linear relation interpretation, cognition, and the necessity to include the element of feeling. It is very important to remind that among the most urgent requirements of the study is the consideration of readers outside the theoretical frame that has long jailed literature

¹⁷ Lakoff & Turner wrote : « *Great poets can speak to us because they use the modes of thought we all possess. Using the capacities we all share, poets can illuminate our experience, explore the consequences of our beliefs, challenge the ways we think, and criticize our ideologies. To understand the nature and value of poetic creativity requires us to understand the ordinary ways we think.*” (1989: xi, Cited in Danaher 2006, p.191)

¹⁸ I have to stipulate that the present part constitutes the core part of my research since it is in it and relying on D. Miall's assumption on the necessity to include feelings in the experience of literature that I support the whole of my hypothesis

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researchers' providing no solutions to actual problems that happen inside the classroom with a group of students manipulated by the teacher of literature.

In his topical research, Miall traces the shortcomings of Interpretation and succeeds in showing that reader response theorists were aware of the limitations of interpretation but did refuse to impose on themselves a means to prove the opposite (e.g., Iser 1978). Hence, a turn towards the rich opportunities offered by the Cognitive Poetics theory was found interesting to resolve the problems as raised by traditional theories of literature. In fact, CP succeeded in casting light on hidden mechanisms of the mind that contribute to our appreciation of literary texts, yet, the investigations failed to solve problems of literariness and the genuine consideration of actual readers. Thus, in this light, Miall aimed at understanding and validating empirically the appreciation of literature and concentrated on the element of feeling which he supposes impregnate literary reading most often, and therefore wonders whether the little attention which has been devoted to it is a matter of neglect from the part of cognitive poetics.

Several scholars, actually, preceded Miall in their research on the role of emotion in literary reading, for instance, Tsur's work which has been significant in its study at the level of sound structures and meter in poetry (Tsur 1997) The cognitivists, then, tackled the issue of emotion but they stood resentful for their consideration of emotion as secondary; an *after-effect* of cognitive appraisal. Stockwell(2002), for instance, situated emotion within a story grammar approach, and explained it in relation to plans and goals, "*emotion follow upon the maintenance of plans, the achievement of goals, their frustration or failure*"; emotions arise "*when there are variations in plans or goals which are being*

monitored.” (p. 172) In other terms, the cognitivists have always questioned the primacy of emotion in psychology and considered it as being a mere effect of a cognitive phenomenon¹⁹.

Hence, new approaches to emotion which consider the necessity of having a comprehensive framework for understanding the role of feeling in literary response were to be developed. The objective was to adopt approaches relying on the crucial role of feeling in literary response while considering the importance of preceding theories of literary response and the prior cognitive processing (see Andringa²⁰, 1990). As already stated, I support my work with the theoretical work on feeling developed by Miall & Kuiken (2002), which proposes a four-part framework for the feelings involved in literary response. The theorists suggest:

- 1- *Evaluative* feelings such as enjoyment, pleasure, frustration, or satisfaction in reading which are reactions to texts, and provide an incentive to sustain reading or consider it afterwards.
- 2- *Narrative* feelings such as suspense, curiosity, and empathy with an author, narrator, or narrative figures are involved in the processes by which a representation of the fictional world is developed and sustained.

¹⁹ “What is missing from these accounts is an overall theory of the role that feeling plays in the process of literary reading: feeling is largely treated as a subsidiary effect, an epiphenomenon occurring in the interspace of the cognitive processes being described.” (Miall, 2006: 45)

²⁰ In collecting think-aloud protocols, Andringa implemented a method to analyse readers’ comments on a Schiller short story. The most notable finding was that for the less experienced readers the most common sequence consisted of emotion references, followed by evaluation, then argument. She comments that in most of the protocols this “seems to be a regular sequence,” suggesting that *emotion* “initiates, selects, and steers the way of arguing.” (1990:247)

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- 3- *Aesthetic*²¹ feelings, those of fascination, interest, or intrigue may constitute the initial moment in a reader's response to the formal components of literary texts (narrative, stylistic, or genre based).
- 4- The *modifying* powers of feeling. The study of Miall & Kuiken, 1994a found that the aesthetic and narrative feelings interact to produce metaphors of personal identification that modify self-understanding.

Thus, in their study (2002), they have suggested that the concept of catharsis²² identifies one particular form or a more general pattern in which aesthetic and narrative feelings evoked during reading interact to modify the reader's sense of the self

Put differently, Miall & Kuiken's premise is to transcend the status attributed to feeling by the cognitivists, thus they have postulated three properties of feeling that are completely independent of the kind of processes described by the cognitive poetics,

...[First]we suggest that feeling facilitates border-crossing, that is, feelings enable us to relate concepts in unrelated fields. Second, feeling prompts us to take a certain stance towards events, preparing us to interpret incoming evidence in a specific way; anticipation of this kind seems to be one of the fundamental properties of feeling. Third, a more common claim, feeling is generally self-implicating; it occurs when some issue of our self-concept is in question.(Miall, 2006: 45)

It is mainly the third property of feeling as proposed by the researchers that particularly interests us. Actual or ordinary or non native readers of literary texts do converge here. In other words, we are interested in the implication of the self in the reading process and how the latter may contribute (in our case) to shape an

²¹ Aesthetic feelings were called « artefact emotions » by Kneepens & Zwaan, 1994.

²² I refer to the conflict of tragic feelings identified by Aristotle.

experience of literary reading regardless of the kind of readers and regardless of the kind of literary competence they possess.

II.6. The role of feeling in the comprehension of literary narratives

II.6.1. Schema Theory

The argument so far holds that the complexity of literary narratives and the will to comprehend them goes beyond the capacity of mere cognitive processes.²³ Since the postulate as suggested by Miall holds that response to literary narratives is controlled by feeling, the latter directs the creation of particular schemata appropriate to the nature of the text, which disturb our existing knowledge about the world therefore asking us to formulate a new knowledge. (See Cook, 1994). Thus, the present section will deal with the role of schema theory in the comprehension of literary narratives and how the latter presents serious shortcomings.

Actually, the contribution of psychology to the comprehension of literary narratives is neither new nor innovative, for, the multitudes of studies which have adopted different versions of schema theory were soon disregarded because of their relative simplicity. The latter (dealt with) were either folk tales or elementary stories for children, or especially devised narratives, and despite this, their authors claimed their studies' principles amenable to be implemented on any kind of narrative and could encompass anyone of them. Yet, it was quickly considered that the complexity of structure of a short story or a novel²⁴ does not offer room

²³ Note that I have already referred to the limitation of cognitive processes in the preceding part of my discussion, the objective now is to comprehend the mechanisms that control feeling in the reading process

²⁴ The complexity of structure of the novel is seen by Graesser & Goodman as: "*a novel is ordinarily narrative, but there may be a description of a setting or an exposition of why a society*

for the practicability of their principles.²⁵ More recently, other versions of schema theory have been developed (Cook, 1994; Semino, 1997) that appear more appropriate to understanding the structures of literary texts, and which have considered the extent to which literary reading involves processes of schema creation rather than instantiation.

Again the point of departure for the researchers in the field seems to go back to the instability of meaning in complex literary narratives, and which, in fact, renders individual responses differ widely. In this perspective, Miall suggests that in front of a text that lacks a network of relationships and inferences and a text that offers shifting and continually developing meanings, the reader needs an alternative recourse for guiding the comprehension process. He advances:

Feeling provides the necessary criteria for such principle. I postulate three main criteria:(1) feeling is self referential: It allows experiential and evaluative aspects of the reader's self concept to be applied to the task of comprehension; (2) feeling enables cross domain categorization of text elements; and (3) it is anticipatory, pre structuring the reader's understanding of the meaning of a text early in the reading process(2006:48)

Yet, it is noteworthy to consider in detail two contributions to schema theory, Graesser (1981) and Semino (1997), to trace back the evolution of the theory and highlight the limitations of the cognitive approach to literary experience.

II.6.2. Graesser's Model

Graesser's (1981) model of schema theory was well developed. It was described as "*Schema Pointer Plus Tag*" because it addressed the implications of processing typical schema based elements of a narrative together with elements

is the way it is...Genres may be viewed as fuzzy sets, just as most categories of knowledge."(1985:142)

²⁵ For more information on these early studies, see Black & Bower(1980) and Yekovich & Thorndyke, (1981).(available in Miall: Beyond the Schema Given: affective comprehension of literary narratives.)

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that are atypical of the schema. Each statement within a narrative is assigned to one of six categories: An event or a state, which must be either physical or internal to a character; or the statement, represents a goal node or a style node (that is, how something was done). A statement can be assigned to only one of these categories. Statements are then related to each other structurally by one of six types of directional arcs, such as “reason,” “consequence,” or “property.” In terms of the “reason” arc, which is the most common connection between statements in the narratives studied by Graesser, it is a rule that one reason can emanate forward from one goal statement to another. (See Graesser & Goodman, 1985)

E.g., *The boy buys the toy* is connected to its subordinate goal by a reason arc, ***in order to have the toy.***

Through these and related methods of analysis, Graesser and his co workers devised a theory of narrative structure which has strong predictive power in accounting for how readers comprehend and remember simple narratives.

Despite his considerable contribution, Graesser has been criticised for the impossibility to apply his model to literary narratives. In other terms, literary narratives cannot easily be accommodated to these categories and rules. The criticism falls mainly on the principle which advances that only one reason arc can emanate forward from a goal, in that, characters of a literary text may be driven by several reasons or motives or may perform different actions that emanate from different goals and that are the particularity of these indeterminate

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texts. Thus, literary narratives typically pose schemata in critical framework and show their inadequacy and inapplicability.

Interestingly, Miall(1989) finds in the indeterminacy of literary narratives a primary agent in the reading process that could drive other systems which control and modify schemata with their apparatus of causes and goals. His chief argument is that indeterminacy points to feeling as the primary process underlying comprehension. As already stated this is not the first study that considers the importance of feeling in the reading process, yet, one may advance that it remains the first study that incorporates feelings to prior cognitive studies.

To exemplify the limitations of Graesser's model, Miall has selected one phrase from a short story by Virginia Woolf (1944) entitled *Together and Apart*:²⁶

[1] Mrs Dalloway introduced them, [2] saying you will like him. [3] The conversation began some minutes before anything was said, [4] for both Mr Serle and Miss Anning looked at the sky [5] and in both of their minds the sky went on pouring its meaning [6] though very differently...

The above set of phrases do pose problems particularly phrase n°3 where ambiguity starts after the two preceding phrases which are devoted to the mere description of the setting; likely to be a kind of party. Who are the characters involved in the conversation? and what was the conversation about? and what is the reason of the conversation are all gloomy elements that apparently could not be clarified thanks to Graesser's model of comprehension. Let us concentrate on

²⁶ The above narrative constitutes the focus of the empirical study of response undertaken by D.S.Miall.

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his major element called the “reason arc” which is supposed to relate statements so that goals would be met, thus comprehension reached. This same phrase is followed by another phrase which starts with “for”; indicator of a goal that links phrase n°4 to the preceding one thus providing a kind of explanation, yet the remaining part of the phrase “... the sky went on pouring its meaning..” does not offer elements of clarification, on the contrary, it appears highly suggestive of a great deal of indeterminacy.

V. Woolf’s prose is, thus, enough representative of the impossibility to generalize Graesser’s schema process of comprehension of literary narratives. The selection of such modern literary texts to be submitted to the study is done purposefully so as to show the complexity of textual structures that characterize the great bulk of fiction; mostly appreciated by contemporary readers²⁷. As a result to Graesser’s study, Miall reached the following: first, schema identification is necessary to permit the beginning of the process of understanding, yet, the complexity of the literary narrative²⁸ and its multiple ranges of textual features may disrupt the application of the schemata. Second, Graesser’s postulate that text elements relate through causal accounts of states or events is not necessarily applicable to literary narratives, for, these elements may offer a wide range of indeterminacy and multiple dimensions and uncertainties. Third, goal accounts of

²⁷ Apparently, a number of studies confirm the preference of students to prose fiction and more particularly, modern short stories. (See Hanson, 1985).

²⁸ The criticism of Graesser’s study was supported by (Olson, Mark & Duffy 1981)’ study, which has considered the literary narrative as often not “*well formed*”, whether in terms of overall plan, coherence, completeness, or conventions .

characters are often problematic, ambiguous and conflictive, thus rendering comprehension difficult if not impossible.

In short, Graesser's approach appears interesting in the sense that it has contributed to explain that the readers' use of schemata is inevitable to comprehend a literary narrative, yet, it has shown too that their efforts should be directed towards developing more complex schemata, ones that transcend the simple ones with which they have started.

II.6.3. Semino's Model

The second and more recent study which used schema theory in the comprehension of literary narratives is the one initiated by E. Semino (1997)²⁹. Actually, Semino's study was highly inspired by Cook's study(1994)³⁰. The latter's theory of literariness put forward one of the first serious endeavours in studies of literature to encompass rigorous linguistic analysis within a broader cognitive frame. In his view, it is the function of certain texts to challenge and alter existing schemata in the reader, and literary texts typically carry out this function. Put differently, literary texts involve "discourse deviation", challenging the reader by causing schema disruption, followed by schema refreshment. (1994:182). Contrary to Cook, Semino sees that literary texts may often reinforce schemata rather than challenge the reader to engage in schema refreshment.(Semino,2001) To exemplify her claim, Semino analysed a poem by

²⁹ Note that all the information concerning the study of Semino(1997) are taken from Semino(2001).

³⁰ While Cook (1994) provided the essence for the study of Semino (1997), the latter dissociates herself openly from his notion of schema challenging.

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Seamus Heaney entitled “A Pillowed Head”. Her aim, in fact, was to demonstrate that the poem is schema reinforcing thus amenable to prove the usefulness of an analytical framework based on Cook(1994) and to provide,

an example of a literary text that seems to reinforce rather than question the areas of knowledge which are relevant to its interpretation, and that therefore triggers the construction of a text world that is not just ‘possible’, but also fairly conventional and familiar... Like most other discourse types, literary texts may challenge to confirm existing beliefs and assumptions (in this, I go against Cook’s and Weber’s claim that the reading of literature typically results in schema change). (Semino, 1997: 175, quoted in Semino, 2001: 347)

Amazingly, Semino’s analysis of schema reinforcement fails to consider the factor feeling, the pin point of Miall’s argumentation. His hypothesis argues that schemata could arouse feeling, just as feeling may appear in the response to certain words or phrases and thus contribute to the shaping an understanding for the reader. Actually, Cook himself pointed to the limitation of schema theory in particular,

“... its lack of interest in form and its failure to account for default elements, can be compensated for by the incorporation of schema theory into a theory of discourse.” (in Hidalgo, 1996: 241). Now considering Cook’s recognition of the shortcomings of schema theory, Semino’s study and her schema-based interpretation does also appear problematic and unsatisfactory, in that, her ill-consideration of individual responses led her dismiss some ‘emotional associations’ other than the ones usually conveyed by the poem. Since the poem is about childbirth, feelings such as *dawn, birth, hope, joy*, for instance, are no more than conventional associations related to the schemata generated by the poem. In other words, the implication from Semino’s study seems to refer to a definite set

of feelings- the ones stated above only. No room is left to other representations that could generate feelings outside the frame of the poem's theme. Unconsciously, Semino disregards the uniqueness of individual responses to literary texts and thus joins Graesser's restrictive model. One would assume that personal and idiosyncratic interpretations do not have room for interpretation, therefore devoiding interpretation of status of a uniqueness, which appeals, undeniably, to feeling.

II.7. Defamiliarisation

After having shown the shortcomings of schema theory as applied to literary narratives, the need to incorporate another theory amenable to play a complementary role in the comprehension of literary narratives imposes itself. I have already supported my study on the assumption that foregrounding is the distinguishing property of literary texts³¹. These same texts and because of these textual properties are responsible for defamiliarizing the schemata usually perceived mechanically and without questioning.

Moreover, the failure to account for linguistic form by means of schema theory is however the focus of other theories of literariness which Cook deals with under the heading of "Formalism & Stylistics"³². It is this type of approach to literature which views literariness as a deviation from a norm that literary texts can be observed by rigorous linguistic analysis and which is, in fact, partly incorporated into Cook's theory. Clearly, the connection appears strongly between

³¹ In fact, the whole study is supported by the argument that Foregrounding is the property of literary texts. See the section on *Foregrounding in the Response to Literature* for more details.

³² For more information, see Cook (1994, Chapter 5)

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Cook's notion of cognitive change and the structuralist notion of defamiliarization. (Cook, 1994: 131/33)

One effect of defamiliarization is to require the creation of a new schema adequate to the material presented by the poem or story. The initial schemata are likely to contradict each other in subtle ways, providing readers with signals of their inadequacy and impelling them to recognise that they have only provisional status. The primary role of readers, then, is to interpret the unfolding sentences of the text for clues to more adequate schema.

Conclusion

What precedes was devoted to an attempt to show the limitation of interpretation as traditionally conceived. Rather than considering the literary text relying on the critics' sole vision, psychological analysis must come to supplement their resources and highlight the ways in which readers and texts are situated within a culture. More particularly, light was shed on both the cognitive and affective aspects that characterise the process of interpretation, engaging then the reader and only the reader. For the purpose of overcoming these limitations, an examination of empirical theories on literature is proposed in the next part of my discussion along with a depiction of the necessity on becoming empirically involved in undertaking whatever research on literature.

CHAPTER THREE

On the Need of Becoming Empirical

Introduction

The purpose of this review is to focus on the examination of the literature relevant to learner response to literature. It is divided into the following topical sections: reviews of literature in response to literature and the examination of major empirical descriptive studies.

III.1.1. Background

Response to literature has a history that goes as far back as Aristotle's *Katharsis*, which actually represented a theory devoted to the effect of tragedy. Most of our knowledge, however, about response to literature has been generated over the three or four last decades. At the present time it still remains somewhat fragmented and intuitive.

Early investigations appeared to focus primarily on the aesthetic factors involved in the appreciation of literature. Emphasis in research was generally concerned with the role of the reading audience, and little attention was given to the study of specific response to specific literary works. Some of these studies involved attempts to provide a better understanding of the terms *interpretation* and *appreciation*. Others were concerned with identifying correlates of literary appreciation, such as intelligence, emotional appeal, mode of expression, and choice of subject matter. Still others involved experimentation with free responses and those elicited by specific questions.

Some pioneer studies were related to analyses of misinterpretations by readers. These studies included those that were informal and controlled. Both types have yielded valuable contributions to our store of knowledge about response to literature.

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Other early studies focused on the relationships that exist between response to literature and personality dispositions of readers. These concentrated primarily on such factors as motivation, readers' interests, attitudes of teachers and parents, sex differences of readers and characters in literature, and the impact of contents on readers' response.

Additional studies have involved research related to various ways of classifying response to literature and evaluating the effectiveness of classroom instruction in modifying reader response to literature. Some of these have included cross-cultural studies in describing and comparing reader response to literature.

Among more recent trends in response to literature has been an attempt to bring about a convergence in the objectives of teaching reading and literature. The present study seeks actually to participate in this trend. During the past few years reading teachers and literature teachers have focused on common objectives and concerns, and interdisciplinary cooperation has occurred.

Consequently, this trend has resulted in expanding the breadth of research methodology in response to literature, with attention being given even to ethnographic and case studies. This, in turn, has led to an increase in literature and to greater use of classroom as the proper environment for such investigation. Even the ecological validity of the septic and artificial conditions of controlled investigations have been questioned. Teachers have not always been able to apply generalizations derived from such studies across various settings and use them in the classroom.

In this present review of literature an attempt was made to include those contributions from the amount of data gathered that (a) represents relevant, historical background in research in response to literature, and (b) provides the bases from which other investigations have been generated, then (c) provides a body of literature from which the need for the present study was indicated.

III.1.2. Reviews of Literature in Response to Literature¹

II.1.2.1. Loban's Study

Loban(1948) presented a relevant study in the field of response to literature. His research proposed sixteen ideas for evaluating literature. Among the ideas proposed were the following: **a-** the use of plot-completion test developed by Sarah Roody in which the student had to rank five endings to each of 10 brief incomplete stories as to the probability as outcomes to the stories; **b-** the use of the Guttman technique, which involved an objective means of forming a scale from answers to questions that centred around a story theme; **c-** the use of the author's test of Grasp of Human Conduct, which consisted of measuring students' interpretations of the behaviour of characters in short stories, novels, dramas but in situations not actually presented in the literary work; **d-** the use of content analysis, a technique in which the student was evaluated on his or her ability to analyse specific points of a story; and **e-** the use of the Social Distance Scale, which indicated a student's personal response to the main characters.

¹ I need to stipulate that the information that has formed the body of the literature review have been inspired by the survey of E. Klemenz-Belgardt (1981) and the work of Werner Dantzler (1987). Because of the rarity of these data, both works helped substantially the present study with precious information concerning the most relevant empirical studies undertaken in North America about research in response to literature.

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His ideas were further more interesting at that time since they included ways to investigate some of the more difficult aspects of literature through: **a-** the use of the four tests developed by the Progressive Education Association by which the classroom teacher was able to evaluate an individual student's progress in literature in comparison to a class as a whole; **b-** the use of the Critical-Mindedness in Reading Fiction Test, which indicated whether students' judgments of literature were "good" or "poor"; **c-** the use of Judging the Effectiveness of Written Composition, which required students to write judgments of short stories; and **d-** the use of An Interpretation Literature test, which dealt with the more difficult aspects of Literature found in O. Henry's short story, "Municipal Report," and which was among the earliest attempts to categorize responses to literature.

Other ideas by Loban for evaluating literature included the following: **a-** the use of a cumulative reading record, which involved keeping a continuous record of all the books students had read and then using these records to evaluate their reading according to six levels of maturity; **b-** the use of the Easy and Difficult Reading test, which provided a means to determine students' progress in reading easy to difficult materials on six levels of difficulty; **c-** the use of Edberhart's Variety and Maturity of Reading form to summarize both the variety and maturity of students' reading; **d-** the use of Richard's technique of analysing student responses to unidentified poems ranging from superior to inferior; **e-** the use of Smith's Test of Contemporary Reading, which consisted of 80 questions about adolescent books ranging from inferior to superior in literary quality; **f-** the use of Burch's Stanford Tests of Comprehension of literature, which emphasized

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judging the character and feelings of people; and **g-** the use of Carroll's Prose Appreciation Tests, which measured students' ability to differentiate among "good", "average," and "bad" pieces of literature.

From among Loban's results is that teachers need to develop better and more appropriate ways to determine the effects of reading literature on learners, while not surprisingly, the same study proved that there are certain aspects of responses to literature that will never yield exact, or objective results. Yet Loban's study remains an important contribution to response to literature since it stands among the first attempts to provide an overview of the major techniques used in the teaching of literature.

III.1.2.2. Cooper's Study

From another perspective of research, Cooper (1971) attempted to measure appreciation to literature rather than understanding or perception². His study represents an interesting study, for; it unveiled aspects of the research in response to literature that were not put under scrutiny yet. For instance, he aimed at understanding the impact of literature on readers or the process in which they have become involved while responding to literary work. For more efficiency, he gave importance to the readers' preferences for particular works. Cooper (1971) gains also the merit for having presented a comprehensive summary of the earlier research in attempts to measure literary appreciation³. He identified the major areas of research in response to literature and categorized them as *discrimination*

² Cooper is reproachful to earlier research which centred chiefly on three major concerns: (a) aspects of the literature itself, (b) methods of teaching literature, and (c) the characteristic of the responder or reader.

³ Cooper's review of 1971 included earlier studies conducted by Ballard(1914), Abbot & Trabue (1921), Logasa & McCoy (1925), Richards (1929), Leopold (1933), Carroll (1934), Fox (1938), Williams, Winter, & Woods (1938), Britton (1954), Taba (1955), Squire(1964), and Purves (1968).

studies. Cooper's review was significant in revealing ways of measuring literary appreciation. It also remains a suggestive study since it prompted other researchers to carry evaluation of appreciation beyond that of simply interpretation. For example, among his observations the need to examine ways of determining the impact of literary works on different types of responders, such as those having different cultural backgrounds.

III.1.2.3. Purves & Beach' Study

Another relevant contribution to the existing review of literature was a very suggestive summary presented by Purves & Beach in 1972. This summary provided 247 entries on response to literature that covered the period from 1912 to 1971. Despite its historical contribution in the domain of response to literature, the analyses of the investigations lacked some depth and as such rendered the credibility of the conclusions somehow doubtful⁴.

The originality of Purves & Beach study stands in the modification of the five Purves-Rippere categories for classifying responses to literature in to the Purves-Beach system of nine categories. The system was presented by Odell and Cooper (1976) as the following:

Personal Statement

- 1- about the reader, an "autobiographical digression"
- 2- about the work, expressing personal engagement with it

Descriptive Statement

- 3- narrational retelling part of the work
- 4- descriptive of aspects of the work; language, characters, setting, etc.

⁴ Purves & Beach recognized the lack of depth of their analyses. (cited in Werner, 1987:22)

Interpretative Statement

5- of parts of the work

6- of the whole work

Evaluative Statement

7- about the evocativeness of the work

8- about the construction of the work

9- about the meaningfulness of the work

(Odell & Cooper, 1976 in Werner: 1987:23)

III.1.2.4.Hanson's Study

More research in the field of response to literature has flourished after the study of Purves & Beach (1972). For instance, Hanson (1973) attempted to introduce the use of the semantic differential scale for recording and evaluating protocols in literature. He recorded responses on a series of 7-point bipolar adjective scales to designate where they lay in regard to specific extremes, such as static-dynamic or simple-complex. This approach to recording responses was a contribution to the use of non-written responses.

Hanson used this approach to investigate such problems as evaluating the effectiveness of teaching literature and subjects' reactions to selected literary passages and poems. His rationale for the use of such a device was the responses, even though they may not be verbalised, can be quite pronounced and recognizable. Again, Hanson's study proved its limitations despite its substantial contribution to the literature on response to literature; in that it involved learners

in different approaches to recording their responses and did not provide sufficient analysis.

III.1.2.5. Petrosky's Study

The need to determine the impact on different types of responders was evident in a review reported by Petrosky (1977). In his study, he highlighted the investigations of Purves into the importance of cultural influences in explaining national difference in response to literature. Purves discovered the general use of language and the extent of resources at home at least to provide partial explanations of cultural influences in the cognitive and affective domains in response to literature⁵.

More to the point is Petrosky's report on Collins' study(1976) which studied the cultural effects on learners' beliefs, attitudes, and mental sets and how these affect the interpretation of racial literature. Petrosky's review pointed out the complexity of response to literature and attributed them to numerous factors, such as readers' personal constructs, their cognitive ability, the readers' past experiences, age, and the teachers' expectations and questioning techniques. His review provided further evidence of the need to investigate cultural differences in response to literature.

III.1.2.6. Applebee's Study

The year of 1977 witnessed another relevant review presented by Applebee. It was a rather comprehensive review of 30 studies that had used the five major categories and the 139 Purves-Rippere elements as a system for content

⁵ These ideas are discussed in *Literature Education in Ten Countries*, (Purves, 1973).

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analysis of responses to various literary works. The studies reported by Applebee were conducted at the beginning of 1968, with the original Purves-Rippere investigation of *The Elements of Writing about a Literary Work*, and extending through 1976, when Odell and Cooper conducted an investigation of the responses of an 11th grade student to three novels. The latter study involved a combination of Purves' procedures with descriptions of intellectual strategies drawn from tagmemic theory developed by Young, Becker, and Pike (1970).

An in-depth analysis of Applebee review helped reveal the following significant points: **a-** teaching styles, teaching or directed discussions, and pupil-led discussions affect response to literature, **b-** response to literature changes when the particular literary work changes, **c-** movement in response to literature investigations is presented toward natural classroom settings, **d-** sex of subjects makes very little difference except when cultural expectations are different, **e-** the use of the Purves-Rippere elements has been extended across national boundary lines, and **f-** the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) investigation revealed within country "clusters" of responses (Applebee, 1977).

Additional major points revealed by the detailed analysis of the Applebee review included the following: **a-** complexity of responses appears to be related to age, **b-** the Purves-Rippere system has been extended to diverse media used in presenting literature to the responders; **c-** methods of response to literature have been extended to taping of oral responses and observing nonverbal responses; **d-** response preferences of weak and strong students are only slightly different except in the area of reading comprehension; **e-** the Purves-Rippere elements

represent a combination of several factors, such as the context of response, culturally induced predispositions, and personal preferences, and f- stronger generalization can be drawn from these studies as a collection.

III.1.2.7. Galda's Study

A more recent review was one that combined seminal theoretical and empirical investigations of response to literature (Galda,1983). This review made an important contribution to noting how response to literature has shifted from the idea that a text contains some hidden meaning that the reader must correctly interpret to that of the literary transaction in which the reader synthesises meaning. The review made reference to the early investigation of Richards (1929), who suggested the idea that our perceptions sometimes interfere with “correct” interpretation, the transactional theory of Rosenblatt (1938), and the subjective impressionism of Bleich (1975).

Galda (1983) also reviewed the literature in reference to the influence of personal style and experience, cognitive development, and the reader's concept of story on response to literature. References were made to Holland (1975), Petrosky (1975), Britton (1970), and Applebee(1973). The review also referred to investigations that revealed how aspects of the text and the context within which responses were generated also influenced response to literature. References to these factors also included investigations by Squire (1964), Iser (1978), Beach (1973), and Hickman (1981).

The Galda review (1983) also made reference to the development of the statement analysis, and the Response Preference Measure (RPM) as instruments

that provide a reader the choice in how to respond to literature. Reference was also made to the Cooper and Michalak investigation (1981), which discovered inconsistencies among the three measures and concluded that essay analysis had greatest construct validity. The major contribution, however, of the Galda review (1983) was the emphasis it placed upon the need to find new ways to analyze and evaluate oral responses as well as written responses to literature.

III.1.3.1. Shortcomings

In short, this section of the review of literature attempted to include relevant reviews of literature that focused on trends in the use of various methods of evaluating response to literature and populations of subjects. However, this same review of earlier empirical works in North America⁶ shows those researchers in the field as being primarily concerned with improving educational practices. In an interesting reconsideration of these pioneer empirical works, Klemenz-Belgardt criticises extant studies for offering poorly theorized views both of literary response and of the literary work under examination and suggests instead that:

The negative effects of this close attachment to educational science may be neutralized by a more intensive integration of the ideas and the knowledge of literary scholarship-including, of course, a more exact determination of the methodological and metatheoretical differences between empirical research on response to literature and the endeavours of scholars in the humanities. (1981:373)

⁶ “The number of American empirical studies on response to literature is impressively high, especially when compared to the small number of such investigations carried out in Western Europe... It[Klemenz’ review] is intended to facilitate European scholars access to empirical studies and consequently advance empirical research on literary communication”(Klemenz-Belgardt, 1981: 359)

While the studies helped inform classroom practice, the result was an “*under-theoretization of the nature of literary response.*”⁷(Miall: 2006:95) Over the last twenty years, however, researchers have drawn upon a much wider and better developed set of theoretical contexts, ranging across discourse processing theories, psycholinguistics, social psychology, personality theory, emotion theory, and psychobiology, in addition, of course, to several branches of literary theory. Yet, there is still need for a homogenous theoretical consensus that would combine the experience of the past empirical researches on literature and future insights of a satisfactory theory. Could the solution be an Empirical Theory of Literature?

III.2. Empirical Theory of Literature and Actual Readers’ Responses

III.2.1. Reasons

The debate whether Empirical studies of literary reading have succeeded in convincing the majority of mainstream literary scholars is still subject to discussion. Actually, it should be noticed that theorists have been urged to think about a theory that incorporates both the study of ordinary and academic readers, for previous studies have paid little or no attention to the study of the “actual” reader and as such contributed, perhaps unconsciously, to widen the gap between these two kinds of readers and raised controversies on the experiment of literary

⁷ Miall explains that even Galda himself, who was among the researchers on response to literature, criticises the lack of theoretical foundation that stimulated these early empirical researchers (Miall,2006)

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reading itself. I have mentioned my support of the reader-response theory in the preceding sections and explained that thanks to its pedagogic implications, it has gained the interest of most educational researchers in the domain of literature. Yet, it seems necessary to go back to the German school of theory since it is responsible for the emergence of the empirical theory of reading.

Again, the problem is not a problem of the theory or the nature of this same theory, the major reproach is made to the fact whether that theory is gaining fame or not because institutionally governed. I have already discussed the polemic over the body of canonical texts which gain the mandate despite their potential irrelevance with regards the literature virtues and I carry along the same line of thought wondering upon the appropriateness of the literary theory “en vogue” !! Is it justifiable in its claims or is the fruit of a set of decisions far from the academy? The whole of my concern seems to be fed by a sole desire that of helping construct a theory on a testable ground.

Two or three decades ago, the very assumption of empirical research on literature would have seemed irrelevant or inadequate, simply because the tenets of literary theory supported a set of beliefs that could not be dissociated from the power of the institution. When inquiring about literary competence, for instance, Culler holds,

The question is not what actual readers happen to do but what an ideal reader must know implicitly in order to read and interpret works in ways which we consider acceptable, in accordance with the institution of literature.
(Culler, 1975:129)

He goes further and speculates warning about,

The dangers of an experimental or socio- psychological approach which would take too seriously the actual and doubtless idiosyncratic performance of individual readers.(Id:258)

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Culler's statements are revealing samples of an entire tradition which maintained the idea that the nature of the literary reading is necessarily determined by the theorist, who in his turn decides in advance what is to consider as worthy in the institution of literature. More dangerously, we are warned on the fruitless study of actual readers, who do not deserve serious attention since they do not fit the already established criteria that determine an ideal reader⁸. Surprisingly, the proponents of the theory advanced views that could not be validated empirically. While they warned on the dangers of studying actual idiosyncratic readers, they could not provide criteria amenable to distinguish such kind of readers from the ones around whom they built their theories, i.e., the ideal readers.

Hence, the turn to empirical theory seems to be connected with a perceived deficiency in the theories emanating from current literary scholarship and a will to cast light on misunderstandings on the nature of literary reading,

But by her own efforts empirical study will come to dominate the literary field by providing a matrix for evaluating theoretical proposals and for rethinking the nature of literary reading and its cultural place. (Miall, 2000:44)

Often, Iser and Jauss were taken to task for their lack of sociological grounding with respect to the reader, therefore, one of the ways to correct this failing, many felt, was to undertake analyses of the "real" reader (Ibsch, 1989, Holub, 1984). Such an approach is said to maintain the central place of theory while offering possibilities to arbitrate between alternative positions. Theory will no longer remain the interminable and inconclusive mode of debate that is currently witnessed; nor will it remain divorced from the interests and concerns of those

⁸ I must confess that the neglect of the « actual » reader has been the point of departure of the present study since I see many similarities between the latter and the reader of literature in an EFL context.

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outside the academy who continue to be engaged in reading literary texts.(Miall, 2000) The empirical theory on literature seems to gain the credit for paying attention to those readers who are not necessarily engaging with literature, rather, attention is paid to those ordinary readers who were for so a long time excluded because of the irresolvable conflicts and the excessive claims made by the most prominent exponents of the theory. De Beaugrande points out the following warning:

Only empirical studies can resolve this state of affairs by freeing these[theoretical] claims from their absolute dependence on the personal eloquence or effrontery of the individual theorists and by providing progressively more reliable and intersubjective grounds for preferring any set of claims over any other”(1989:10)

Actually, the critic highlights the subjective treatment of the theoretical approaches of the exponents of reader response theory, in that he stresses the danger engendered by the impossibility to agree upon valid techniques that could enable the reader and the critic to discuss the literary meaning and respond to the text. Therefore, De Beaugrande sees in the empirical studies on literature, a sufficient ambition to cope with the demands of the age; an age whose chief concern had to be pragmatic and scientifically testable.

III.2.2. Theoretical Issues

Thus, in the same frame, Reinhold Viehoff tried to contribute to “actual reception research” by carrying Jauss’s demand to “objectify” the horizon of expectations.⁹ He sent questionnaires to 106 critics over the whole Federal Republic inquiring on how literature is and how it should be. The critic was

⁹ While Jauss implied that an investigation of actual works would be adequate to the task, especially in the « ideal » cases of *Don Quixote* or *Jaques le Fataliste*, Viehoff opts for an empirical approach. (Holub,1984:136)

offered a series of adjectives and their corresponding interpretations with a 7-point gradation. The critic, then, was supposed to rate or rank “ideal” literature vs. “actual” literature. Unfortunately, Viehoff showed that while Jauss ideal construct neglects the extra- aesthetic dimension, the findings indicate that this dimension determines the expectations of a significant number of critics. Through a battery of statistical analyses and a grouping of results, Viehoff endeavoured to demonstrate the distance between the ideal and the real in the critics’ literary expectations, thus making the concept of “horizon of expectations” objective.

III.2.3. N. Groeben’s Theory

Nonetheless, the influential figure of Norbert Groeben has argued that the real change in paradigm, which Jauss proclaims, does not involve a shift from the immanent model of New Criticism or Formalism to the functional and effective theories of reception, but rather a change from all hermeneutic schemes to empirically based research (Ibsch, 1989). In more explicit words, Groeben advocates redirecting literary research in accordance with methods already popular in the natural and social sciences¹⁰.

In his insistence to point to the deficiencies of the previous approaches, he distinguishes sharply between *subject* researcher and *object*: the reader or receiver, who should be the object of literary research, was often confounded with the investigator or interpreter. The “object” is not the text, but the meaning attributed by the reader to the text. Groeben aims to prevent researchers from attributing an exaggerated or a disproportioned importance at their own

¹⁰ Groeben relied on the “*falsification theory of Karl Popper, the analytical philosophy of Werner Stegmüller, and the notions of text-processing developed by Gotz Wienold and S.J. Schmidt*” (Holub, 1984:137)

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interpretation¹¹, which is in fact, characteristic of the hermeneutic school, and it is only at this condition that the current stream would reach scientific status. The decisions inherent to the meanings of a text could emerge only from the receiver and not the interpreter. The duty of the latter is to reproduce experimentally the response mechanisms by implementing different techniques, which included many standard instruments developed by psychologists and social scientists as the semantic differential, free association, cloze-procedure, and free-card-sorting-system, and whose results would be explained. The hypothesis on the meaning of a text which could be best checked by the concretisations of the receivers would nurture the ambition of being relatively generalizable.

In this particular context of theory, Groeben and other researchers have experimented their hypotheses on *la Catastrophe du lièvre (Hasenkatastrophe)* by Robert Musil (Groeben, 1981a). Yet, in order to validate his theory, Groeben asked representatives of other methods of interpretation (hermeneutic, Marxist analysis, psychoanalytic, and formalist) to suggest an interpretation to the same text of fiction by Musil. The findings were subject to a sample of persons asked to check through one of the three empirical methods (cloze-procedure, the semantic differential, and the semantic categorization). Actually, they were asked to answer one of the two major questions:

1/ Which of the propositions of interpretations suggested above could be considered as most valid?

¹¹ Groeben's idea is, in fact, proper to all researchers in response to literature. Charles R.Cooper, for instance, advanced, « *Researchers in response to literature are interested in describing, not in judging...* » (1976:37) . Holub, in his turn, refers to all prior theory, the Hermeneutics then, as having a « heuristic » function.

2/ Which of the three empirical techniques suggested could appropriately fit the answer to the question of the interpretation of the text of fiction?

Unfortunately, because it will not be possible to do justice to all the processes and experiments undertaken in this research, the present review will concentrate around the most appealing findings. For instance, it was noticed that the Formalist approach was found interesting while the psychoanalytic interpretation was disregarded because of the divergence of the meaning reached from the prospects of the text¹². Again, the Hermeneutic approach seems to offer the largest divergences *par rapport* the literary text and the way it is received; yet, these findings did not permit to denigrate the theory or diminish its worth. One of the findings was to make the researchers reformulate their question and as such the empirical researches have permitted to affirm which of the hypotheses of interpretation was the less adequate.¹³

III.2.4. Shortcomings

The concept of the reader that Goeben suggests seems interesting, for he refers to an *actual* reader subject to experimentation and validation, the position of the latter then is non hermeneutic. Thus, Groeben's will was to "scientific" / "emprise" the science of literature¹⁴. Yet, the ambition was far from realization.

¹² Conscious of the limitation of the psychoanalytic approach, Groeben held, « *le projet d'interprétation psychanalytique (...) [peut], du moins pour la République fédérale d'Allemagne et pour la population de lecteurs consultée, être déclarée invalide* » (cited by Ibsch in Angenot et al., 1989:258)

¹³ Again, it is impossible to examine the three suggested empirical techniques in detail; yet, the *cloze-procedure* method has proved to be inappropriate.

¹⁴ Groeben aimed, for instance, at validating empirically the "*communicability of modern lyric poetry*."

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The first problem he meets occurs when he strives to translate the findings into terms that are quantifiable,

Communication is not a simple process; it occurs on many levels and by various means. To assume that redundancy as it is defined here is an accurate measure for communication, especially when dealing with literary texts, is hardly a secure hypothesis.¹⁵ (Holub, 1984:140)

More to the point is the criticism of the Hermeneutic school when referring to the obstacles that those historical readers may encounter while following Groeben's empirical experiment. For them, such kind of readers is unfitting to the requirements of a scientific experimentation, and as such Groeben himself recognized that it would be impossible to devise a theory deprived of any hermeneutical support. In sum, the major reproach of Groeben's procedure, however, is that the majority of questions that matter in literary scholarship cannot be solved empirically, otherwise, they would have been noticed by perceptive students of literature without the burden of the statistical survey¹⁶.

Even among the circle of empiricists, and particularly Schmidt and his colleagues, Groeben was accused of being imprisoned in the hermeneutic spirit, the more he wanted to get rid of, the more he found himself join their spirit. For instance, the question of validation or non-validation of meanings suggested in the same text is fundamentally hermeneutic, since the objective of the hermeneutics is to designate *the* adequate meaning to the text. (Holub, 1984; Angenot et al., 1989; Ibsch, 1989)

¹⁵ The above quote is related to Groeben's experiment which wondered whether it would be possible to communicate modern lyric poetry.

¹⁶The statistical aspect of Groeben's procedure was criticised for being heavy and for its mechanical aspect unsuitable for literary researches, yet, he stands as one of the first researchers whose use of statistics influenced the current mainstream of research.

III.2.5. Schmidt and Constructivism

On the other hand, the programme proposed by Siegfried J. Schmidt and the group NIKOL¹⁷ claims the status of a new conception. While Groeben has been preoccupied with implementing empirical methods in order to validate the scientific status of the discipline, Schmidt is interested in devising an appropriate theory before aiming at validating it. In other terms, he is not interested in *empirizing* interpretation but in attributing interpretation a place in the frame of the Empirical Science of Literature (ESL) (*Empirische Theorie der Literatur, ETL*). Hence, ESL represents one of the first attempts to provide “... *an autonomous paradigm for the study of literature despite the insufficiencies of its current state of elaboration*” (Schmidt 1983:19)

Schmidt builds his ESL on a theory of human action (*Handlungstheorie*). His premise is that all literary phenomena are no more than the product of the behaviour of concrete subjects. In this theoretical frame, all the ontological commitments are already given up, mainly the view that there is an essential “literariness”¹⁸ that distinguishes literary texts. Again, in this perspective, literature is seen as an outcome of linguistic socialisation carried out in the interests of social groups; thus “*literariness cannot be regarded as a textual property but as a result of actions of analysis and evaluation performed by subjects within an action system.*”(Id:31) Interpreters do not stand outside the system of action, which the scientific is supposed to study, but they are active

¹⁷ NIKOL refers to the research group made by: P. Finke, W. Kindt, J. Wirrer, R. Zobel at Bielefeld University and since 1980, Schmidt has continued his work with new NIKOL members; A. Barsch, H. Hauptmeier, D. Meutsch, G. Rusch and R. Viehoff at Siegen University. (Schmidt, 1983: 19)

¹⁸ Schmidt's concept of « literariness » has influenced D.S.Miall's empirical study of literary reading.

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agents within the system itself, whether be they receivers or an experts¹⁹.(Schmidt, 1985) Apparently, Schmidt's view is closer to that of Fish²⁰, who does not see the meaning enclosed just in the literary text; the empirical research permits to discover the different interpretations according to their context and their social pertinence.

All of critics, producers, readers, and publishers should be included in the literary system and considered as active agents, and it is only in this way, Schmidt holds, that ESL will bring about a *Kuhnian* paradigm shift, establishing a scientific programme of research on literature, one independent of hermeneutic assumptions. In addition to their contribution in the domain of information, they would embody a decisive role in fixing the norms of the literary system: they would contribute actively in defending or rejecting the pertinence of certain models of behaviour or thought in approaching a literary text.(Schmidt, 1982) Perhaps the best known aspect of Schmidt's work has been to define literary response in terms of the aesthetic and polyvalence conventions²¹, a claim that has

¹⁹ « les scientifique analysent le système littéraire ; leur activité obéit aux critères du système de la science. Les interprètes prennent part au système de la littérature, ils sont des acteurs de ce système » (cited by E. Ibsch in Angenot et al., 1989: 162)

²⁰ Fish's central point turns around the importance of the communities of interpretation in shaping an interpretation of the literary text.

²¹ Schmidt (1983:28) defines the Aesthetic and Polyvalence conventions as the following:

Aesthetic Convention

It is expected in our society of all participants who intend to realize aesthetic KOMMUNIKATE from linguistic TEXTS that they must be willing and able to de-emphasize the fact convention and to expand their action potential (or the action potential of other participants) beyond the criteria of true/false and useful/useless; instead they orient themselves toward aesthetically relevant categories; they must be willing and able to designate communicate actions intended as literary with appropriate signals during production, or to follow such signals during reception; and finally to select as a frame of reference for the referring expressions in the text not primarily (or not exclusively) the socially established model of reality, but other frames of reference as well.

Polyvalence Convention

It is shared knowledge in our society for all participants in literary communicative interaction that:

- (a) text producers are not bound by the monovalence convention;
- (b) text receivers have the freedom to produce different KOMMUNIKATE from the same TEXT in different times and situations, and they expect others to do likewise;

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interestingly influenced some empirical studies. This same claim is built on the concept of constructivism of “facts.”²²

Despite its deep roots in cognitive science and discourse processing, constructivism is undeniably linked to the figure of S.Schmidt who was first responsible for selling its foundation to colleagues in literature, literary criticism, media studies, and empirical studies of literature²³. Constructivism has had tremendous impact on both cognitive science and the field of discourse processing throughout the last twenty five years. What is meant by constructivism then? It means that the human mind actively constructs meanings rather than merely translates explicit texts. It means that “*cognitive mechanisms dynamically interact with stimulus input during comprehension, and collaboratively produce cognitive representations*”(Graesser, Singer, & Trabasso, 1994; Kintsch, 1998). So meaning does not reside in the text, nor does it reside in the mind, but rather it resides in a dynamic dance between the two. Because of these cognitive complexities, any enterprise that dissects the linguistic and semantic properties of the text alone is not a psychologically plausible model of comprehension and appreciation. Any text-analysis enterprise is also fundamentally limited as a formal theory because it will never go the distance in offering a complete explanation of the composition of the explicit text. From this view of things, E.Ibsch raises the following question: “*Does this construction permit empirical*

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- (c) text receivers rate the realization of aesthetic KOMMUNICATE as optimal, though the grounds for this rating may differ among participants and situations;
 - (d) text mediators and post-processors should not act in conflict with the aspects of the polyvalence convention in (a) through (c).

²² See Finke(1982)

²³ The reticence of many fields of research has not permitted to produce the revolutionary change that Schmidt and his fellows had hoped, except perhaps the empirical studies of literature that saw interesting insights in the ideas generated by constructivism.

testing or is it used as a hard core which does not need corroboration?" (Ibsch, 1989: 399). She points out, such theorists seem unreceptive to Popperian scientific procedures, since they have no place for *"the ethical impulse inherent in the search for the counter-example"*(Ibid). Ibsch appears very critical and holds that a theory of this status should assume validity rather than demonstrate it therefore calling for *"immunization procedures instead of a strengthening of methods for testing"* (Ibsch, 1989:402). In his turn, Graesser et al. (1994) manifest their disagreements on what constitutes the theory of Schmidt, he rather calls it a *"meta-theory"*. In short, Graesser et al. explain that a good theory tries to explain a complex phenomenon (like text comprehension), but also does so with enough specification and decisiveness that it generates predictions on what will happen in a particular experiment or empirical study.

III.2.6. Shortcomings

Surprisingly, outside Germany, the theoretical claims of ESL have not been generally accepted by other empirical researchers²⁴. ESL was mainly criticised for lacking *psychological relevance*.(Viehoff & Andringa, 1990). Even in Germany, the principles of ESL have been disputed and Schmidt's radical constructivism was seen as having, *"no way of assessing the subjectivity of responses: without independent descriptions of a text, any response must be accepted."*(Miall, 2006: 96) In his turn Groeben in (Groeben & Schreir, 1998) holds that appropriate and inappropriate responses should be distinguishable,

²⁴ In a discussion of Schmidt's Constructivism, Graesser advance the following: *« I suspect that these disagreements [with Schmidt's ideas] are the result of our growing up in different continents, countries, cultures, and intellectual traditions. Perhaps we would have been intellectual clones if I had grown up in Germany"*(1994:3).

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implying a normative framework for understanding. Further, he sees in Schmidt's polyvalence convention a norm in itself and if readers fail to follow the convention "*they are by definition not participating in the literary system.*" The implication from such a statement is that literary readers "*must strive for polyvalence*"(1998:58).

The hint is very clear and seems to call for the necessity for normative conceptions of literary response, only in this way, would empirical research on literature reach paradigmatic status. Yet, the huge number of studies undertaken in the field did not seem to converge toward the same direction. Moreover, they seem to perpetuate the same shortcomings of the preceding approaches. This could be illustrated by the selection of literary texts of acknowledged quality²⁵ in most studies and sometimes the use of non-literary texts; extracts from newspaper articles, for instance. Very few studies have ventured to put under scrutiny studies of response with sub-literary genres, such as popular fiction²⁶. In this frame, literary reading and thus literary response appears to require new dimensions that would, in fact, overlap polyvalence, personal relevance, and even sensitivity to poetic features.²⁷ Hence, investigating literary reading deserves more attention, for; it distinguishes itself as a unique and "superior" kind of reading that would, even, help understand the conditions under which literary reading takes place in education with an objective to improving them (e.g., Miall, 1993).

²⁵ In the preceding section of this study, I have warned on the dangers of canonical texts being taught and transmitted regardless of any literary worth intrinsic to the text itself.

²⁶ For more information about the topic, you may see Nell, V. (1988). *Lost in a Book: The Psychology of reading for Pleasure*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

²⁷ By sensitivity to poetic features, I refer particularly to Miall & Kuiken' (1994) study which demonstrated the impact of Foregrounding on literary response, I will come back to a detailed description of this study.

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From among the objectives of the empirical research on literature is the urge to attribute literature a status of testability. Put differently, the prerequisite that literary processes are institutionally and thus socially determined is fundamentally questioned. For the first time, the innate tendencies of behaviour of the reader are put to the fore at the expense of unfitting imposed conventions, thus, implying a change even in the role of the literature teacher, who used to transmit an agreed socially experience to that of a facilitator of an inborn facility for literary experience.²⁸ The empirical research on literature is very confident on the possibility to reconcile between the traditional literary scholarship theoretical perspectives and the more up to date methodologies to reach a critical role in the debate.

Empirical research on literature succeeded in distinguishing itself, in that; it has placed studies of literary discourse and literary response within wider frameworks. The implication is that literary discourse is not sufficient to provide thorough understanding of literary questions, for; *experiencing*²⁹ and understanding literary texts such as novels and poems require psychological processes within which discourse processes play an essential, but possibly not the most important role. Actually, the shortcomings of discourse theory were not perceived by the empiricists at first. Spiro (1982), for example, highlighted the limitations of discourse theory and called for the inclusion of motivation in reading studies. In this context, empirical studies on literature promise to study

²⁸ Early theorists like Fish have advanced strong arguments on the power of literary conventions both on readers and teachers, unlike proponents of empirical research on literature who trusted the reader's innate capacities and thus devised the concept of the teacher guide or mentor.

²⁹ « Experiencing » literature rather than understanding it is a concept proper to D.Miall. In it, he shows the implication of the self in the transaction reader/literary text.

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literature in this wider frame examining some of these alternative perspectives and showing their contribution besides the theories of discourse.

Actually, these same empirical researches are far from reaching homogeneity in approach. The differences inherent to the use of different kinds of empirical methods appear to strengthen the difficulty of capturing empirically what is distinctive to literary response. The whole of this review aimed at demonstrating the necessity to shift to empirical studies on literature simply because the latter appear to do justice to both theory and practice. Yet, reaching a consensus is far from being realised that is why I will support my study on the empirical study of literary reading as advanced by D.S.Miall.

III.2.7. Miall & Kuiken's Empirical Method

Miall and Kuiken, prominent researchers in the empirical studies of literature, studied readers' responses to literary texts and distinguished three specific aspects of the literary reading experience. First, the individual nature of response; second, the sensitivity of most readers to stylistic features; and third, the constructive role played by feelings.

The individuality of response to a literary text is, the main hangover of all the studies in the domain while at the same time it is on it that the advocators of an empirical approach nested the core of their studies. For a long time, readers were persuaded of the value of the literary texts they read and were never given the opportunity to discover it for themselves at first hand. In front of a multitude of meanings attributed to the same text, readers could but wonder on the validity of their own interpretation. A harassing point as it were. Thus, as a reaction to the

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disregard of the most central aspect of the personal response; its uniqueness, Miall & Kuiken argue that *the individuality of our readings, ...is neither incidental nor a side effect of reading; it is central to our experience of literature.*(1994b:7)

Indeed, in conducting studies whose aim was to observe the way readers may react to stylistic deviations of language, or foregrounding³⁰, they encounter in the text, the researchers noticed that readers rely on the distortions of language to build a network of relationships between different points in the story or the poem. Thus, they held that while each reader may venture in the attribution of a meaning to the text, the text itself tends to structure and guide their meaning.

The third and last aspect of the present theory centres around the sum of feelings raised while reading a literary text. When the researchers asked readers to write their responses to a poem, they noticed that the feelings they displaced to the striking points in the text played an important role in their interpretative procedures. They also observed that feelings enable readers to track the relationship between the local details of a text and their sense of the text as a whole.

By studying readers with widely different levels of literary competence and interest³¹, Miall & Kuiken deduced that while readers are asked to comment on striking elements in the text, the foregrounded elements such as alliteration, assonance, metaphor ...that require from them to activate their feelings and according to their own schemata reconsider the text and thus interpret it. They

³⁰ Foregrounding : a concept much used in STYLISTICS. Foregrounding occurs when any deviation from the normal resources of language is found in a literary text; the deviation may be a matter of grammar, metaphor, or any other figure of speech; its effect is to push the relevant part of the text into the reader's attention, to place it as if in the foreground of a picture.

³¹ Miall's study included two kinds of readers, what he called expert and novice readers.

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summed it up in the following: *foregrounding prompts defamiliarization, defamiliarization evokes affect, and affect guides “refamiliarizing” interpretative efforts (1994a:13).*

Hence, Miall & Kuiken’s contribution seems extremely interesting since it grants the affective domain a more serious role in the construction of a literary response. It appears further interesting in that it demonstrates empirically that the process of literary reading offers an opportunity for literature to enable its readers become more conscious and more critical about the emotions they feel, and which, in fact, are nothing but the result of their own culture and specific social experiences,

... the reading of literature may play an important part in developing the self of the reader: more particularly, it provides a context in which the reader’s own experience can be reassessed through constructive reformulation of meaning and scope of emotions.(Id: 10)

Conclusion

Miall & Kuiken’s study seems to satisfy the inquiries of any literature teacher who, undeniably to my sense, wonders whether the lack of enthusiasm that dominates his classes could be overcome. Those feelings of anger, disappointment, boredom, and frustration felt in the classroom by the students may not be necessarily the result of poor students in literature but on the contrary they may be the result of inadequate teaching methods that leave no room for the personal response to take place. Thus, with the hope that further investigations will find ways to help readers interpret literature and engage authentically in the experience of a literary analysis, the present study will make a contribution to this effort. The next part is devoted more particularly to the examination of the

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different approaches in the teaching of literature in a foreign language along with the conduction of an experiment on Algerian university readers of literary texts in English.

CHAPTER FOUR

Literary Reading in an EFL Context: An Algerian Empirical Experiment

Chapter IV. Literary Reading in EFL Context: An Algerian Empirical Experiment

Introduction

In the preceding parts of my discussion, I have attempted to argue for the strength of the empirical theory of foregrounding as proposed by D.S.Miall and my first objective is to illustrate that this same theory could be implemented in whatever context possible since it calls for affect. My second objective, then, aims at re-generating the love of the literature subject in both bored students and disappointed teachers. Apparently all the other elements as the culture of the reader, his nature, his literary background, his language equipment are of an additional but not necessary need to the accomplishment of a genuine reading amenable to generate meaning. The argument so far is that readers in an EFL context, for instance, interact with the stylistic features of the literary text and the latter prompt in them the necessary feeling (Miall & Kuiken, 1994a) to project them outside the world of the text and enhance in them the appropriate re-familiarizing strategies (Fialho, 2007), and most importantly implicate them in that process of experiencing literature.

It is noteworthy, however, not to exclude the noticeable differences that exist between a reading that occurs in L1 and another in L2. Although I have assumed that a theory implemented in a native context and which reached interesting results could reach similar results in a non native context, there are many researchers whose works highlighted the differences of both readings and underlined their particularities. Obviously, reading was studied in its broader sense, in that; research was not interested specifically on literature and its worthy dimensions. For example, Bernhardt asserts that many L1 reading researchers tend to see L2 studies as “*marginal and deviative*” because they view L2 reading itself

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as “*merely a slower, bastardized version of doing the same task in the native language*”(in Davis & Bistodeau, 1993:1) Actually, these researchers’ findings are not to be dismissed since there exists a great truth in what they advance. The slowness of the reading in L2 might go back to the ill match between the systemic language competence of the reader and his schematic knowledge of the world (Widdowson, 1990). Yet, these same differences should not convince researchers of the widening gap between reading in L1 and L2, in that the element of affect which supports the whole of my hypothesis could encompass the divergences, thus making of reading a personal enterprise. In this frame, Davis & Bistodeau who studied two groups of readers, one reading in English and the other in French as their native for a first time and then did the opposite for the second time found that, “*little difference exists in psychological processing between L1 and L2 reading.*”(Id:3) Naturally, such a finding finds place in the theory of Miall which combines cognition and affect in its analysis of literary reading and relegates cultural elements to a secondary level.

In an attempt to view what can be adopted to guarantee a quality education in the world of EFL literature, the following part of my discussion is devoted to a chronological survey of some of the related approaches and theories within the field of literature and which, primarily, highlight the role of *emotion* in enhancing a genuine education.

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IV.1.1. A Review of the Major Approaches and Theories Implemented in an EFL Literature Context

Research in academic settings where English is taught as a second or foreign language reveals many discrepancies which most of the time are due to teachers neither having the resources to teach literary texts nor the adequate methods to approach them conveniently. Teaching literature¹ can often imply the mastery of a rich and varied knowledge in many fields as culture and history, hardly present in a university degree in Algeria. Therefore, managing the class becomes a complicated task which requires other elements able to facilitate the exercise.

Short (1983) was among the first who advocated the notion of sensitivity to literature as related to the stylistic components of its language. Put differently, he encouraged the learners to depict the deviances of the language of literature by comparing them to the regular structures of the ordinary language. The case, according to him, is further interesting for the learners of the foreign language, for, their appreciation of the richness of the literary text is achieved only after having grasped the regularities found in the non-literary language. In such a way, learners would diverge from the disentangled interpretations and personal evaluations of the text to agree upon a descriptive analysis rooted in a deep mastery of the language rules. In sum, Short sees in stylistic analysis a central approach to the teaching of literature in a foreign language.

¹ In addition to academic degrees, Literature teachers' human qualities and their knowledge of the world remain fundamental in making of their teaching an effective enterprise.

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In 1986, Hawthorne suggested some approaches through which fiction, as a genre in particular, could be dealt with.

Textual approaches: usually favoured by the Formalists, this kind of approaches is supported by a self-enclosing analysis of the literary text. Each word, expression or the like in the text is used to reach a meaning and a deliberate neglect of the extrinsic information is aimed at the expense of the load of information the text may offer.

Generic approaches: a generic approach requires from its learner knowledge of the literary genre being dealt with before an attempt to understand it.

Biographical approaches: this kind of approaches usually encourages the search for other works by the same author, so as to understand the whole spirit of his/her writing and situate the work in this perspective.

Psychological approaches: psychological approaches most of the times appear as the most subjective, for, an analysis of the characters' minds is mainly involved. Besides, the analysis of the readers' responses to the inter-characters relationships is always privileged.

Reader-oriented approaches: actually this kind of approaches has been highly influential in the process of the present research, since in it an emphasis of the interaction reader/literary text is put to the fore. Thus, reading a literary text is presented as a rich exercise giving each time birth to a new understanding.

Feminist approaches: this kind of approach – nurtured most of the time by female frustration and gender hatred- is seen by Hawthorne through the depiction of female characters as always being weaker, inferior, and subordinate to counter balance male strength, superiority and power.

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El-Sherify, in his turn, (in Al-Alami, 2009) presents some of the most popular approaches in the teaching or learning of foreign literature. These are:

The ***analytic approach***: while the approach favours little or no extra information about the work of literature, it focuses on what the text is about or might be about, thus it is quite individual and left to the personal appreciation of the reader.

The ***experiential approach***: in such a kind of approaches, experiencing the literary text is encouraged through the connection to personal experiences and life. No distinction is made between form and content, both are necessary to enhance sensitivity.

The ***eclectic approach***: as the name indicates, all kinds of approaches are welcomed, depending on the specificity of the context.

The ***translation approach***: this approach rests on the translation of the literary text into the native language. Using two versions of the same text may help the reader synthesise his reading in the foreign language while taking notes in the native language.

The ***cultural approach***: in this approach, the description of the main literary movements is advocated since it puts under scrutiny the cultural aspects of each period and how the latter contributed to shape these movements.

The ***communicative-competence approach***: in this approach, the literary text is used as an instrument through which the four language skills are practised for the objective to acquire a communicative competence.

The ***skill-based approach***: this approach uses literary texts for the objective to improve reading skills.

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The ***text commentary approach***: known also as ‘*explication de text*’ concentrates on the components of the literary text and disregards all the extrinsic parameters.

The ***semantic approach***: in the semantic approach particular attention is given to the hidden meaning conveyed through the deviations of language as the metaphors and similes. It assumes that the language of the literary text is loaded with connotations that deserve analysis.

The ***integrative approach***: this approach aims at overlapping the mastery of language learning, the understanding the target culture, and an increase of literary understanding and appreciation. Hence the literary text is used to develop all these skills.

The ***stylistic approach***: the stylistic approach requires an analysis of the structures of language to reach meaning. Again, the language of literature is used as a means to achieve understanding.

The ***integrated approach***: this approach links between both the biographical information about the author and the particularities of his/her writing.

Close (1992) encourages the adoption of a critical approach. In other words, he seems to favour an approach which makes learners feel confident enough to wander where their understandings could lead them and then argue for their own interpretations. The rise of a critical consciousness towards a literary text is, according to Close, the unique way to disregard *the interpretation* imposed by the God like teacher.

In his turn, Cook (1993) re-examines the importance of *literary stylistics*, which has proved to be particularly proficient in non native settings, notably in

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EFL/ESL contexts. The interest lies in the intricate relationship reader/literary text and how the latter can affect their understandings. He once more seems to give importance to the structures of language to raise awareness in the mind of the readers enabling them construct their own meanings.

In Crawshaw's view (1996), the study of *stylistics* encompasses the domains of linguistics, psychology, and sociology. In this approach no distinction is made between literary or non-literary text since importance is both attributed to intention and the view of the world.

Process and activity come to characterize the *creative reading approach* as advanced by Carter and McRae (1999) and Carter and McCarthy (1994). In the process based principle, the reading of a literary text is similar to an enjoyable experience² learners are undertaking, whereas, the activity-based principle implies an active involvement from the part of the learner to approach the literary text. Traditional teacher-led literature interpretation classes have no role to play in this respect³. In sum this approach improves the tradition reader-oriented approaches providing the reader with autonomy of reflection sustained by the pleasure of a pleasant experience of the text.

Fostering the use of a stylistic approach when dealing with literary texts, Stockwell (2007) also recommends the benefits of this method especially in EFL contexts. The involving and self engaging characteristics of the approach are gradually making of it one of most interesting approaches among EFL practitioners. Besides, experience has demonstrated that the lexico-grammatical

² A principle similar to that of Miall's as opposed to mere interpretation.

³ Giroux and McLaren (1994) believe that the reader-response approach has initiated a decentralization of the literature classroom as the reader is considered the potential knower.

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principles present in authentic literary texts help stimulate learners' interest while engaging with formal grammar in discourse. Thus, once more the stylistic approach appears interesting enough in its ability to highlight EFL learners' potential interests in literature.

In the same year, Dawson(2007) has introduced a theory of reading of World Englishes literature. The essence of the theory puts to the fore the universality of human emotion⁴, and considers the clues of an affective response to literary texts. Dawson considers happiness; fear; anger; and sadness as what make up the embodiment of a universality of human emotion, and as such, should be viewed as the main vehicle for engagement with a literary text. More interestingly, it sheds light on the role of *emotion* in literary education. She advances that understanding and managing learners' emotions could be the issue to experience literature. Her theory is referred to as *emotion tracking pedagogy*(Dawson, 2008), and has been initiated as an approach for the teaching of World Englishes literature. Since meaning is considered as a construction, Dawson holds that while decoding a text at various levels, the reader relies on his affect to strive for a text to mean and construct that meaning. More particularly, when discussing the role of affect, attention should be given to the importance of response; affective response in particular.

⁴ This pedagogy uses universality of emotion as a way to explore texts from different cultures and traditions through a notion of 'sameness' as opposed to 'otherness'. (Dawson, 2007)

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Conclusion

What is noticeable from the above survey is that the majority of approaches tend to favour the relationship reader/literary text from a stylistic perspective. Put differently, the intricacies of language and particularly those of literary texts and even in EFL contexts proved to have a positive impact on the readers making of them eager to engage empathetically thus appealing for their affect. Following this view of things, Miall's theory appears to offer prosperous ground in an EFL setting!

IV.1.2. The status of literature in the syllabus of English language as taught in Algerian universities

The teaching of literature as taught in the departments of English in Algerian Universities implies a special conception of literature. The latter does not benefit from a status of research nor does it aim at being appreciated, rather, it is simply taught, but in which way? Describing the process through which literature is transmitted in departments of English at university; Lakhdar Barka reports a series of pre-requisites in the lecturer's view,

- Almost no literary text is read as an entity (whether a short story, a novel, or play) by the student, sometimes Up to the third year*
- The theory of literature course sounds too pretentious when it comes to practice. It deviates into a series of critical ideas that hang in a referential vacuum by dint of elementary reduction in order to make it understood.*
- Surveys boil down to a list of dates or writer's birth, themes, and publications since there is no steady reading background to sustain them.*
- How can we explain the antagonism between the lecturer's objectives (expertise one should say) and the system's inability to optimize them? (1990:84)*

Now, it is the teaching of this literature that is questionable and deserves, to my sense, to be revisited. The point of departure of this discussion puts under scrutiny the sensitive dichotomy language-literature. Actually, I qualify it as sensitive

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because in spite of the fact that modern universities emphasize the separation between the teachings of a foreign language and that of literature in a foreign language, the dichotomy remains unclear and invites a wide range of speculations about the eventual combination of the two disciplines of education⁵. Again, it is not my intention in this part of my discussion to put to the fore the endless and noteworthy polemics over teaching literary texts or informative texts to EFL students. On the contrary, I strongly believe that using literary materials in EFL classes is highly enriching and the distinctive qualities of these texts certainly do contribute to raise a special sensibility in these students.

IV.1.3. Uses of Literature in the Foreign Language Classroom

In this perspective, few researchers have attempted to understand the reasons behind this language-literature gap and considered the use of literature in foreign language classrooms as an effective approach of teaching. (Brumfit & Carter, 1986) They have even argued that it is valuable authentic and motivating material, which is conducive to students' linguistic development, personal involvement, and cultural enrichment. (Carter & Long, 1991)

IV.1.3.1. Linguistic Development

Malley(1989) considered the worth of literary texts as being texts which convey “ *things which mattered to the author when he wrote them.*”(1989:12) Seen in this light, these texts, which have not, in fact been created for the sole purpose of teaching, render the teaching of the language far richer and help impregnate it with varied human life experiences. Furthermore, many genuine features of the written language are presented at many levels of difficulty; hence,

⁵ The lack of rigidity of the dichotomy made Smith (1972) advance the following: « *no teacher of literature ignores linguistic problems and no language teacher really wants to leave his students speaking a sterile impoverished version of the language* »(in Tseng:2010:53)

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exploration of the literary language is encouraged to think about the norms of language use, forms, and conventions. (Widdowson, 1975) Apparently, this kind of exchange- EFL learner/literary text- is fundamental for the students' language enrichment and can enhance in them the will to appreciate more sensitive features of the language. (Floris, 2004)

IV.1.3.2. Personal Involvement

The pin point of teaching a foreign language is to see students deploy their curiosity in discovering what is new and what is unknown to them. Usually, literature helps them get immersed in a discovery of the self that is incomparable. The universality of the themes that literature vehicles, sometimes unconsciously, brings students to question and comprehend human experiences that most of the time are similar to theirs and characterise their life. Social truths, then, are unveiled, human perceptions and insights are put to the fore. Hence, teaching literary texts appears fundamental in shaping an effective good educational practice that is undeniably nurtured by a personal development and the growth of the self, (Carter & Long, 1991; Floris, 2004), and more sensitive is the case for literature in a foreign language.

IV.1.3.3. Cultural Enrichment

Considering the fact that foreign language instruction bears a more complicated and, so, controversial relationship to literature than that of second language instruction, where a lot of immediate instructional obstacles get in the way, arguments against the use of literature in the EFL classroom are numerous⁶

⁶ A very important point is that my discussion at this level is not interested in enumerating the wide number of arguments which are for or against the inclusion of literature in EFL classrooms since much has been said and done in the domain and in addition to that my work is premised on the teaching of literature in order to enhance literary appreciation. Additionally, its teaching would necessarily enrich the acquisition of the foreign language.

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and do share the same view that literature can contribute little to language learning due to the special nature of literary texts.(McKay, 1982) Put differently, reading literary works, for McKay and his followers, is not only impeded by the semantic and lexical barriers of the target language but more importantly, these texts stand as barriers of unfamiliarity with or remoteness of the cultural background of the learner.

On the other hand, much has been said and confirmed concerning literature as being the doorway into another's culture to such an extent that teaching literature has been seen as a means enabling students:

to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space, and to come to perceive traditions of thought and artistic form within the heritage the literature of such cultures endows (Carter & Long, 1991:2)

Actually, regardless of the contradictory arguments in the field, reading literary texts, necessarily, encourages learners to grow with sharp discerning sensibility to the events, whether social, political, or historical, and which, in fact, constitute the background of those particular literary texts, enabling thus readers to tolerate two or more different realities.

IV.1.4. Literature in the Algerian Foreign Language Syllabus of English: Some Bitter Truths

Before being an educational practice with internal research on important issues like the method, syllabus, content, and material teaching, ELT remains government prerogative before being designers' one, a truth too often forgotten. A survey of the literature on ELT advances that the latter cannot be considered within the practice of the language solely, rather, it should be seen within a wider socio-cultural and economic context of its use; therefore, it remains an issue from

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which political interest and power cannot be removed. Referring to the thesis that no syllabus is *neutral*⁷(Freire:1972), the literature in a foreign language syllabus content in the frame of the Algerian licence of English is, then, questioned. The presupposition is that the syllabus, necessarily, carries a heavy heritage of *cultural imposition*⁸ which is primarily responsible for the ill-match between teaching and learning within ELT. The claim is that designers and practitioners of ELT should revise their orientations as Wilkins advances: *The process of deciding what to teach is based on considerations of what the learner should most usefully be able to communicate in the foreign language. (1976:19)*

It is only after having placed the learner at the apex of their priorities that they could pretend at pedagogic effectiveness.

Actually, the institutional constraint does have a decisive role in the teaching of literature of a foreign language in the Algerian context. Though, I have advocated my support of the integration of more literary materials in the teaching of a foreign language and though I do recognize my support being stimulated by a personal experience of teaching literature of a foreign language to Algerian university learners, I, on the other hand, stipulate openly that my exploratory researches have always been considered within the frame of the institutions' instructions. Not surprisingly and with the advent of the modern world, language instruction is becoming highly instrumental, the reason why syllabuses tend to use less and less literature materials (Abbott: 1987, in Su: 2010). In fact, literary instruction' status in the institutional curriculum is not

⁷ The term "neutral" is borrowed from Freire's (1972), for, the implications behind the design of any syllabus are necessarily ideologically bound, highlighting the dichotomy oppressor(syllabus designer) vs. oppressed(learner).

⁸ I am borrowing the word from G. Hall, which refers, in fact, to the deliberate imposition of cultural values on the learners claiming them as vehicles of modernity.

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approached nowadays as it used to be; evidence that today's students needs and expectations differ widely from those of the student of yesterday. For instance, in the Taiwanese context, literature courses are compared to the study of an "art" (qut. in Liaw, 2001: 36, qut. in Su, 2010:4). The argument emphasises the inadequacy of acquiring such a competence; quite unnecessary for the requirements of the workforce. Fortunately, non-native literatures are still taught in the university degree of English language in Algeria, maybe not with the desired dimension teachers would expect, yet, students' literary equipment is still regarded as conducive to cultivation of critical thinking skills and aspirations.

The aforementioned realities concerning the role of literature of a foreign language in fostering foreign language acquisition are unfortunately and again impeded by another set of truths that goes beyond teacher's control. A research conducted by Djafri(2009)⁹ helped understand three important truths. First, it has been noted that despite the existence of an official syllabus designed by the ministry and in which the teacher is asked to teach a particular kind of literary texts, canonical ones most of the time, teachers often proceed to manoeuvre so as they could adapt the syllabus according to local circumstances. While, in this particular frame, teacher are regarded as an unproblematic agents of education helping a more appropriate delivery of the syllabus, they seem, on the other hand, unable to reshape the whole objectives of the degree. Therefore, and here I would join Hall's view(2000), *what would be the necessity of imposing a syllabus if the latter is going to be altered and changed in ways not intended by the designer?*

⁹ The particularity of the research lies in its close depiction of similar findings since it was conducted at the level of three Universities of the West of Algeria.

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Indeed, the most striking revelation of the study lies in the fact that a great number of teachers of a foreign language have manifested their desire to embark upon the adventure of designing their own syllabuses. They have seemed optimistic about the promising results that might be enhanced by their involvement in shaping the content of this literature teaching. More explicitly, they have noticed that the disregard of power from the syllabus could be an opportunity to enrich the circle of exchange between cultures and facilitate their students' acquisition of knowledge. Yet, they also have showed poor information concerning their learners' future professional worries.

Finally, these same teachers, who seem to have shaped an expertise from the observation of their learners' worries, have refused to see them involved in the formulation of their syllabuses. Teachers of this literature seem to perpetuate deliberately Freire's notion of 'bank' of education, where the traditional status of teacher and learner are unfortunately maintained,

The teacher chooses the programme content, and the students adapt to it; the teacher chooses and enforces this choice, and the students comply; the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing; the teacher thinks, and the students are thought about. (Freire, 1972: 46/47)

Apparently no room is attributed for innovation. The will to perpetuate the dichotomy teacher vs. learner rather than the reconciliation teacher **and** learner is in itself a canonisation that operates like an obstacle to the genuine transmission of literature in a foreign language.

The implications from the above observations seem to point out the necessity to reshape the content of foreign literature syllabus in the Algerian university degree of English. However, in the meanwhile, teaching literature in English does take the shape of a set of disentangled experiments undertaken here

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and there, most of the time results of personal teachers' initiatives and for the purpose of enhancing the love of literature in their students. At the same time, teachers should moderate their expectations in aiming to implement a literature-based syllabus since little research has been conducted to verify the success of literature instruction in EFL settings with statistical evidence (Su, 2010).

IV.1.5. Selection of Literary Texts: Some Criteria (EFL Context)

Introduction

To multiply the benefits of literature teaching in language classrooms, selection of literary texts is a crucial issue (Mckay, 1982). Criteria for literature selection generally involve two aspects: students and the text itself. Regarding the students, the literary text selected should cater for the students' tastes, interests, and hobbies, and should take into account their linguistic proficiency, cultural background, and literary background¹⁰ (e.g. Brumfit, 1981; Collie & Slater, 1987). Whereas, in the literary text per se, the considerations include length, themes, genres, classic status¹¹, availability of the printed text, etc (e.g. Brumfit, 1981; Carter & Long, 1991; Mckay, 1982). In short, although literature may offer many useful benefits, pedagogically there are still some major obstacles that hinder its transmission.

¹⁰ Actually, the literary competence of readers in an EFL context could be seen as a bonus in their process of experiencing literature but not as a necessary factor of literary selection. I have already discussed the experiments undertaken by some researchers on readers with a meagre literary background and which in fact proved that readers rely on other resources other than their literary competence to engage with the literary text.

¹¹ Note that in an earlier part of my work, I discussed the dangers of transmitting classics or canonical texts of literature to a young generation of learners.

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Hence, given the above criteria, selection of literary texts should partly depend on the target students' needs and preferences. However, in many 'literature teaching in language classrooms', students attitudes toward literature are often neglected or not given due attention. Instead, the literary texts selected are usually determined by curriculum authorities, materials, writers, or classroom practitioners. But these professionals' preferences of literature might not be similar to students' , and their assumptions of which literary text will be motivating and appropriate for students' attitudes toward literature are also less conducted in research (Davis, Gorell, Kline & Hsieh, 1992)¹², thus investigating students' attitudes toward literature and their preferences over different literary genres appears to deserve serious look.

In EFL contexts, although the overall picture of students' perception of different literary genres is less explored, there is some empirical research reporting students' favourable attitudes toward a specific genre used in their language classes, for example, poems (Chang, 2007), short stories of children's literature (Chen, 2006), and simplified novels of young adult literature (Yen, 2005)¹³. Nevertheless, the main purpose of these studies was to examine the effects of that particular literary genre on EFL students' development of language skills. Therefore, students' positive attitude toward the literary texts taught might be interpreted as their acknowledgement of literary texts as useful instructional materials, but probably not as their true appreciation of literature for literature's own sake.

¹² Davis, Gorell, Kline & Hsieh (1992) is a study that was concerned with students of languages other than English.

¹³ See Tseng (2010) for further information concerning the aforementioned studies.

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Actually, literature is rarely taught for its own sake in EFL classrooms. Literature teaching always has a bearing either on analyzing the linguistic element of the literary text or on examining the linguistic benefit that literature teaching claims to provide students with. However, “*literature is always more than language*” (Brumfit & Carter, 1986:41), and it seems relevant that a *pure* literature syllabus should not be confused with syllabuses for the teaching of language or of culture. It is, thus, assumed that as long as EFL students get immersed in their preferred literature which is taught for literature per se, without appending purposes, the potential linguistic, personal, and cultural benefits of literature teaching are then likely to ensue. It is my contention that further research should support the argument so far but as far as EFL literature syllabuses are concerned very few studies have been conducted so as to examine the students’ attitudes towards the different literary genres, hence, my motivation in conducting the present research.

IV1.5.1.Objectives through the Selection of Literary texts

As previously stated, the present research is personally motivated, thus, as a literature admirer and teacher-researcher in an EFL context; I aim at exploring tentatively the idea of ‘literature syllabus’ (Brumfit & Carter, 1986) inside the classroom, with the hope of enhancing the love of literature to students. According to the researchers in the field, a literature syllabus has two stages. The first stage is to enable students ‘experience’ literature, and the second is to enable them describe, explain, or account for the experience,

The course ought to be approached as an empathetic moment during which the learner shows complete availability to a subject in which his will to read must be provoked by a psychological incentive acting as an intellectual curiosity.

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Many para-pedagogical and tactful conditions must be met to create such a situation, i.e. to tease the desire to read¹⁴. (Lakhdar Barka: 2005:284)

The assumption of such a literature syllabus will determine my criteria of literary text selection and my instructional methods in literature teaching. Moreover, since it is first and before all aimed at re-attributing literature in English its deserved position among Algerian students of English, the primary objective of my literary selection does not take into account equipping students with a literary expertise and generic views, rather, the aim is to enhance in them appreciation merely.

IV.1.5.2. Literary Text Selection

It is under the premise that modern short stories gain most preference of students in an EFL context that I build my argument¹⁵.

IV.1.5.3. Background of the Research

To start with, a study conducted by Hiverla and Boyle (1988) surveyed ESL working adult learners' attitudes toward literature courses offered in a part-time degree programme in a university. The aim of their survey was to find out which literary genres were most favoured or feared by the students and which aspects of literature gave the students most trouble. Results of their survey showed that the students enjoyed 'prose fiction' (i.e., novel and short story) most and feared 'poetry' most, in addition, the students found 'interpretation of theme' most difficult when studying literature, followed by some language-related aspects of literature.

¹⁴ Not surprisingly, the above recommendation was part of a set of prospects in which literature in English would benefit from a particular treatment both from the part of teachers and learners. The implication is that reality is far from this expectation.

¹⁵ The premise was supported by a survey study in which a questionnaire was designed so as to show the preferences of students concerning literary genres.

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Akyel and Yalçin (1990) investigated EFL senior high school students' reaction to the specific contributions of prose fiction, drama, and poetry, in developing language competence and literary competence. Their survey results showed that the students regarded 'novel' as the most effective literary form in helping them develop their linguistic skills and cultural awareness, and 'drama' as the most effective in helping them improve oral expressions. Moreover, the students considered 'poetry' and 'short stories' not having much effect on their language skills development. The survey also revealed a link between the students' language proficiency and their attitude toward literature. Those who rated their English proficiency as high appreciated the literary texts selected; by contrast, those who rated their proficiency as average found the literary texts boring and difficult.

A more recent study Tseng (2010) investigated EFL learners' perceptions or attitudes toward different literary genres; including 9 poems, 7 short stories, 2 novels and 6 plays (24 literary texts). The study contested earlier studies in that despite their significant finding, both studies were concerned with ESL/EFL learners in general. In addition, and again although involving EFL students in their studies, the researchers surveyed the reactions to literature as means of developing their language skills, and not as the ends of study per se,

It is possible that students have different perceptions of 'literature for pleasure' (i.e., regarding literature for its own sake) and 'literature for instrumental use' (e.g., reading literature to sharpen language skills)...(Tseng, 2010:56)

Thus, after 14 week experimentation, Tseng's study succeeded in demonstrating that most students preferred prose fiction (i.e. novels and short stories) and plays

to poems. Yet, because of time constraints he did not use original versions of some literary texts, which, undeniably, remains questionable¹⁶.

IV.1.5.4. Short Stories: Why Modern Ones?

I am of the opinion that fiction as a literary genre is mostly appreciated among the generation of young readers because simply it remains the closest depiction of their life. Regardless of age, culture, or religion, elements of empathy are strongly present in such a genre. Yet, fiction is very large and ranges a wide spectrum of choices: which text of fiction illustrates best this human sensibility and justifies its presence in this literary selection?

From this perspective of things, fiction of the modernist period seems to offer challenging insights to that human sensibility. Actually, treating modern texts allows us not to go beyond the syllabus instructions. To support the present argument, Clare Hanson (in Miall, 2008:132) succeeded in showing the presence of two classes of short story, one based around a particular situation or short narrative episode, the second largely devoid of plot and focusing on a moment of truth in experience. Thus, the second class of short story appears to refer to those stories in the hands of Woolf, Joyce¹⁷, Mansfield, and others of their contemporaries, which are notable for the development of free indirect discourse. She further argues that these short stories are “*best able to express a fragmented sensibility*”(id: 57). Hence, it is assumed that the selection of the short story *The*

¹⁶ In the next pages I argue for my use of plot summaries and synopses and back up the whole with my own arguments.

¹⁷ Joyce is particularly known for having described the moment of truth in experience as an « *epiphany* ». Originally epiphany meant for the Christians a manifestation of God's presence in the world, but in no case had Joyce referred to it as a positive experience.

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Kiss by Kate Chopin, among other stories, for the fulfilment of my hypothesis relies on this fragmentariness to captivate young Algerian readers¹⁸.

Despite the above studies whose notable contribution to the field of selection of literary texts to be taught in EFL literature classes, I must admit that ‘subjectivity’ also does play a role in the selection proceeded in this study. Most of the time, the reason that one literary text is chosen instead of another is merely out of my own interest and preference. Even so, text selection is still no easy task because there are many interesting literary works to choose from.

IV.2.Demonstration

IV.2.1.Method

IV.2.2.Research Questions

- 1- What are the students’ attitudes toward literature in English at university?
- 2- What are the teaching methods and activities students like most at University?
- 3- What are the literary works students like most in the literature selection?
- 4- What are the literary genres students like most in the literature selection?
- 5- Are the students motivated to read the literary works in their original form after having been introduced to them through plot summaries?

¹⁸ The selection of *The Kiss* by Kate Chopin has been reserved for the last stage of experimentation, see Chapter 6.

IV.2.3. Participants

For this initial¹⁹ part of the experimentation, 38 3rd year volunteer undergraduate students of English from the University of Mostaganem were chosen randomly. The consideration that only students were selected for the research is due to the fact that students are the main *stakeholders*²⁰ while their counterparts teachers take the responsibility as curriculum designers or more exactly as curriculum implementers²¹, thus being in a way or another not objectively engaged. The number 38 is selected to respect the criteria of ‘manageability’ and ‘doability’. The fact that our university is an institution of teaching and not of research operates as restrictive on enterprising an experiment on whatever characteristic, therefore, respecting the usual size of a class at the department of English (around 38 students) is the argument I have used to implement the research. More importantly, my selection of 3rd year students is motivated by a number of reasons. Actually, they represent an interesting sample of study since they are neither deprived of any literary equipment nor considered as literary competent. Their intermediate level of acquaintance with literature in English may permit for promising grounds of exploration. The personal observations I have drawn from my experience of teaching this level of students have encouraged me to select them for my experiment. Put differently, 3rd year students’ profile shows them as being students who master language conveniently and could express their ideas on whatever topic they come to meet. Thus, as one of the different subjects they have to study, literature in English offers them the

¹⁹ The use of “initial” suggests that there are other stages of the experimentation which actually are complementary.

²⁰ I have borrowed the word from Su(2010) for its pertinent implications.

²¹ It would be interesting, nonetheless, to test teachers’ degree of implication for a better delivery of literature in English in Algerian universities.

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opportunity to put into practice their linguistic proficiency and thus a growing enthusiasm is noticed among them while they are asked to discuss their ideas. By contrast, students of lower grade show a lack of language maturity that most of the time prevents them from engagement with literary texts and fosters frustration in their general attitude. Those of a higher grade, 4th year students notably, show frustrations of another genre. They are mainly concerned with getting their degrees and looking for a professional issue that could save them, very few get interested in engaging genuinely with literature. The aforementioned information may justify the selection of this grade of students and may offer interesting grounds for generalisation.

IV.2.4. Teaching Materials

Eight literary works are chosen to be used in this experiment. The materials include two poems, two short stories, two novels, and two plays. The poems and short stories were presented in their original form, whereas the novels and plays²² were introduced through synopses and plot summaries drawn from the literature resources on the internet. The titles of the literary texts used in this study are listed next. Each of the literary texts was re-typed and edited so to fit an A4 size sheet of paper. They were distributed to students as handouts in every literature presentation.(See appendix II)

²² I believe that the use of plot summaries and synopses is not teaching literature at all because these materials lack authenticity. In addition, I do not believe that the spirit of a novel or play lies in its storyline("Rereading" experiments have demonstrated that students turn from a story driven point at a first reading to a stylistic driven point of the story at a second reading, see section: ***Rereading: A Discovery in Itself***). Yet, with the purpose of introducing as many literary works as possible and with the assumption that excerpts are not informative enough to tell the whole story that I have opted for these versions of the literary texts.

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Table 4.1. The Literary Selection

<i>Materials' Title</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Name of the Author</i>
Sonnet 130	Poetry (sonnet)	W. Shakespeare(?)
Untitled	Poetry (elegy)	W.H.Auden (1936)
Evelyn	Fiction (short story)	James Joyce(1914)
The Kiss	Fiction (short story)	Kate Chopin (1894)
Wuthering Heights	Novel (plot summary)	Emily Bronte(1848)
Crying of Lot 49	Novel (plot summary)	Thomas Pynchon (1966)
An Ideal Husband	Drama (Synopsis)	Oscar Wilde (1895)
The Glass Menagerie	Drama (Synopsis)	Tennessee Williams(1944)

IV.2.5. Teaching procedure

The experiment was held in four weeks. The literature presentation was made once a week and lasted about ninety minutes, and the total of the eight literary texts were introduced in the order of poems, short stories, novels, and then plays. The literature teaching procedure, in general, was as follows. First, the author and some background information of the literary texts were briefly introduced to students. When the authors are important figures, more time was spent to describe their particularity. Second, the literary texts were presented and

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explained to students, and the unknown words in the texts were explained²³ to students as well. Finally, some questions, including those concerning the theme of the literary texts, were raised for students to discuss, and students were invited to share their opinions or experiences related to the text. In addition, some activities designed for specific literary texts were held to enhance students' understanding of the text.

It is noteworthy to explain for both participants and researchers that there were no tests or exams on the literary texts introduced. For, the major objective of the experiment was to survey students' perceptions of the texts selected and not to measure their understanding of them. Moreover, exams were known for putting a psychological pressure that might seriously affect students' interest in appreciating the literary texts.

Therefore, a perception questionnaire quite similar to the one introduced before the experiment was introduced after having finished with the teaching of the eight literary texts. The objective was to examine whether their general perceptions toward literature have changed after having experienced the reading of a wide selection of literary genres.

IV.2.6. Instrument

A quantitative research method was applied to the study along with informal classroom field notes and observations. Two sets of attitude questionnaires²⁴ were administered to students. The first one was designed specifically to examine students' prior attitudes towards literature in English as

²³ I do not favour translation of words into the mother tongue or a second language, but I think it sometimes necessary for the targeted fulfilment of the experiment.

²⁴ See Appendix I

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taught at university. This fifty two item questionnaire adopted a six-point Likert scale²⁵, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). It contained three parts. The first part (from item 1 to 30) is related to students' attitudes toward reading in general and reading literature in particular at university level and opinions on proper hour allotment for literature in English course; while the second (from item 31 to 38) is concerned with the students' preferred teaching methods and activities. The third part (from item 39 to 52) is related to the students' expectations on the literary genres to be taught.

The second questionnaire was introduced to students after having been exposed to the literary selection. The objective was to see if ever any shift in their attitudes and perceptions towards literature was noticed. It also aimed to proceed to a comparison between their most preferred literary genre before and after the literary selection. The quantitative information collected through the questionnaires was used for statistical analyses.

Table 4.2. The Subjects (n=38)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Missing (%)
Males	5	13,15	(4) 10,52
Females	28	73,68	(1) 2,63

These figures are clearly illustrated in the following graph :

²⁵ Likert scale instruments is used to test relevance (See O'Leary,2010:187/8), usually it ranges from four to nine items. In this study the design of six points instead of five (usually the most used scale in empirical quantitative studies) is done purposefully to leave no neutral option for the students to choose, thus forcing them to either agree or disagree with the statement.

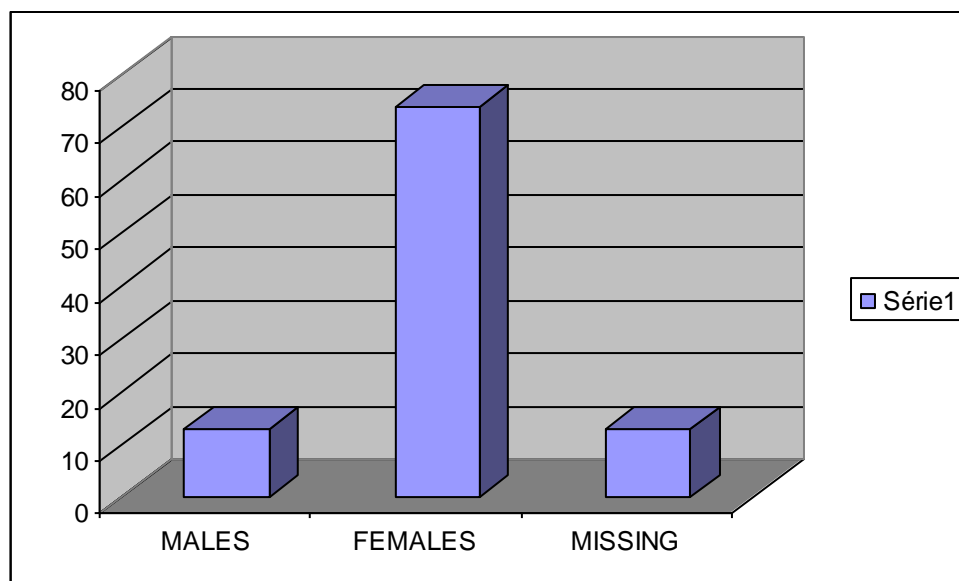


Figure 4.1. Gender distribution of the experiment's participants

IV.2.7. Results and Discussion

IV.2.7.1. Students' Attitudes n (=33)

²⁶Note: question n°= 26

1-What are the students' attitudes toward foreign literature at university?

Table 4.3. Pre-and-Post Attitude toward Foreign literature subject status at university level and its Proper Hour Allotment (n=33)

Questions	Pre-Qu. Mean/(%)	Post-Qu. Mean/(%)	Post.M- Pre.M (M2-M1)
19-I find foreign literature interesting	4,24/72	4,30/73	,06
20-I find foreign literature boring	2,69/21	2,63/20,5	,50

²⁶ Question n°= 26(I like the 2nd year university foreign literature content as taught in the department of English) was omitted since it does not meet the expectations of the post questionnaire

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21-I find foreign literature of no interest	2,51/12	2,51/12	0
22-I find weekly provided foreign literature hours not enough	2,96/42	3,06/43	,10
23-I find weekly provided foreign literature hours enough	3,39/45	2,96/39	- ,43
24-I find weekly provided foreign literature hours too much	2,72/30	2,45/27	- ,27
25-I find weekly provided foreign literature hours of no need	1,87/9	1,78/8,5	-,09
27- I'd like to read for a memoir in foreign literature	3,96/66	4,09/68	,13
28-I'd like to carry on post-graduate studies in foreign literature	3,81/60	4,06/64	,25
29-I'd like to develop a university academic career in foreign literature	3,81/60	3,87/61	,06
30-I'd like to teach foreign literature at university level	4,15/72	4,06/70	-,09

At this level of experimentation, particular focus was put on the Algerian students' attitudes towards literature status in English at university. The purpose of this investigation was to proceed to a kind of comparison between their attitudes before the literary selection and after having been exposed to the literary selection. In other words, the slightest shift in attitude was explored so as to

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profile the students' readiness to perceive this literature in a better way. As shown in Table 4.3. , a majority of students 72% reported being always interested in literature before the beginning of the experiment and held that the literary selection boosted their interest and made some of them more sensitive to literature²⁷(73% after the experiment). Fewer students(20,5%), however, found literature boring if compared to earlier results, which is an indication on the impact the literary selection had on students and the probability to obtain better results on a longer span of time. Still, the same ratio of students (12%) reported being not interested in literature and advanced that the literary selection did not increase nor decreased their interest. The findings of this first part of investigation reflect in some sense the students' lack of literary background which resulted in their passive reactions in class as noted by the researcher. Not to my surprise, many students expressed their frustrations as the experimentation reached its second week and wanted even to give up the enterprise, nevertheless, as the experiment was approaching its completion, many students' attitudes changed as questions n°= 27, 28, and 29 may show in the table.

Unexpectedly, students' post attitudes toward appropriate hour allotment reported positive shift (see Q. 22, 23, 24, and 25). The results obtained through the Post questionnaire reflected students' change of attitude towards the supposed hour provisioning that the literature subject should deserve.

²⁷ One of the students reported in her oral comments: “ *I loved watching Wuthering Heights movie; it was so romantic that it touches my heart. I found that I became more sensitive to happenings around me. I became more knowledgeable about what the story tries to express and have more empathy toward how the protagonists Catherine and Heathcliff felt*”

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2-What are the teaching methods and activities students like most at university?

Table 4.4. Preferred Teaching Methodologies

Teaching Methodologies	F/(1) %	F/(2) %	F/(3) %	F/(4) %	F/(5) %	F/(6) %	Mean	Ranking order
Lecture	1/3	0/0	0/0	5/15	10/30	17/52	5,24	1
Film-aided instruction	0/0	0/0	2/6	5/15	16/50	10/30	5,03	2
Internet-based activities	1/3	0/0	0/0	10/30	12/37	10/30	4,87	4
Cooperative group work	2/6	1/3	4/12	7/21	9/28	10/30	4,51	6
Question posing and answering	0/0	1/3	0/0	7/21	15/46	10/30	5	3
Written reports	0/0	4/12	2/6	11/33	11/33	5/16	4,33	8
Oral reports	1/3	2/6	3/9	11/33	8/24,5	8/24,5	4,42	7
Encouraging students to search for FL related information on websites	0/0	1/3	3/9	9/28	7/21	13/39	4,84	5

These figures are clearly illustrated in the following graph:

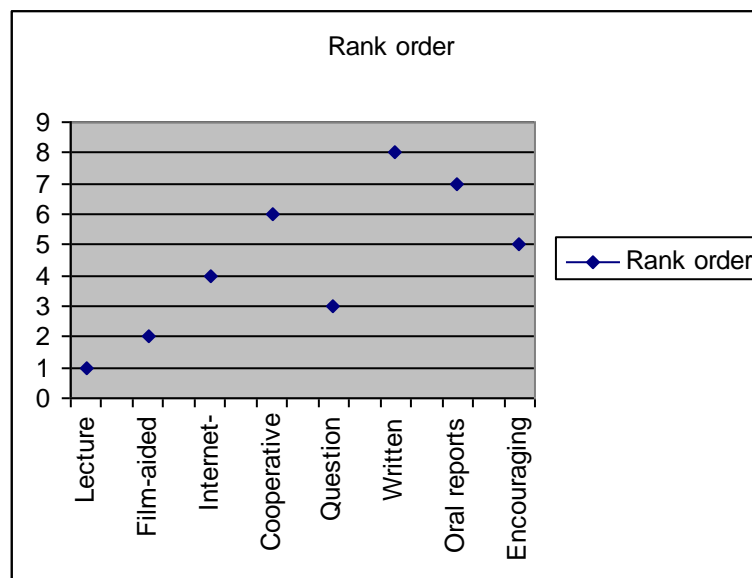


Figure 4.2. Rank order of most preferred Teaching Methodologies from 1 to 8

For the purpose of implementing the most appropriate teaching procedure that could meet the expectations of the students, a need analysis was conducted to understand the students' most preferred teaching methods and activities. Part II of the questionnaire ranging from item 31 to 38 proposed a series of teaching procedures, usually implemented in the literature classroom, separately or combined, and aimed at offering a wide spectrum of choices to the students. One does not have to forget, too, that the *looseness*²⁸ of the context of implementation permitted such initiatives from the part of the researcher and welcomed even further non-expected ones.

Not surprisingly, the students were unanimous when selecting “teacher lecturing” as their most preferred teaching method with a score mean of 5,24.

²⁸ By looseness, I refer to the lack of academic constraints; mainly marking, and which contributes substantially to welcome non conventional procedures of teaching. Note that the objective of the experiment is to detect the most preferred literary genres that could enhance a unique literary experience, hence the justification of the enterprise. The nature of this experimental context may diverge it from the expected results in a holistic context, yet, for the requirements of the experiment many criteria were deliberately bypassed.

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Their heavy reliance on this teaching method could be explained as the necessity to be monitored while managing a load of information about the literary selection. “Film-aided instruction” came in the 2nd position with a score mean of 5,03 indicating, then, the students’ preference of such kinds of media support, not always used by professionals of the field because of materialistic constraints. “Question posing and answering” endorsed a score mean of 5. The finding, actually, helped understand that the majority of students were ready to engage in a way of thinking able to sustain in them the necessary mechanisms to appreciate and discover the literary selection. At the same time “Interned based activities” and the “search for related FL information in websites” endorsed the following positions (M=4,87, and M= 4,84) indicating, thus, the technological involvement of the students and their preference for such kinds of pedagogical support, most of the time seen as revolutionary in our institutions. At last the teaching and learning activities that required “cooperative group work” (M= 4,51) “oral reports” (M=4,42), and “written reports” (M=4,33) did not seem to gather enthusiasm by students and therefore ranked the last three preferred activities respectively.

As a result to this need analysis, the researcher has drawn the profile of an enthusiastic learner ready to engage in the literary experiment while at the same time aware of the existing supports that could make of his learning an easier enterprise. Whenever the student asked to rely on his own capacities to take an active role in the experiment, the latter has shown enough distance and manifested less interest. Again, this need analysis has permitted to favour the adoption of activities where the learner is continually assisted both by the teacher and the different aids such as movies and online versions of the proposed dramas. For

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instance, the movie *Wuthering Heights* and the drama *The Glass Menagerie* were proposed and followed by a discussion on the video content. In order to smooth in-class group discussion activities and maximise the teaching and learning effectiveness, the students were required to do pre-reading activities at home and thus were arranged into groups.

3-What are the literary works students like most in the literature selection?

Analysing this question required from the researcher first and before all to rank the selected works on the basis of their Mean scores since some of them obtained the same frequency counts. Thus, it has been agreed that the Mean score of the works students like most should exceed 4 on the scale, while those they like the least should be lower than 4. (The results were listed in Table 4.5.)

Table 4.5. Literary works students like most in the literary selection
(n=33)

Presentation Order	Literary works	Genre	Agree(4,5,6) Frequency/(%)	Mean	Ranked Order
3	<i>Evelyn</i>	Short story	33/100	5,60	1
5	<i>Wuthering Heights</i>	Novel	30/90	4,93	2
4	<i>The Kiss</i>	Short story	28/84	4,84	3
7	<i>An Ideal Husband</i>	Drama	28/84	4,36	5
8	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	Drama	26/78	4,45	4
1	<i>Sonnet 130</i>	Sonnet	23/69	3,72	8
6	<i>Crying of Lot 49</i>	Novel	22/66	3,96	6
2	<i>Poem (W.Auden)</i>	Poem	20/60	3,81	7

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Actually, the results obtained after having introduced the eight literary works to the students show a high preference for prose fiction (short stories and plot summaries) over the other literary genres, which confirmed earlier results obtained through item n°= 6²⁹ of the pre-questionnaire (See Appendix I). More particularly, those texts like *Wuthering Heights* which students had chances to experience in other media were warmly welcomed and more appreciated by the students thus confirming their preference for film-aided instruction (rated 2nd preferred teaching methodology, see Table 4.4.). The implication from the present finding is to recommend the use of the other media as a supplementary support in order to enhance the love of this literature in Algerian students. In the second position came drama synopsis with significant mean scores of 4,45 and 4,36. Not surprisingly, plot summary of the novel *Crying of Lot 49* was ranked n°=6, despite it being written in prose. The novel is a metafiction which offers a complex set of structures that seem to require a degree of maturity absent in the students' competencies. The intricacy through which the novel is woven does not, however, diminish its literary worth, yet, it comes to appeal to a higher level of literary maturity. At last both the poem by W. H. Auden and the sonnet by Shakespeare received the lowest mean scores among the literary presentation, which probably confirm former prerequisites held on the complexity of poetry and its high degree of sophistication making it not easily accessed.

4-What are the literary genres students like most in the literature selection?

²⁹ As a reminder, item 6 obtained the highest mean score of (M= 5, 60).

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The third part of the pre-questionnaire (ranging from item 39 to 52) aimed at assessing the most preferred literary genres among students before being exposed to the literary selection. In the logical continuum of the three main parts of the questionnaire, the students showed great enthusiasm concerning the possibility of being introduced to a wide variety of literary genres, except questions n°= 49, 50, and 51 which showed respectively the lowest scores of mean in this part (3, 46, 3,66, and 3, 51); an indication of the *apriori* conceptions students do have on such literary genres. On the whole, the results suggested that the students held positive attitudes towards the different literary genres and were eager to start the experimentation level.

Table 4.6. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perceptions of Literary genres in the Presentation

Literary Genres	Number	Agree Frequency/(%)	Grand mean	Rank Order
Poems	2	43/65,15	3,76	4
Short Stories	2	61/92,42	5,22	1
Novels	2	52/78,78	4,44	2
Dramas	2	54/81,81	4,40	3

The figures are clearly illustrated in the following graph:

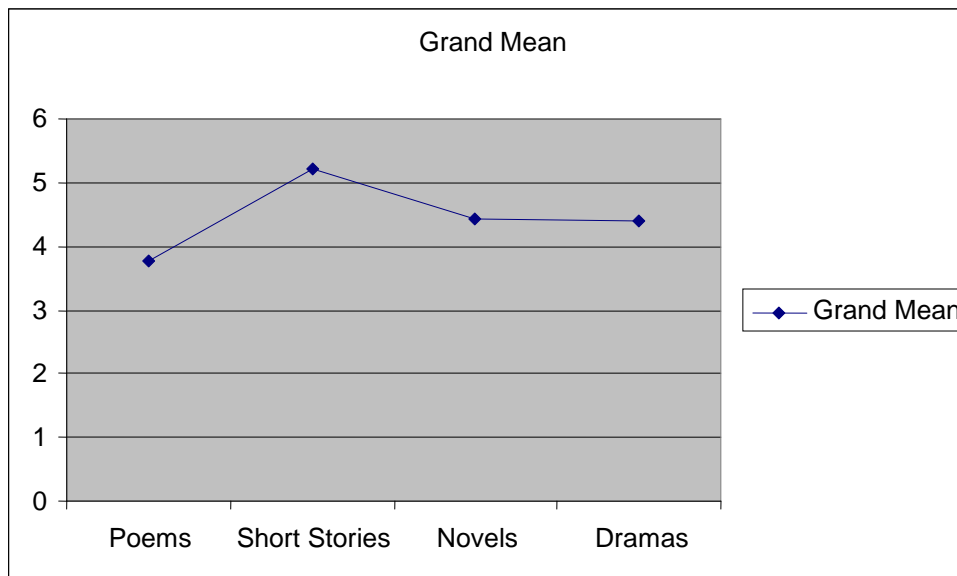


Figure 4.3. Grand Mean Distribution of most Preferred Literary Genres

It is noteworthy to explain that for the desired fulfilment of the experiment the same number of literary genres was introduced to the students. Hence, the results obtained could be interpreted as students' preferences of prose fiction over the other literary genres in the literary presentation and in general. On the one hand, one does not have to dismiss, that the eight literary works were not presented in a similar way, which could contribute seriously to the appreciation of one literary genre over another. The use of media support, for instance, to present the novel *Wuthering Heights* or the play *The Glass Menagerie* might have raised students' likeness for this novel in particular. In addition to that, it might be possible that the instructional methods used during the implementation have affected students' attitudes towards certain genres over others³⁰.

³⁰ In a preceding part of this section, I have explained that subjectivity has played an important role in the selection of the literary works that make up the presentation. Furthermore, the preference of the researcher (myself in this case) for certain texts over others might have sharply influenced their teaching. On the other hand, all these texts are part of the syllabus of English language as taught in the modules of literatures in English at the University of Mostaganem.

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5- Are the students motivated to read the literary work in its original form after having been introduced to it through a plot summary?

Table 4.7. Descriptive statistics of Questions X-X1

Questions (post-Qu.)	Agree(4,5,6)	Mean	S.D.
	Frequency/%		
I'd like to read <i>Wuthering Heights</i> (original version)	15/45	3,39	1,41
I'd like to read <i>Crying of Lot 49</i> (original version)	3/9	1,87	1,03
I'd like to read <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> (original version)	14/42	2,96	1,44
I'd like to read <i>An Ideal Husband</i> (original version)	7/21	2,69	1,48

Considering that students had little knowledge about literature in English though having had previous exposure to English literature, the texts that were selected were those of well known literary figures so as to convey some of the fundamental Western literary aspects. In this view of things, it is argued that texts in simplified versions were chosen, which still expose the students to works of quality, without de-motivating or frightening them³¹.

Items X to X1 on the post-questionnaire provided answers to the research question n°= 5, and the descriptive statistics of those items are presented in Table 4.6. Actually, the plot summaries of novels and the drama synopses presented in class did not motivate students to read the literary works in their original version.

³¹ Su argues for a similar procedure and holds: “the adoption of simplified materials, as opposed to original works, ...help prevent linguistic difficulty for the students. As a result, students would not make a huge leap from painful word-by-word decoding to the comprehension of relatively lengthy literary texts containing highly abstract vocabulary, complex syntactical patterns, and sophisticated style and contents.”(2010:14)

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The data showed that even for the novel of *Wuthering Heights* and the play *The Glass Menagerie*, which were supported by video tapes, only 45% and 42% of the students showed their will to read both texts in their original forms, a percentage relatively weak if compared to the rest of the students who did not want to carry on the experiment. On the one hand, it could be argued that first and foremost, the length of the texts frightens the students and prevents them from engaging in the reading experience. On the other hand, rejection comes from the interest students pay to the storyline of the texts. Their poor generic competence makes them diverge about the literary intrinsic value of the texts and get attached only to its story line dimension. In the next section I will devote a whole part called: Re-Reading: A Discovery in itself, in which I will refer to the various experiments undertaken on students and which demonstrate that a first reading is merely related to information.

Despite the fact that the use of these simplified versions did not succeed in motivating half of the students to read the original literary texts in the present experimentation, this does not suggest that the technique is ineffective in introducing literature to EFL students. Surprisingly, students liked the novels and dramas presented in their simplified versions and showed positive attitudes towards those texts (see Table 4.6.). Therefore, replicating the study on other texts deserves further investigation even if it does not fall within the inherent objective of the present experiment.

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Conclusion

Conducting this first stage of experimentation has permitted the depiction of the profile of a sample of Algerian University readers of literary texts in English. First, it was found that these readers manifested a considerable enthusiasm while being at the heart of the experiment, which is in itself an indication that these readers are willing to change the way they are perceived by the institution. More importantly, the results showed a preference for certain teaching methods over others, another indication that the way literature is taught affects considerably its appreciation. Finally, readers preferred to read short stories for a number of reasons stated above, which is crucial evidence that these readers are capable of generating an appreciation of literary texts written in a foreign language. The next questions would be to which extent this appreciation is possible? Does it depend on a particular competence? Or is it inherent to the text only? The following part of my experimentation aims at putting under scrutiny such questions with supporting findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

Literary Competence: Key Element or Not in an EFL Context?

Introduction

The essence of the present argument stems from the observation of the inefficiency of Algerian EFL students in coping with literary texts. I do, on one hand, join Cook (1991) in his assertion that the study of literary English has rarely been adjusted to the foreign students' needs. Yet, on the other hand, I share the idea that even native learners face difficulties while they engage in the process of reading literary texts. To my sense the problem is set at a higher level; that of a theoretical confusion which concerns even native learners of the language. By theoretical confusion, I refer to theorists who argued for the necessity for readers to possess a literary competence and thus a generic competence in order to proceed with the text appropriately. I, then, will attempt to present counter arguments to justify the first level of confusion. My objective, in fact, is to put to the fore some evidence about the necessity to reconsider the position of readers in front of literary texts and therefore offer them more autonomy out of the conventions which have for a long time restricted their capacities.

In the first part, this investigation will rely on the work of Lubberda(1998) whose main objective was to demonstrate the power of the literary language on readers and how the latter would embark upon the world of the text regardless of their literary training. In the second part, I will demonstrate to which extent genre conventions contribute to the processing of literary texts.

V.1.1. Literary Competence seen in the Light of the Impact of the literary Language on the Reader

In his master thesis entitled *Literary Language and Complex Literature*, Luberda (1998) strives to highlight one of the most complex issues of the 20th century, an issue that triggered many literary theorists and still represents one of their major preoccupations. He depicted the existence of two languages, one instrumental or ordinary, whose main objective is to communicate (*totality, relevance, and closure*)¹, and the second he named literary or deviant and whose objective is to violate (*totality, relevance, and closure*). That depiction interests us in the sense that he considers both languages within the context of readers and the context containing readers, i.e. the socio-historical context. In fact, Luberda's view of the categorisation of these two distinct languages is not seen in the light of the formalists,² who neglected the contribution of the cognitive aspect provided by readers. For Luberda, the use of the instrumental language does not require from its users special capacities or predispositions; he named training, while, the case differs for the users of the literary language. Again, the literary language does not aim to communicate nor achieve closure, thus its users are unable to approach it without being equipped with the appropriate material that would make them manage successfully in deciphering the different signs in the text and reach a second level of meaning. (Riffaterre, 1985: 127)

¹ **Totality**: an assumption that the contents are interrelated and, when combined, function as a whole.

Closure: the impression of completeness and finality achieved by the ending of some literary works.

Relevance: a cognitive mechanism by which we process information according to a belief that it will be meaningful to us, that it will somehow "relate" to us.

² The formalist school imposed itself in the preceding years arguing for the autonomy of the text as an artefact independent of any other factor.

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Riffaterre and many other theorists wondered whether the reading of literary texts demands specific skills and requires from their readers special attitudes. In their struggle to answer the question raised by Riffaterre “what do you have to do to get your reader’s licence?” these same theorists decided to approach literature not according to its textual properties, but according to a theory of discourse where possessing a literary competence is necessary to read a literary text.

Hence, J.Culler coined the term literary competence and argued that a reasonably practised reader would not read a poem, for instance, in the same way a reader lacking that competence would do,

To read a text as literature is not to make one’s mind a tabula rasa and approach it without preconceptions; one must bring to it an implicit understanding of the operation of literary discourse which tells one what to look for.(1975:115/6)

The concept of literary competence proposed by Culler supports the idea that readers should bring some machinery to the text to process it other than instrumentally and that machinery could not be achieved unless readers are aware of the different existing reading conventions, significant works, theories and forms. One should not forget, however, that even if polysemy³, as claimed by many theorists, is the most highly distinguishing feature of literary texts; that should not minimise the power of institutionalised discourse on it. In other terms, the literary texts’ interpretation has to fit within the literary conventions established by critics and theories (Culler, 1981; 1997). At the same time,

³ A concept with multiple meanings, known as plurisignation, poly-or multi-valency.

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however, Luberda's support of literary competence does not neglect the ability of readers to read a text or resolve some meaning out of it. Again, for Luberda polysemy is the principal challenge for readers and it presents itself regardless of one's training, he thus holds that literary competence,

....may aid at distinguishing more or less significant meanings and the practice of literary interpretation will provide structure upon which to array these meanings.
(1998: 36)

In his distinction between the two kinds of languages, Luberda attributes the differences primarily to the degree of impact they have on readers. In its success to fulfil the communicative expectations of *totality, relevance, and closure*, the instrumental language is processed without affecting readers. Whereas, in its violation of the communicative expectations, readers are driven to process differently and activate new cognitive mechanisms that would aid them reach meaning. Thus, regardless of readers' literary competence, Luberda seems to support the idea that the literary text exercises power over them. This same text has the power to make even the unaware readers go beyond the surface meaning and proceed to a deeper level of understanding.(Luberda:1998:39, Cook: 1994, Hakemulder in Van Peer, 2007).

Luberda goes further and puts under scrutiny those readers who consider the possibility that language may 'fail'. In more accessible terms, he seems to point at those readers who, when unable to reach a meaning, may conclude that the author has not succeeded in communicating what he meant; a recurrent remark that many readers make when the process of reading has met an obstacle and is therefore necessarily abandoned.

Consequently, in his argument against literary competence, Luberdá considers the potential effect that a literary text may have on many readers and that leads them to continue processing the text again and again.

V.1.2. Hypothesis

The advocates of the empirical studies on literature assume that genre convention, which has been considered as a control factor influencing the reading process, may not be an explanatory factor in this same process.

V.1.3. Genre Convention and its Role in Interpretation

Perhaps the most significant literary convention that dominated contemporary literary scholarship has been that of genre. Seen from the perspective that all literatures are organised generically, although not to the same degree, the concept of genre has imposed itself strongly among literary conventions. It, therefore, provides writers/readers with a combination of literary and extra literary rules enabling them interact genuinely with the literary text. Furthermore, the whole of the richness of genre seems to lie in the fact that it offers writers/readers an unprecedented position and considers them as fundamental pillars of the literary communication. Yet, for a long time genre has been attributed a mere classificatory function; an attribution which, in fact, has disregarded its most essential properties within literary criticism. In other terms, genre was considered as a literary instrument responsible of recognising the textual features that make of a text a novel or a poem or a short story, for instance. A. Fowler exhaustive contribution to the theory of genres, for instance, criticises

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the ancient misapprehensions associated with genre's role when he holds: *genres are often said to provide a means of classification. This is a venerable error* (1982:37). In fact, Fowler's claim transcends classification, without neglecting it, and sees genre theory's use as primarily concerned with communication and interpretation, *at the end of the day, genre analysis is valuable because clarifactory and not classificatory.*(1982: 286)

Considering the history of interpretation which has for a long time tended to disregard the distinctiveness of the text by relating it to external factors, one of the major contributions of genre lies in the fact that it focuses on the specific qualities and structures of the text itself. The features of a text are determined by its particular generic form. Genre which used to be considered descriptive is therefore now considered explanatory or more exactly may be considered as an indicator which determines what is expected in a certain type of discourse. In clearer words, genre is now seen as the sum of certain social roles within a literary culture that govern the relationship between text and reader (between sender and receiver), as Bawarashi(2000:346/7) has put it,

Genres create a kind of literary culture or poetics in which textual activity becomes meaningful, ...they constitute the social reality in which the activities of all social participants are implicated. (in Miall:2006: 92)

While genre's role seems to provide a systemic and incomparable contribution to the literary communication, it is, however, generated by a consensus born within a tradition. That is to say that the laws which govern genre are not intrinsic to

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literature; on the contrary, they are the result of the different models accepted by a social group. Todorov (1976) explains the richness of genres as being a bridge between society and individuals,

In a society, the recurrence of certain discursive properties is institutionalised, and individual texts are produced and perceived in relation to the norm constituted by that codification. A genre, literary or otherwise, is nothing but this codification of discursive properties. (in Swales, 1990:36)

Therefore, the arbitrariness by which genre theory functions does not obey a theoretical conception; rather it obeys the rules of a literary practice. (Glowinski in Angenot et al., 1989: 90)

Indeed within the boundaries of a certain literary culture, the generic rules generated by this same culture seem to determine to a great extent an essential framework for reading (Derrida, 1980: 65, Fowler, 1982: 259). While engaged in the process of reading, readers adapt their cognitive apparatus to the requirements of the genre that a text represents and therefore leads them (readers) to program a particular and appropriate mode of reading. In fact, that mode of reading deployed during the reading of that text or discourse is no more than a pre-determined attitude that may enable them make predictions about how the text is to unfold. In this frame, then, genre becomes regulative of the reading process; it orients it, and to a certain point determines it. The fact that genre can fulfil that function is again linked to the rules of a literary tradition known to the readers and which calls for their knowledge and habits within a literary culture.

That attitude, however, which is generated by the tradition in which it originates, is not the same for all readers. If we consider that like discourse

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structures, genres are characterised in part by the types of story grammar, or schemata they call for; they, thus, affect each participant of the literary communication particularly and depend on their potential degree of engagement. In this respect I would attribute the impact of genres on readers primarily to their competence.

By competence, then, individuals are distinguished by the amount of knowledge they have in a certain field. The acquisition of a generic competence, hence, is no more than the acquisition of a specific and technical literary competence. By literary competence, then, readers are distinguished according to their competence in the literary domain. Culler (1975) attributes literary competence to a reader when the latter reaches a degree of assimilation nurtured by his various readings in literature,

...to be an experienced reader of literature is, after all, to have gained a sense of what can be done with literary works and thus to have assimilated a system which is largely interpersonal.(1975:.128)

For J.Culler, when readers begin with noting their own interpretations and reactions to a literary work and succeed in formulating a set of explicit rules which account for the fact that they produce these interpretations and not others, they would then possess the basis of literary competence.

Similarly and through a steadily learning process, which is in the majority of cases a lengthy and complicated process, readers become familiar with the different generic features of the text, and therefore build their reading on the concept of generic expectations (*horizons d'attente*). In other words, a competent

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reader relying on his generic competence knows what he should expect in a certain type of texts or discourses. I.A.Richards (1929), relates the experiments he undertook at Oxford University, where during many years he proposed anonymous poems to his undergraduate students. The responses of the students appeared confused and their interpretations lacked semantic autonomy. Moreover, students' interpretations differed from one student to another since each one used his/her own generic conception of the poem to propose an interpretation of their own. Thus, Richards concluded that those poems which appeared without titles or attribution, and which in fact was done purposefully for the demonstration of his hypothesis, were responsible for the divergence of interpretations. Hence, it seems quite clear that the interpretation of a text depends to a great extent on the generic conception by which readers read that text.

In the same frame, the occasional recognition of a strong reading⁴ is in its turn no more than another proof of the deficiency of a generic competence from the part of the reader since the indeterminacy of meaning⁵ which suggests that a work means whatever we like appears to be another *venerable error*. Fowler(1982) quotes Hirsch⁶when the latter clarifies the so often made confusion between meanings

The meaning of a text (which does not change) and the meaning of a text to us today (which changes) is between meaning and broader significance; and between meaning and thematic formulations. Interpretation properly concerns the whole form and content, not merely schematic formulations.(1982: 268)

⁴ By Strong reading is meant: "...a clearly articulated reading that self-consciously goes 'against the grain' of a text." (For more information, see McCormick & Waller, 1987: 207)

⁵ The plurality of meanings is bound by the literary convention that imposes one agreed meaning and not another.

⁶ E.D. Hirsch is an American hermeneuticist, whose work *Validity in Interpretation* is indebted to Husserlian phenomenology.

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Thus, Hirsch seems to argue that the rules of genre generated by the literary tradition allow the critic to operate in an organic situation, in which scholarly reconstruction and interpretative criticism complement each another.

Since the fact that certain readers who are more familiar with genre rules than others is determining in the choice of their interpretative strategies, the interdependence of generic perception and interpretation is therefore undeniable, but to which extent? In fact, for a long time this interdependence has fed the majority of studies undertaken in the literary scholarship. For a long time the text was read in the hope to discover the mystery locked inside it, i.e. a text was read for the sake of being interpreted, (remember “The Figure in the Carpet by H. James)⁷. The question to be raised then is: what is the role of the generic perception when the critic aims at demonstrating the individuality of the work of art, i.e. when he aims at interpreting it?

In order to answer the above question, one has to challenge what has represented for a long time the goal of literature, i.e. interpretation. Genre, then, does not seem to represent an interpretative category in the sense that it indicates principally the similarities that exist between the analysed work and previous works, while interpretation should depict what is particular to the literary work and not to what is shared. The interpreter is not obliged each time to take into account the generic structure of the text, but at the same time he cannot neglect it.

⁷ In « The Figure in the Carpet », James places an interdiction on critical activities, mainly on the aim of the interpreter to hold one meaning, and leave open a rich domain for appreciation (Iser :1978)

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Whether a literary text should be interpreted or not? is a question that imposes itself in the recent years, for, literary criticism has been accused sharply to have reduced texts to a mere referential meaning. (Iser, 1978:5). A triggering question as it were, it has, furthermore, stimulated many critics to present arguments against the necessity of interpretation (Sontag, 1983:98). Indeed, this same inquiry represents the starting point for the upheaval brought by the proponents of the empirical studies on literature. The latter advanced that a text is not read for the sake of being interpreted; rather it is read for the sake of being experienced. For, they consider the reading of literary texts as an experience that engages the self regardless of any literary background. Therefore, the laws of genres and the amount of knowledge in literature which have received for a long time much consideration in the process of interpretation are of little consideration in empirical research on literature.

When the advocates of empirical studies on literature claimed the necessity of experiencing the literary text, they, in fact, have shaken the rules of literary criticism which were regulated mainly by the laws of genre. In order to have their argument taken into account; they had to support it with testable experiments. Thus, three studies were conducted in which genre was manipulated experimentally as to show its limits as an explanatory factor.

V.1.4. The Manipulation of Genre

The first study was undertaken by Zwaan (1991). In his study he selected six short stories from newspapers and novels which can be read in either perspective, since they were devoid of any marked literary figure. The purpose of

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the study was to demonstrate that readers would read differently in another frame. As expected readers read faster in the newspaper condition than in the literary condition. In the literary condition readers were more careful in identifying the words of the text just read. In a second study using the same conditions (Zwaan,1994), readers in the literary perspective were found to have a poorer memory for the situational information in the texts than the newspaper condition readers. In fact, the study suggests that when readers believe themselves to be engaged in literary reading, they read more slowly and form a better representation of the surface structure of the text.

While Zwaan's study argues for the regulative functions of genre, Hoffstaedter (1987) seems to hold the opposite arguing that genre information is not invariably decisive. She presented 24 poems to readers in two conditions, a newspaper reading condition (modifying the layout of the poem appropriately) and a poetry reading condition. Readers were asked to make judgments of *poeticity* on a scale from non-poetic to poetic. She reports that for only 10 out of 24 poems were judgments significantly different across the two conditions. For 14 of the poems it was their poetic properties that appear to have determined the reading condition. The study showed that the text features such as strong metaphors, personifications or unusual syntax structures could override the supposed genre.

Devising a different method, Lászlo (1988) implemented changes in the texture of an American and a Hungarian literary story in order to examine effects

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on both reading times and on reader's deployment of schema knowledge. Three versions of each story were presented: the Original version, the Insert version, and a Script⁸ version. Both stories were about short term romances that turned out to be unstable because of social differences, thus suggesting two "themes," social and romance themes. László reports that reading times were longer for the Original story, but shorter for the Script than for the Insert version in the case of the American story, while reading times for the Script and Insert versions were the same for the Hungarian. The results show that the literary texture of the original stories prompted the longest reading times. On the other hand, the manipulation of the stories had no consistent influence on the plot continuation choices, a finding that seems to show construal of the "romance" plot to be a feature of the discourse level, not the literary level of processing.

Hence, the aforementioned experiments tested by Zwaan and his colleagues cannot but confirm the fact that the major property of literary texts (discourses) is to alter readers' minds making them read more slowly and pay attention to the surface features of the text regardless of their awareness of the genre being dealt with.

Conclusion

In this respect, the claim raised by the empirical theorists on literature interests us in the sense that EFL readers' poor literary and generic competences may not be an obstacle, as claimed earlier, to an authentic response to literary

⁸ Insert version : a version where two or three passages based on an action sequence had been rewritten in summary form
Script version: a version where the whole story was rewritten in summary form, keeping the plot structure clear.

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texts. In more explicit words, my study will rely on the assumptions of the empirical theory to demonstrate the process of reading Algerian readers may engage with in order to cope with literary texts of an English expression. The next section will be devoted to a practical demonstration to support my hypothesis.

V.2. Demonstration

Introduction

It is the contention of the empirical researchers on literature that the issues raised by the reader-response theorists were of considerable interest and in various ways continue to be reflected in their present investigations. Attempts to deal with issues like how meaning is attributed to literary texts have led literary scholars to follow many divergent paths, covering a wide range of assumptions and methods. From among these approaches, are the hypothetical speculations about how the ‘ideal’, ‘implied’, ‘informed’, ‘model’, or ‘super’ reader constructs meanings.⁹ Yet, despite the multiplicity of approaches, no method exists for evaluating efficiently the acceptability of any given interpretation. Indeed, in spite of the comprehensiveness of the approach, which redirected attention away from the reader towards question of culture and history, the traditional view of the theory foreclosed attention to reading almost as soon as it had begun, “*the reader-response project was described by one of its reviewers as ‘self-transcending’ and ‘self-deconstructing’, suggesting ‘that it has a past rather than a future’*”(Freund

⁹ J.Culler relies on the notion of ‘ideal reader’ in his *Structuralist Poetics* (1975), W.Booth introduces the notion of the ‘implied reader’ in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), and it is developed later by W.Iser in *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (1974); Stanley Fish refers to the ‘informed reader’ in “*Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics*” (1970); M.Riffaterre speaks of the ‘super reader’ in “*Describing Poetic Structures*”.

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in Miall, 2006: 92). Considering all the controversies which characterize the issue at stake does not actually prevent readers from generating meaning from literary texts and does not prevent literary appreciation from being the pivotal point of literary reading. Hence, heading towards a literary view that would be able to reconcile all these divergent views seems urgent and requires serious attention.

In this perspective I will devote the following part of my discussion to an acute examination of the set of testable concepts as devised by Dixon et al. (1993). My support of this study is motivated by its lawful and systematic characteristic, and which according to me could fit the criteria of my personal investigation. The originality proposed by the group of researchers lies, then, in the fact that they define interpretation in what they call a theory of literary processing based on a system of sampling, evaluation or assessment, and generalization. These same researchers were quite aware that devising an absolute test of merit would be quite utopic and rather naïve from their part, hence, they thought about the elaboration of a framework for understanding the processing of literature in which the issue of different readers and the relation of their divergent interpretations could be addressed. At the heart of the matter is the elaboration of the concept of the reader and the argument that experimental evidence on literary processing can be used to evaluate a critical analysis of any given literary text. Therefore, three concepts were devised for the purposes of the theory, the concept of ‘statistical reader’, the concept of ‘population’, and the concept of ‘measurement’.

V.2.1. Interpretation in the Light of Literary Processing: Dixon et al. Empirical Concepts

V.2.2. Who is the Statistical Reader?

Dixon et al.(1993) central argument revolves around the need to frame interpretation within a concrete context that is neither idiosyncratic nor capricious. Hence, they argue that literary processing and interpretation require a concept of the reader that surpasses speculative notions about hypothetical readers. They, thus, propose a new concept of the reader, they call the ‘statistical reader’. Actually, the concept is not new, rather, it is its application to the field of literary processing that is new and deserves further experiments. One of the reliable advantages of this concept is the fact of positing the reader within a population of readers that share the same commonalities amenable later to an effective generalisation of the findings. Thanks to this concept, no interpretation would be made in the abstract; rather it would be made with respect to some explicitly defined population of readers.

V.2.3. What is a Population of Readers?

For a long time, a large amount of research has been conducted so as to reach the same results; that of understanding how readers infer meaning from literary texts. Yet, these researchers did not address the same kind of readers most of the time. Their main convergence lies in the fact that the majority addressed readers within the academic frame; university students often, and neglected the case of the ordinary reader.

Thinking about what Dixon et al. call a *population* of readers leads necessarily to think about an objective and lawful empirical investigation that could satisfy the

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least convinced ones. In fact, it is supposed that reader populations are unlikely to be uniform and monolithic with respect to interesting aspects of literary processing. Instead, they advance that any population of readers consists of a “*complex collection of overlapping and nested groups, each with potentially distinct literary processing.*”(1993:11) Put differently, for the group of researchers, a population is needed to justify the scientific claims made about reading processing, however, they do not restrict size, scope, or criteria for defining a population to such an extent that the population about which interesting claims might be made, may reach any number or may vary widely in size. One population could be a subset of another, or they might be disjoint, which makes sorting out the facts a difficult bargain yet empirically testable.

Conducting a research about the image of the main character in a literary text¹⁰, for instance, requires a given number of readers whose role would be to confirm the hypothesis stated at the beginning. The question is who are these readers? Is the hypothesis going to be confirmed by testing any kind of readers? Or do we refer to a group of readers in particular? A population is then explicitly and objectively defined by a *sampling procedure* which in its turn defines a distinct population. Hence, it is crucial to have some appreciation for the manner in which readers are selected for inclusion in the study because this sampling procedure defines the population to which conclusions apply. Running a study about any literary text in English that will apply to Mostaganem University would

¹⁰ Dixon et al. research addressed skilled students of English at Edmonton University, Alberta, to analyse the image of the protagonist in *The Old Man and the Sea* by E.Hemingway.

The Old Man and the Sea is said to be a text which evokes strong biblical and epic images and the portrayal of the central character evokes the image of the Christ. From this view of things, Dixon et al. argued that these are mental representations in the reader’s mind and that does not mean that they cannot be assessed, thus they proposed to run the above empirical research. (1993: 9/11)

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call for a number of readers, students of English then, from this university. At the same time, the sensitive nature of the sampling procedure should be taken into account, for; making generalisations to larger populations is not always, to quote Dixon et al. words, *defensible*¹¹.

V.2.4. What is a Measurement?

A measurement is anything one can assess or evaluate about individuals, their behaviour, or the situation in which individuals are. A measurement is objective because it is possible to describe the procedures by which it was collected; these procedures are called the *measurement instrument*. The measurement instrument can be a questionnaire, for instance, that raises a series of questions concerning the objective for which researchers strive. The amount of measurements that might, in principle, be collected from an entire population is referred to as measurement *distribution*,

Although measurements are generally collected from small sample of individuals, those measurements may provide a substantial amount of information about the population in general.(Ibid:12)

Hence, the notion of measurement distribution is crucial because it admits the possibility that populations are heterogeneous with respect to any given measurement. For example, one might measure the image of the main character in some sample of readers, then, one might infer properties of the measurement distribution for skilled readers in general.

¹¹ Two main reasons render the generalisations in an EFL context not defensible: the foreign language status of English and the different cultural then generic traditions of this sample of readers.

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Two types of measurements are distinguished. First, *dependent* measurements are those that depend on the literary processing engaged by readers in a particular situation. Example: the length of time taken to read a text segment may provide information about the nature and extent of literary processing on first encounter with the text¹². Dixon et al. go further and hold that a better strategy would be to find any number of measurements that index literary processing in a variety of ways. For example, in addition to initial reading time one may also collect information concerning the reader's evaluation of the text at a first then at a second reading or one may evaluate readers' response to directed questions about the text. Then, logic and inference can be used to combine these indices into a detailed account of the processing that produced the obtained measurement. The second type of measurement is called *reader* measurements. These are the ones that describe relatively stable properties or characteristics of individuals in the population. Such elements are crucial to a theory of literary processing because they allow one to provide a principle account of the heterogeneity that exists in a population.

The starting point of this discussion points out the poor literary equipment of Algerian students of English, considered for a long time a potential obstacle to genuine appreciation of literature in a foreign language. This same discussion, however, hypothesises the contrary highlighting this handicap as an interesting clue of investigation if seen under the light of empirical researches on literature. Put differently, the students will be granted the opportunity to measure the effects of literary texts on them regardless of their competence in the field,

¹² Vipond & Hunt (1985), and Miall & Kuiken (1994) have used this measurement type in their studies.

- 1- All kinds of literary texts are able to generate appreciation in the reader.
- 2- Literary appreciation does not depend on literary competence.

V.2.5. Background

I have already introduced the empirical methodology devised by Dixon et al., and in which an assessment of literariness and interpretation potency was aimed at. Actually, the distinctiveness of the research is that it considered interpretation of literary texts in a bare context, devoid of extra factors that could spoil this interpretation. After having exposed the serious battle undertaken by researchers and theorists against interpretation and its limitation, it seems unconceivable, at this stage, to list a substantial number of literary effects and decide that these are generated by a given work and then test them on a sample of readers. There could be a large number of literary effects and these effects could not be the same, for, more than one instrument of measurement could be used. Although the process is empirical, the data collection does not validate the experiment and as such makes the researchers fail to induce generalisations from the sample. In front of such a problematic situation, the genius of Dixon et al. lied in devising an easier approach that could fit a wide range of literary texts. They assumed that readers would enjoy and appreciate texts that are *evocative, intriguing, stimulating*, and so on (Ibid:16).

The assumption was supported by a global evaluation of the story which may serve to summarize the presence of these types of effects, yet and once more, a mere evaluation of the story could be influenced by non objective factors that

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have nothing to do with literariness or literary effects. They advanced that readers may rate a text highly literary simply because they find the content described pleasant or agree with the social values evoked by the text – as the opposite also may happen. Thus, they thought about replicating the experiment twice developing what they named a *rereading paradigm*¹³,

*...We assume that the change from one evaluation to the next reflects the emergent effects that are produced on second reading. We refer to the change score as **depth of appreciation**, on the view that it reflects the added appreciation of the text that emerges from a deeper understanding. (Id: 17)*

By the *depth of appreciation* measure, the group of researchers aimed at assessing literary emergent effects that do not occur at a first reading and that are independent from thematic content, since if the story was to be found interesting and pleasant at a first reading, for instance, it would necessarily be the same at a second reading. A second reading offers, then, the possibility to consider the literary features of the text which have been less noticed if not ignored at first reading, since there was a focus on the story rather. Therefore, they anticipated that the difference between the first and second reading would be larger for literary texts than other types of texts, in what follows the description of their experiment and others in the same field.

¹³ Actually, experience has demonstrated that re-reading allows a deeper understanding of the story and as such a better appreciation, yet, the genius of the *rereading paradigm* as devised by Dixon et al. has succeeded in demonstrating the reasons behind such appreciations through evidence, which, in fact, represent the power of the literary text on the reader after a second reading.

V.2.6. Rereading: A Discovery in Itself¹⁴

Dixon et al. (1993) argued that the literariness of a literary text is likely to occur at a second reading. To illustrate their hypothesis they used a post modern crime story, *Emma Zunz* by *Louis Borges* and another non literary, detective story: *Death was her Dowry*; the two stories were superficially similar in that both concerned a murder and involved a woman as a central character. A measure instrument was devised to evaluate the depth of appreciation of both stories at a first then at a second reading. The results confirmed the expectations of the researchers that *Emma Zeunz* appears to be a literary text and validates the depth of appreciation measure after the second reading. By contrast, the detective story text did not show any shift in appreciation after the second reading. The second part of the experiment consisted in rewriting passages from Borges' story, found 'problematic' and 'unreliable of communication', rendering them thus more accessible to readers. Once more, the results showed that the depth of appreciation for some readers appeared substantially lower without the texts features judged 'problematic'. The implications from the study seem to support the conclusion that *Emma Zeunz* generates more emergent effects than *Death was her Dowry*. As a conclusion, Dixon et al., first, presumed that the effects that emerge on a second reading contribute to the appreciation of the story, which, in turn, produces an improved summary evaluation of the story. In this sense, *Emma Zeunz* is

¹⁴ Actually, rereading processes are not new and received their most systematic application within structuralist theory. For instance, in *S/Z* (1970) R.Barthes takes a story by Balzac, 'Sarrasine', and systematically analyses it section by section (which he calls *lexies*, that is, units of reading). He divides the text into 561 of these units and analyses them according to five codes: *hermeneutic*, *actional*, *semic*, *symbolic*, and *referential*. Once the analysis of the 561 *lexies* has been made, Barthes puts them all back together at the end of the book. The polemic aimed to demonstrate the plurality of meanings and to deconstruct the valorised position into which intrinsic critics had placed the writer.

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more literary for the population of readers selected. Second, the researchers assumed that the emergent effects generated in the readers are clearly sensitive to specific features of the text related to *narrational ambiguity*.

(1993: 29)

In another study conducted by Cupchik et al. (1998) and whose objective was to demonstrate the effects of rereading, the researchers were able to show significant shifts in appreciation during a second reading. They selected four short stories by James Joyce, which they ranged in two categories. *The Dead* and *Araby* were considered as “emotional” texts, *A Painful Case* and *Counterparts* were considered as “descriptive”. After reading four segments of each story, readers were asked to rate each kind of experience to three scales: intensity, pleasantness, and relaxation-tension; they then generated an interpretation, after which they read the segments again and re-rated them. The results showed that on a first reading, emotional texts excerpts were read more quickly and judged more favourable than the descriptive ones. By contrast, the second reading showed that the descriptive texts, found loaded with stylistically complex descriptions of settings and characters, received a closer attention from the part of readers thus diminishing the complexity which they initially associated them with. The implication from this study is that readers tend to move beyond a story-based understanding towards one focused on stylistic and evaluative judgments, “*the language which has passed by takes on new potency, finding a meaningful role that goes beyond mere description to serve a rich allusion*”(1998:843/44)

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In his turn, Miall(1995) ran a study in which he presented 1/5 of the short story *Together and Apart* by V.Woolf (what equals 56 phrases) for a group of 28 undergraduate students of English literature. The study was run with students in several sessions, during which the 56 phrases provided the main focus for collecting response data. The opening section of the story was presented typed normally on a page, with the name of the author and story title as the heading: participants read the story in this form first. They then received a version in which each phrase was printed on a separate line, for the purpose of rating. Interestingly, he noticed that the rating of importance of the phrases at the first reading differed from the second reading. Thus, the findings implied that rereading, defamiliarisation process then, made readers doubt their initial conventional¹⁵ interpretation. Actually this change in evaluation is in itself positive, for, it calls for the creation of new schemata that could enhance the process of comprehension. Yet, the question that comes to mind is: Is rereading sufficient to reach a clear and definite interpretation? The answer is still obscure!

The implication from the above study and according to Miall's conclusion refers to the power of the figurative language used by the author and which appears highly suggestive of an interpretation that transcends the primary schemata generated at first,

...the power of a literary text lies beyond the sentences of the text itself, in activating vectors of concern within the reader that are likely to continue resonating for some time to come....To put it another way, a schema(in the formal sense is only part of what the story brings into being.(2006:65)

¹⁵ By conventional interpretation, I refer to the interpretation imposed by a teacher or a textbook, for instance, or even to the one shaped by the community(to use Fish' terminology)

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In this view of things, I replicated the study of Dixon et al. on a group of Algerian university students of English whose literary equipment operates usually as restrictive to a desired response to literary texts in English. The preceding section of this investigation helped portray the profile of the student of English at the University of Mostaganem. The portrayal, in fact, was revealing in many aspects and among these stands the meagre competence of the students in the literary field. My objective, through this study is to demonstrate that Algerian students are capable of generating an appreciation of literary texts not in their native language and that the power of the literary texts on these readers surpasses their competence in the field.

V.2.7. Experiment

The present experiment assessed the depth of appreciation in two short stories. The first one was *The Confession* by Guy de Maupassant, written by one of the canons of French literature¹⁶. It is ranged under the section crime fiction and acknowledged among the literary circle as an interesting example of good literature. The experiment tested whether the story was literary by the criteria and measures developed by Dixon et al. (1993). The literariness of the short story was compared to that for a control text that I assumed has less literary values¹⁷. In this case, I used a story entitled: *Letter from the Understudy* by Kathryn Simmonds, a creative writer, available online but that does not benefit from any literary canonical status. The two stories were superficially similar in that both depicted a confession after having committed a crime. (See Appendix III)

¹⁶ Guy de Maupassant's short stories were widely appreciated among the English readership for their particularities to such an extent that the translation of his stories embodied an official status.

¹⁷ My assumption is built on the fact that this short story does not fall within the Western known literary canonical texts, and that could be in fact very subjective.

V.2.7.1. Population and Sample

The population of readers I was interested in could be described as skilled readers of English but having little background or systemic exposure to literature or literary criticism. My sample consists of 24 third year students of English from the University of Mostaganem who act as volunteers for the experimentation unfolding. As already mentioned, these students were neither accustomed to extensive reading in their native language nor in English language, and the unique source of literature they were receiving was the weekly obligatory lecture of literature part of the syllabus of English at university level. My assumption is that this sampling procedure would provide information that is representative of the intended target population.

V.2.7.2. Measurement Procedure

V.2.7.2.A.

Participants¹⁸ in the experiment were tested in two separate groups. They were given a handout containing a short preamble about the nature of the study they were participating in and were asked to read one of the two short stories each. Subjects were told that they would be asked a number of general evaluative questions about the story they read. Half of the subjects were given *The Confession* (1721 words) to read, while the other half were given *Letter from the Understudy* (1766 words). Both short stories were re-written so that they would have similar length and share nearly a reminiscent structure.

After having read the story for the first time, participants were asked a series of 10 questions concerning the story. The answers required a response on a

¹⁸ I will use the word **Participant** to refer to all kinds of subjects that undertake experimentation.

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numerical rating scale (from 1 “strongly disagree” to 6 “strongly agree”). The same battery of questions was asked after asking the participants to read the same short story for the second time. The instruments used were called Post-test (1) and Post-test (2)¹⁹ and included a small part in which the participants were asked to write down their overall impressions of the short stories after their first and second readings. The objective through this experimentation was to assess whether there was a slight or shift of appreciation between the first and second reading of the same literary text. The findings of the experimentation are reported in Table 5.1. where the mean rate for each question was reported after each first and second reading of both short stories.

Table 5.1. Mean Evaluation of *The Confession* and *Letter from the Understudy* after first and second reading

Short Stories	<i>The Confession</i>		<i>Letter from the Understudy</i>	
	<i>Guy de Maupassant</i>		<i>Kathryn Simmonds</i>	
Questions	First Reading(M)	Second Reading(M)	First Reading(M)	Second Reading(M)
1- I find the story interesting	5,38	5,76	5	5,41
2- I find the story a good example of literature	4,61	5,30	4,66	5,08
3- I find the language of the story accessible	5,30	5,61	4,83	5,16
4- I find the structure of the story clear	5,76	5,92	4,66	5,41
5- I like the idea of confessing	5,61	5,61	5,83	5,91

¹⁹ Post-test (1) and (2) are available in Appendix IV.

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one's mistake				
6- I appreciated the story	5,53	5,53	5,08	5,75
7- I would recommend it to a friend	4,92	5	4,5	5,16
8- I felt pity for the protagonist	4,84	5,07	5,16	5,66
9- I have already lived a similar situation	1,92	1,69	2,83	2,58
10- I find the protagonist courageous enough for having dared confess their crimes	5,46	5,15	5,75	5,91

In the present research, I was primarily concerned with responses to 4 questions concerning the overall appreciation of the short stories. “I find the story interesting,” “ I find the story a good example of literature,” “I appreciated the story,” and “ I would recommend it to a friend,” (Table 5.2. & 5.3.). The remaining questions of the Post-tests were considered relevant to the nature of the study but not directly linked to the assessment of depth of appreciation of the short stories and that is why I concentrated my analysis on the above mentioned four questions.

For each question, an index of the general evaluation of the story was compiled by calculating the Grand Mean rate to the four general appreciation questions as shown on Table 5.2. & 5.3. The shift of the Grand Mean values from the first to the second reading of *The Confession* and *Letter from the Understudy* by both groups of participants is shown in Figure 5.1. and Figure 5.2. respectively. As can be seen, the evaluation of both stories improved from first and second

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reading. However, *Letter from the Understudy* improved substantially more than *The Confession*, even though initially it was less appreciated. In other words, *Letter from the Understudy* showed more depth of appreciation (0.28) than does *The Confession* (0.54). It is, thus, assumed that the greater depth of appreciation of *Letter from the Understudy* is due, in part, to the literary effects that emerge on second reading, and that there are few literary effects generated by *The Confession*.

Table 5.2. Grand Mean Evaluation of Four questions' Depth of Appreciation in *The Confession*

Short Stories	<i>The Confession</i>	
	<i>Guy de Maupassant</i>	
Questions	First Reading(M)	Second Reading(M)
1-I find the story interesting	5,38	5,76
2-I find the story a good example of literature	4,61	5,30
6-I appreciated the story	5,53	5,53
7-I would recommend it to a friend	4,92	5
Grand Mean	5,11	5,39

These figures are clearly illustrated in the following graph :

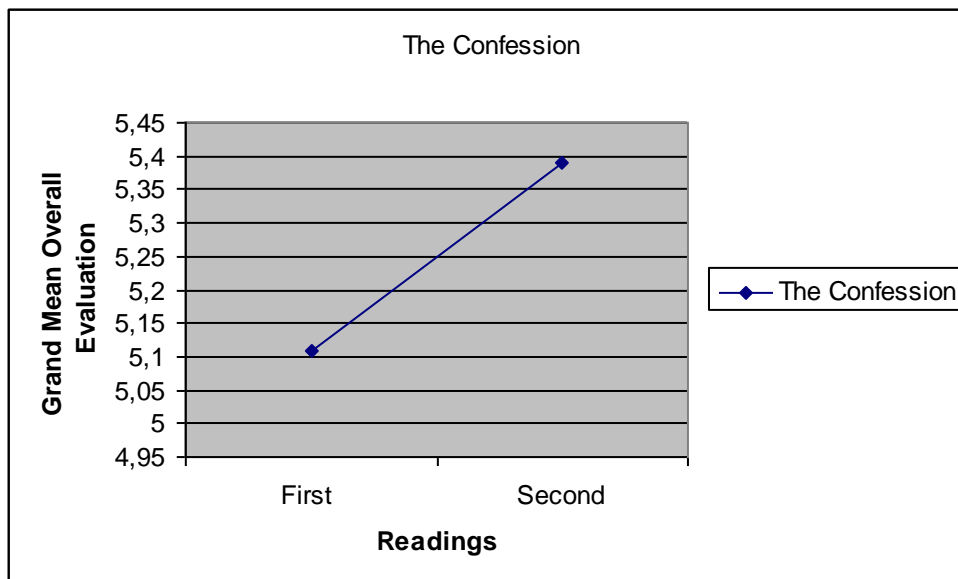


Figure 5.1. Grand Mean Overall Evaluation of First and Second Reading of *The Confession*

Table 5.3. Grand Mean Evaluation of Four questions' Depth of Appreciation in *Letter from the Understudy*

Short Stories	<i>Letter from the Understudy</i> <i>Kathryn Simmonds</i>	
	First Reading(M)	Second Reading(M)
Questions		
1-I find the story interesting	5	5,41
2-I find the story a good example of literature	4,66	5,08
6-I appreciated the story	5,08	5,75
7-I would recommend it to a friend	4,5	5,16
Grand Mean	4,81	5,35

These figures are clearly illustrated in the following graph :

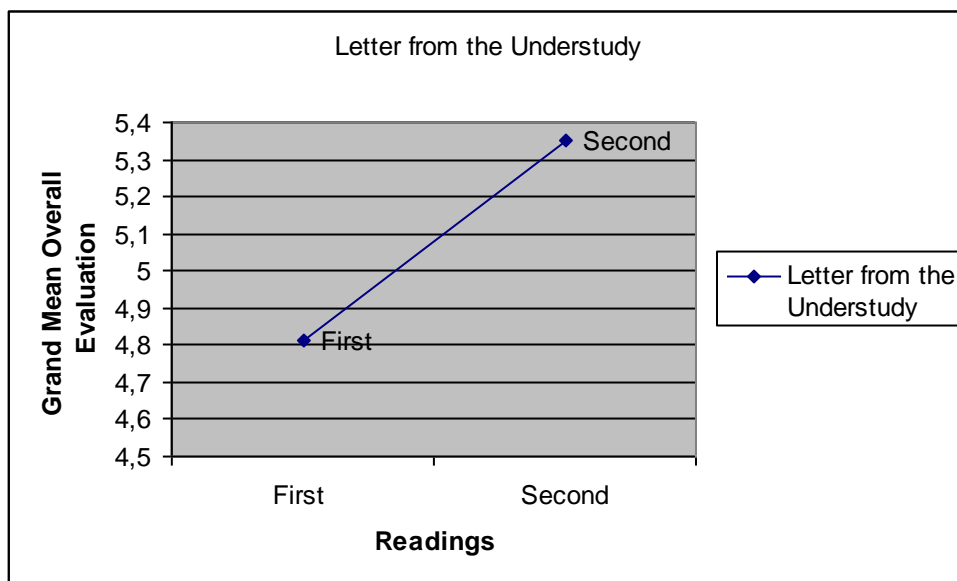


Figure 5.2. Grand Mean Overall Evaluation of First and Second Reading of *Letter from the Understudy*.

V.2.7.2.B

The second part of the experiment consisted in asking participants who read the short story *The Confession* twice to replicate the experiment with the short story *Letter from the Understudy* and vice versa. Unfortunately and since the experiment was undertaken by volunteer²⁰ students, only 10 participants out of the 24 first ones who started the experiment accepted to carry on the second part and provide us with explanations upon their preferences. The objective through this second part of the experiment was to assess the difference in depth of appreciation of both short stories for the same participant and analyse why and on which ground one short story was more appreciated than the other. Put differently, I aimed to expose empirically that the nature of the literary texts taught to non

²⁰ It was very important for the unfolding of the experiment to respect the participants' will not to take part in the remaining parts of the investigation. Actually, 33 third year participants embarked upon the very first experiment whose aim was to find which literary genre do students tend to prefer. Then, only 24 participants carried on the adventure to finally reach 10 participants at this present level of investigation.

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native students do not determine their appreciation of it and that these same students are capable of generating an appreciation of texts of literature in a foreign language regardless of their canonicity.

The findings reported in Table 5.4. correspond to the results obtained after having undertaken the second part of experimentation. Table 5.4. shows the difference between the first and second reading for both stories for the same participant. Interestingly, the means obtained were translated to Figure 5.3. & 5.4. and actually confirm an improvement from the first to the second reading for each individual participant, except for participant 3 and 5 in their readings of *The Confession*. Once more, the greater depth of appreciation was attributed to *Letter from the Understudy* which again confirms the appearance of more emergent literary effects at the second reading. (see Figure 5.4.) An index of those literary effects can be obtained by subtracting the depth of appreciation for *The Confession* from that of *Letter from the Understudy*, thus, in this study, the “literariness” of *Letter from the Understudy* relative to *The Confession* was:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathbf{D.A.} & & \mathbf{D.A.} \\ & \downarrow & \downarrow \\ \mathbf{L.F.T.U.} & & \mathbf{T.C.} \\ \mathbf{0,54} & - & \mathbf{0,28} = \mathbf{0,26} \rightarrow \text{“literariness” of L.F.T.U} \end{array}$$

Table 5.4. Mean Evaluation after First and Second Reading for Ten participants

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Participants	1st Reading T.C (Mean)	2 nd Reading T.C. (Mean)	1st Reading L.F.T.U. (Mean)	2 nd Reading L.F.T.U. (Mean)
Participant 1	4,9	5,2	4,6	4,9
Participant 2	5,4	5,6	4,9	5,6
Participant 3	5	4,6	4,3	5
Participant 4	5	5,4	5,4	5,7
Participant 5	4,4	4	3,6	3,8
Participant 6	4,6	5	4,9	5,6
Participant 7	4,9	5,1	5	5,6
Participant 8	5	5,3	5,1	5,4
Participant 9	5,1	5,4	4,2	4,3
Participant 10	4,7	5,4	4,4	5
Grand Mean	4,9	5,1	4,64	5,09

The figures are clearly illustrated through the following graphs:

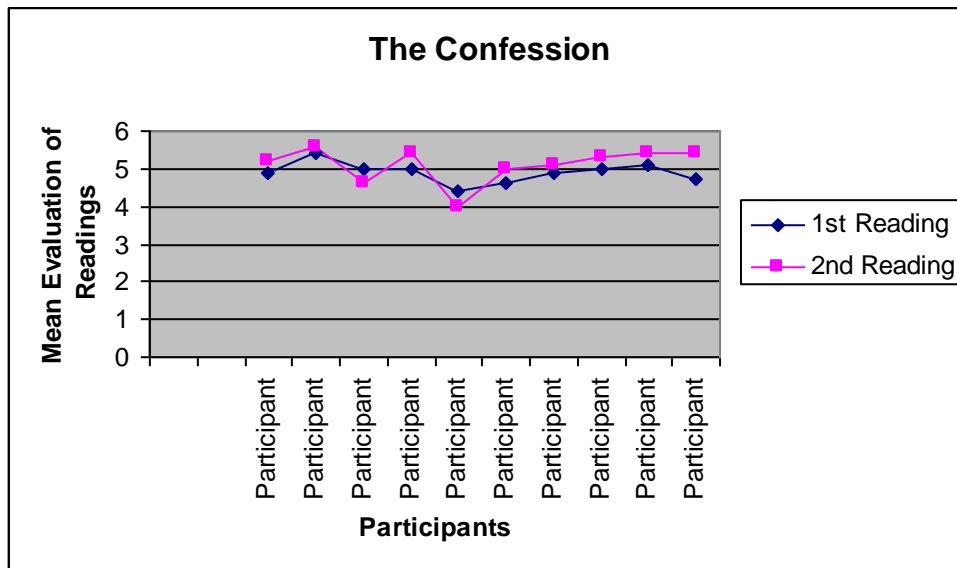


Figure 5.3. Mean Evaluation of first and second reading of *The Confession* for each participant

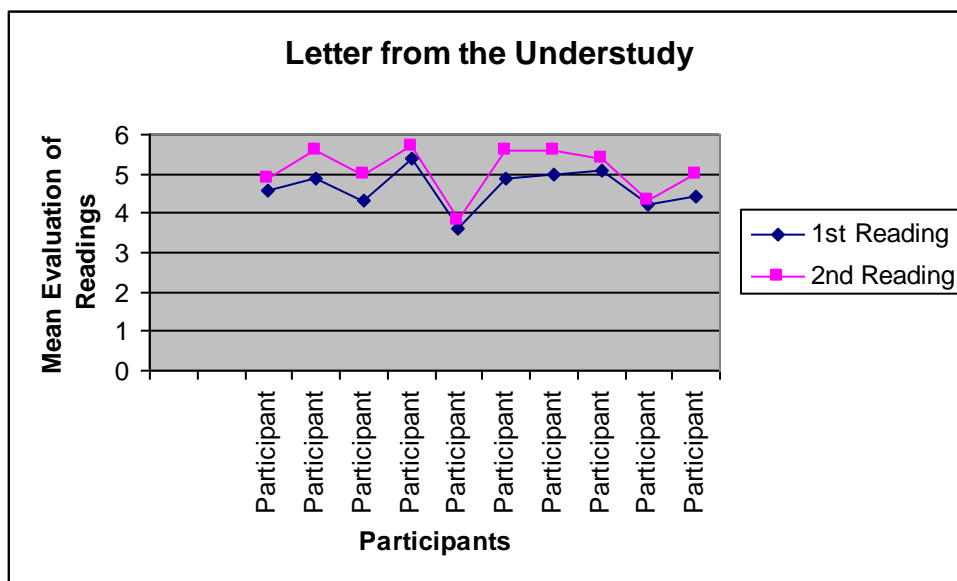


Figure 5.4. Mean Evaluation of first and second reading of *Letter from the Understudy* for each participant

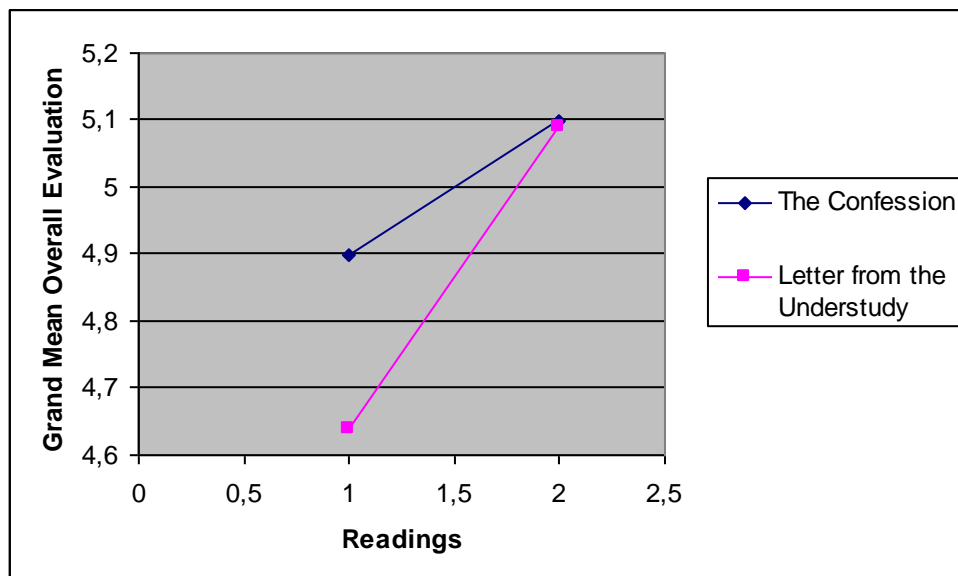


Figure 5.5. Grand Mean Overall Evaluation of *The Confession* and *Letter from the Understudy* after First and Second Reading.

V.2.8. Some participants' Written Protocols

Writing down their overall impression about their first and second readings of both short stories has permitted to understand the reasons that motivated the participants' appreciation of one short story over the other. Here are some written protocols²¹ recorded for each participant. Put differently, we have recorded four written protocols for the same participant and have proceeded to their analysis taking into account the length of the protocol and its content.

Table 5.5. Some Participants' Written Protocols

²¹ I have selected only 3 participants' protocols upon the 10 ones simply because I have found them representative enough of the overall impressions of the whole group of participants.

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Participants	1 st Reading	2 nd Reading
<p>N°6 The Confession</p>	<p><i>“ It is a good example to motivate people to love life as it is, and not as they want to be. It is a very interesting story that aims to make people satisfied by what they have in their life because if they don’t, they will be jealous. This short story shows the danger of that feeling.”</i></p>	<p><i>“I find the story so interesting. It is written with great way that makes it easily understood. It shows the danger of teenagers’ age when they can do anything, they are not wise enough. Sometimes, one little mistake can destroy their whole life. For instance, Marguerite in her 12 years old, fell in love with her sister’s fiancé, then, decided to kill him the way dogs are killed. There were no values, no religion which dictated her what to do. Marguerite killed Henry and thought that when she refused marriage, she was scarifying her life for her sister. This story shows the importance of confessing but it would be better to do it as soon as it is possible. At last, this story emphasises the importance of wisdom in life which makes people love their life as it is not as they want it to be.”</i></p>
<p>N°6 Letter from the Understudy</p>	<p><i>“ At the first time, I found some difficulties but through the story I became more eager to know the end of it. The vocabulary was somehow difficult, but I could grasp the whole idea. I like the idea the protagonist has followed to confess his crime. I have learned a very essential moral which is that confession is very necessary even if it is too late.”</i></p>	<p><i>“ to begin with, I adore the theme of the story which is confession even if it is too late. I like the use of the metaphor: “ Theatre is my life” and how it is related to theatre. I find that Garvin regrets deeply his crime by stating all the reasons behind his act. I appreciate the structure of the story and how the ideas are ordered. On one hand, I have shared the reaction of Garvin when he felt worried about his future career. On the other hand, this will never make him innocent, but the fact of calling the ambulance shows that he did not want to commit his crime. I like Garvin’s bravery to</i></p>

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		<i>daresay the truth about his social class and family. At last, I could know the psychological personality of Garvin and how melancholy pervaded his life.”</i>
N°7 The Confession	<i>“Clear and the English used is simple, and what I really liked is how touching was this story. It is that kind of stories that have certain affection that last for a long time.”</i>	<i>“ this story is one of those stories that make you think how complicated it could be... it gave me a small idea about what is like to live with a great burden and the feeling of regret like the one Marguerite had to hide for so many years. It is the kind of guilt that only death helped her to get rid of. The situation that the sisters lived was so complicated and resembles the kind of experience that you don’t want to live or know. So, I appreciated Marguerite’s courage to unveil the secret and Suzanne’s forgiveness for her dying sister who needed salvation for her last minutes in life.”</i>
N°7 Letter from the Understudy	<i>“Speaking about the story is very nice. The structure is clear, whereas vocabulary is somehow difficult, but it was a good task to look for the meanings of these new words.”</i>	<i>“ When I read the story for the second time, I found it extremely amazing because I share something with the protagonist which is his dream of becoming an actor. That’s why I liked so much especially the idea of confession at the end of the story. Concerning the vocabulary, it became clearer but I feel like I need to read more and more”</i>
	<i>“I find this story very interesting. As a short story, it is more digestive than a long one. It is very easy to get the idea of the story. I find also that the structure is clear and the</i>	<i>“In my second reading, I more appreciated the story. This is in fact due to the beauty of literature that each reading is more beautiful than the previous. My first reading was</i>

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<p>N°1</p> <p>The Confession</p>	<p>language is more accessible with regard to the first story “Letter from the Understudy”. This story is very attractive in the sense that I yearned to finish it without looking for the explanation of unfamiliar words in the dictionary. I was only interested in getting the end of the story. The way the protagonist confesses his crime reminds me of old movies where the assistance of the priest was always necessary for any kind of confession. This scene is no more existing in contemporary movies as if it has become old-fashioned.”</p>	<p>for the sake of entertaining myself while the second one was for literature’s beauty. I became more interested in the content of the text. I felt more attracted by the organisation of ideas and how they are expressed. How the use of vocabulary differs from one scene to another; sometimes hard words, and sometimes soft ones, just to fit the depiction of certain ideas. My second reading made me realise that the first reading was superficial and feel pity for the family’s disaster because whatever one’s religion we share the same context because I think no one has lived such situation. It made me feel bitter and reminds me of the situation when my father was dying.”</p>
<p>N°1</p> <p>Letter from the Understudy</p>	<p>“ The protagonist tried to confess a mistake he did through a letter he wrote to a friend, and this is very brave for a man like him whose career is controlling his life. Being fond of acting made him oppose even his parents in order to realise his dream. He even did something wrong for the sake of reaching his goals but what was good in him was his confession.”</p>	<p>“ I appreciated the story in the part confession of course, because though it is a difficult task, the protagonist did it. The only problem with it was his escape, he should have stayed and faced the problem simply not commit the crime from the beginning. As he said acting was his life, he should have worked to be at the top and not use malice to have his aims done. Life is made through sacrifices and struggles, and if he had become a big star using such corrupted ways, he would have never felt happy about it. But again confession led him to turn the page and maybe correct his mistake.”</p>

V.2.9. Results and Discussion

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The written protocols of the participants helped confirm earlier obtained results but more importantly they contributed to shed light on the reasons that motivated their appreciation. Since the participants were neither restricted by space nor by time, they were, on the contrary, asked to generate a maximum of words that could translate their overall impressions after the first and second readings. The latter did not hesitate to produce acute written productions after their respective readings. The first striking remark has to do with the length of the protocols. As Table 5.5. shows, first protocols are shorter than the ones produced after the second reading which could be attributed to the creation of new schemata capable of enhancing and improving the process of comprehension, thus making it necessarily longer. (See Figure 5.6.)

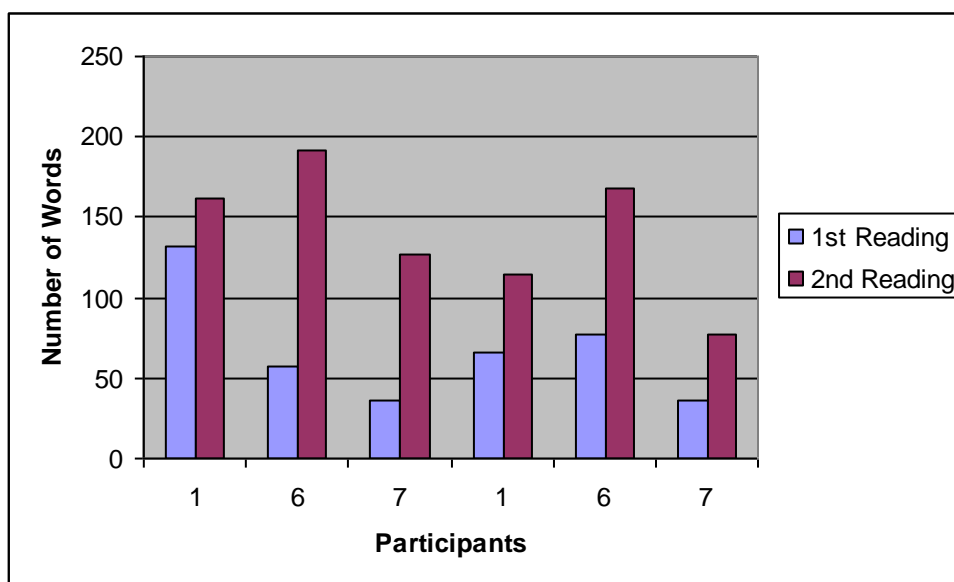


Figure 5.6. Number of Words of 3 Participants' Protocols after First and Second Reading

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On the other hand, despite the recurrent use of verbs like “appreciate,” “like,” “love,” and even “adore” which represent interesting evidence of common appreciation of both literary texts, the content of the protocols differed from one participant to another and from one reading to another. The majority of protocols produced after first readings were related to the importance of the clarity of the structure, the organisation of ideas, and most importantly the accessibility of vocabulary. Being non-native readers of foreign language texts of literature justifies, to my sense, the participants’ preoccupations with such elements of the reading process. It is quite unconceivable to aim at a comprehension of a literary text without having understood its structure and vocabulary. Hence, their systemic competence is primarily required to overcome foreign language barriers, and it is only after second readings that participants could appeal to their schematic competence in order to approach the text more easily. For instance, some participants moved beyond the story unfolding, mainly reporting feelings towards the protagonists’ involvement in committing the crime, while others expressed value judgments on their acts and the reasons behind doing so. Feelings of empathy were very present among the protocols produced after second readings, which again confirm the appearance of new schemata that were not present during their first readings and which helped participants enlarge their spectre of understanding and comprehension of the texts. More amazing is the fact that these protocols offered a deep insight about life. Put differently, participants’ comments helped depict them as sensitive to aspects of life that they consciously or unconsciously ignore. Many participants emphasised the moral that could be deduced from both stories and highlighted the importance of repentance after

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committing a mistake, a sin, or a crime. Only one participant showed concern with literary values of the text and linked her appreciation to the continual emergent beauty of literature after many readings. That could be attributed, probably to better literary equipment than the one of the other participants.

Conclusion

The results from this experiment support the conclusion that *Letter from the Understudy* generates more emergent effects than *The Confession*. Presumably, the effects that emerge on second reading contribute to the appreciation of the story, which, in turn, produces an improved summary evaluation of the story. In this sense, *Letter from the Understudy* is more literary than *The Confession* for this population made by non-natives of English language, and this despite its being a non-canonical text of literature.

Although this conclusion is not the one expected by specialists of literature, who would have supposed a more substantial appreciation of a literary text written by the great Guy de Maupassant, it is, actually, the conclusion we, teachers of literature of a foreign expression, face everyday with our students. The canonicity of a text written by Guy de Maupassant is not sufficient to justify a better appreciation of it and should not determine curriculum designers to transmit it to non-native students of English. It is not however my intention to depict a text like *The confession* as a text that does not deserve attention, on the contrary, the results obtained confirm an interesting appreciation from the part of the students, yet, these same results, show a more interesting appreciation of a text of literature that does not fall within the great known canons. Such a finding should be

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primarily credited for shedding light on that body of non-canonical texts' capacity to enhance a re-appreciation of literature in general in the Algerian students of English.

Furthermore, initially it was quite unconceivable that our group of readers who have limited reading skills or comprehension abilities would appreciate little of the short stories' art and style and would not show the depth of appreciation we observed in our experiment. Actually, it might be surprising in the view of some scholars that the untrained and unsophisticated readers in our sample were able to appreciate both short stories. The implication from such an empirical finding may lead literature specialists to rethink the assumption about literary competence and the skills acquired through literary training especially for our non-native students of English. This by no means suggests that literary training is not necessary for the appreciation of literature²² (remember participant n°=1), and that the readings of all untrained readers are just as profound and enlightening as those of informed and skilled readers. It does seem, hence, that naïve and unsophisticated readers are sensitive to intrinsic values of the literary text that surpass any extrinsic impact.

A crucial result from our perspective is the demonstration of the use of new methodological tools for investigating literariness and interpretation as devised by Dixon et al. in a sample of Algerian readers of literary texts written in English. Following Dixon et al. instructions, the experiment helped verify that emergent effects can be measured in a rereading paradigm in which participants

²² See Afzali & Tahririan (2007) in their attempt to propose some strategies for ESL students to cope with their deficiencies while reading authentic literary texts in English.

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are asked for their evaluation after both first and second reading. Moreover, the relative larger change from first to second reading obtained with *Letter from the Understudy* suggests that the emergent effects were associated with the literariness of the story. In this sense, the results sound consistent with my assumption that literary effects may guide the appreciation of the text regardless of its canonicity or the literary competence of its reader.

CHAPTER SIX

Foregrounding in the Response to Literary Texts: An Algerian Empirical Experiment

Chapter VI. Foregrounding in the Response to Literary Texts: An Algerian Empirical Experiment

VI.1. Theoretical Background

Introduction

In an attempt to explain the question: “*What is this language that says nothing, is never silent, and is called literature?*”(Foucault, 1966), the theory of foregrounding, to my sense, seems to provide a satisfactory range of answers. Some particular linguistic devices, mainly *deviation* and *parallelism* constitute the core of the foregrounding theory. While used in an exhaustive and condensed way, they are responsible for enhancing the necessary competence to reach the potential meaning of a text in the reader, but, most importantly, they are the principal agents making this same reader have an aesthetic experience. Foregrounding theorists hold that literature- by distorting language and using unusual forms- divides the readers’ attention, therefore breaking up their usual behaviour: common place views and perspectives are replaced by new and surprising insights and sensations. Therefore, in the following parts of this literature review on foregrounding, the present discussion will take into account the fact that among literary theories; the foregrounding theory remains one of the few literary theories that has been tested empirically, and which could in fact provide testable data to the expectations of the present research. (Van Peer & Hakemulder, 2006)

VI.1.2. Assumption of the Analysis

The hypothesis which supports my analysis claims that Foregrounding is a fundamental item which differentiates literature from the other varieties of language use, such as everyday conversation or scientific reports- the controversy whether

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literary discourse exists or not is an issue that will not be discussed in this section.

Thus, it is assumed that foregrounding refers to specific devices, as produced by the author, and which are located in the text. It therefore takes into account these stylistic features and considers them as a hallmark of literary language. They are also employed to indicate the specific poetic effect on the reader. Evidence for their influence on reading is available in several studies, suggesting that contemporary critical disregard for their aspect of literariness may be premature. A considerable number of studies showed the interdependence between the distortions of language (deviations and parallelism) and the readers' mind attraction, "*it is obviously the aesthetics of form which tends to attract the reader's attention here...*"¹(Leech & Short: 1981:17)

¹ I have selected a number of quotations from Leech & Short (1981) which highlight the notion of 'prominence' in style in fiction,

a-(Leech & Short, 1981:48), "Prominence is the related psychological notion[i.e., related to deviance]: Halliday defines it as 'the general name for the phenomenon of linguistic highlighting, whereby *some linguistic feature stands out in some way*' [Halliday (1971:340)]. We assume that prominence of various degrees and kinds provides the basis for readers' subjective recognition of a style."

b-(Leech & Short, 1981:49), "We presume a fairly direct relation between *prominence (psychological saliency)* and deviance (a function of textual frequency). It is reasonable to suppose that a sense of what is usual or *unusual or noticeable* in language is built up from a lifelong experience of linguistic use..."

c-(Leech & Short, 1981:48), "...if features can *register on a reader's mind* in his recognition of style, the degree to which they are salient will vary..."

d- (Leech & Short, 1981:49), "... the *threshold of response*"

e- (Leech & Short, 1981:131), "This punctuation would have made some difference to *the reader's processing* of the sentence... *dividing the reader's attention*..."

f- (Leech & Short, 1981:231), "The rhetoric of text, as we have considered it, is addressee-based: this means that the principles of good textual behaviour... have functions which can be explained in terms of the *reader's needs and responses*."

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On the ground of these studies and others², I will direct my analysis, pointing to their strength and weaknesses.

VI.1.3. Foregrounding

VI.1.3.1. Definition

As far as the present study is concerned, the term foregrounding and its implications will be considered in a broader sense, therefore including stylistics, text linguistics, and literary studies. The term was initially derived from the theory of aesthetics and language of the Czech School, “[*the concept is*] *certainly valuable, if not essential, for the study of poetic language*” (Leech in Freeman 1970:122) to later come to embody different meanings at the same time,

the ‘throwing into relief’ of the linguistic sign against the background of the norms of ordinary language...and within the literary text itself linguistic features can themselves be foregrounded, or ‘highlighted’, ‘made prominent’, for specific effects, against the (subordinated) background of the rest of the text..(Wales 2001:p.157)

It is also used to indicate a psycholinguistic process, “*to awaken the reader, by freeing him from the grooves of cliché expression, to a new ‘perceptivity’*” (Verdonk, 1989:247), through which during the reading act- something may be given special prominence, the latter effects on readers enabling them evaluate literary texts, or explain them historically or explain their importance and distinguish their cultural significance. More exactly, the term refers to the range of stylistic effects that occur in literature, whether at the prosodic level (e.g., alliteration, rhyme), the grammatical level (e.g., inversion, ellipsis), or semantic level e.g., metaphor, irony).

² See, for instance, Emmott (2006)

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VI.1.3.2. Properties

I will start with advancing that the difference between the language of literature and the ordinary language is not into the language itself but in the readers' minds, and the way they interpret it (see Fish in Tambling, 1988:39), yet my assumption is the following: the difference that distinguishes the ordinary from literary languages lies in the fact that the former is low in foregrounding devices and the latter is high in foregrounding devices. Outside literature language tends to be *automatized* using structures and meanings routinely and thus respecting the rules of grammar and coherence, whereas, within literature, this is opposed by devices which shake the automatism with which language is read, processed, or understood, thus, in this context two devices, those of ***Deviation*** and of ***Parallelism*** are distinguished.

Deviation corresponds to the traditional idea of poetic licence: the writer of literature is allowed-in contrast to the everyday speaker-to deviate from rules, maxims, or conventions. These may involve the language, as well as literary traditions or expectations set up by the text itself. The result is some degree of surprise in readers, and their attention is thereby drawn to the form of the text itself (rather than to its content). Cases of neologism, live metaphor or ungrammatical sentences, as well as archaisms, paradoxes, and oxymora (the traditional tropes) are clear examples of deviations.

Devices of parallelism are characterized by repetitive structures: (part of) a verbal configuration is repeated (or contrasted), thereby being promoted into the

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foreground of the reader's perception. E.g. rhyme assonance alliteration, meter, semantic symmetry, or antistrophe.

VI.1.4. Evolution of the Theory

It seems necessary to provide an overview of theoretical principles in the foregrounding approach in order to justify the reasons behind undertaking the present study. Fairly recent, the theory of foregrounding traces back its origin to Aristotle's *Poetics*, where the latter emphasizes the fact that the literary text is made according to specific rules, and in this process, devices of deviation and parallelism play an important role,

By contrast, diction is distinguished and out of the ordinary when it makes use of exotic expressions- by which I mean non-standard words, metaphor, lengthening, and any thing contrary to current usage. (Heath, 1996:36)

Actually, today's foregrounding theory could be seen as a more elaborate and systemised synthesis of Aristotle's view. The basis of the foregrounding stems from theories initially formulated by Coleridge and Shelly in the 19th century (in Miall & Kuiken,1994:391), and later developed by the Russian Formalists and the Prague Structuralists. It is important to stress that there has not been an intended continuity in the foundation principles of this theory, yet, when gathered, the various theories contributed to strengthen the concept. For Shklovsky, for instance, one of the primary functions of literature is to '*restore freshness*' to perception which has fallen into an overused perspective,

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The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived, and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception, because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important. (in Selden, 1985:11)

And carries further advancing,

This new attitude to objects in which, in the last analysis, the object becomes perceptible, is that artificiality which, in my opinion, creates art. A phenomenon, perceived many times, and no longer perceivable, or rather, the method of such dimmed perception, is what I call 'recognition' as opposed to 'seeing'. The aim of imagery, the aim of creating new art, is to return the object from 'recognition' to 'seeing'. (in Cook, 1994:131)

In this view, the immediate effect of foregrounding is to make strange (*ostranenie*)³, to make us see things anew and thus achieve *defamiliarization*.

According to Mukarovsky(1932/1964) then, the foregrounding phenomenon occurs randomly in the everyday language, at the expense of communication, which is the primary purpose of everyday language. The foregrounding features are not involved, and language is automatized. While, in literature, foregrounding's primary goal is to disrupt such everyday communication. In the latter, it tends to be systematic and hierarchical, that is similar features may be repeated and a set of features will dominate the others provoking a reaction in the reader, a phenomenon Jakobson termed "*the dominant*" (Cook, 1994:137),

Foregrounding is the opposite of automatization that is, the deautomatization of an act is automatized, the less it is consciously executed; the more it is foregrounded, the more completely conscious does it become. Objectively speaking: automatization schematizes an event; foregrounding means the violation of the scheme. (in Miall & Kuiken: 1994a:390)

³ "Ostranenie is a neologism created by nominalizing the Russian adjective for 'strange' and prefixing it with a morpheme denoting a process."(Cook, 1994:131)

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Therefore, Mukarovsky points out to the fact that literature does not aim at communication primarily, on the contrary, this act becomes secondary, leaving the reader's focus only on style:

In poetic language foregrounding achieves maximum intensity to the extent of pushing communication into the background as the objective of expression and of being used for its own sake; it is not used in the services of communication, but in order to place in the foreground the act of expression, the act of speech itself. (Id:390)

While Mukarovsky highlights the prominence of style in the readers' attention, he appears deliberately encouraging the confusion of content in style and style as content, which necessarily postpones communication continually,

According to our understanding, this concept of style emphasizes the contribution of 'form' to 'content', in brief, style is looked upon as 'meaning'.(Verdonk, 1989:251)

It is also clear, from a number of points in the writings of Coleridge, Shklovsky, and Mukarovsky, that they saw the defamiliarizing process as necessarily accompanied by feeling,

....the two cardinal points of poetry...are the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by modifying colours of imagination. (Coleridge in Miall & Kuiken,1994a:391).

In his turn, Shklovsky saw the presence of feeling as necessary to the *defamiliarizing* process. Put differently, Shklovsky proposed that a characteristic feature of literary writing is 'impeded form' and thus this difficulty of perception raises different kinds of emotions, "What is hard to come by attracts both interest and value."(Cook,1994:133)

To end with, Mukarovsky is also of the opinion that the power of imagery present in

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the language of literature proceeds inevitably to elevate readers to a state of feelings not present in ordinary discourse,

When used poetically, words and groups of words evoke a greater richness of images and feelings than if they were to occur in a communicative utterance” (Miall & Kuiken, 1994a:392).

Shared ideas by Shklovsky, Mukarovsky and Coleridge gave Miall & Kuiken(1994a) the opportunity to formulate the psychological process that the reader undergoes when encountering foregrounding. They advance that there is no doubt that foregrounding, by creating complexity of various kinds, requires cognitive work on the part of the reader; but it is their suggestion that the work is initiated and in part directed by feeling. (1994a:392)

Hence, my hypothesis sees in feeling a potential factor much stronger than any other cultural or personal characteristic of learners of literature in English background bound to help them engage genuinely in their “refamiliarizing” interpretive efforts and appreciate the aesthetic part of the engagement.

VI.1.5. Literature review of Foregrounding Theory Use in Practical Studies

In his study, Van Peer (1986) examined phonetic, grammatical, and semantic features in six short poems, and ranked the lines of each poem for the presence of foregrounding. For example, this opening line from a poem by Roethke, ranked high: “ *I have known the inexorable sadness of pencils.*” The pencils are personified; it contains an unusual word, “inexorable”; and repeated phonemes such as ‘n’ and ‘e’.

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Foregrounded features can be classed either as deviations from normal language use (e.g., a metaphor), or constitute an unusual parallelism (e.g., the use of rhyme, or repeated stress patterns). Among other tasks, readers were asked to rate the lines for strikingness⁴. Van Peer found that the mean ratings for strikingness were strongly predicted by the presence of foregrounding. This effect was obtained whether experienced or novice readers were involved.

Miall & Kuiken (1994.a) carried out a similar study with three modernist short stories. By means of four studies in which segment by segment reading times and ratings were collected from readers of three different short stories, Miall & Kuiken not only provide empirical support for linguistic components, but also for psychological ones. As for the testing of linguistic aspects, they confirm and extend Van Peer's previous observations (1986) as they investigated the relation between responses to foregrounding and qualities such as strikingness, importance and discussion value. They found a relation between foregrounding and reading time, strikingness, and affect. Again, this effect was also found whether readers were experienced, senior students of literature, or whether they were relatively unskilled readers.

Also concerned with investigating the psychological process a reader undergoes when encountering foregrounding, the proposed originality, Miall & Kuiken (1994a) suggest that a central part of the constructive work required by readers of a literary text is initiated at the moment they react affectively in response to

⁴ I will come back to 'strikingness' and explain how the latter is the first effect of foregrounding as perceived by readers.

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stylistically remarkable elements. They propose the notion of *refamiliarization*, a process which has been described by Harker(1996) as the readers' "reattentional activity". The problem is that this concept overlooks the contribution of feeling. Refamiliarization refers to "*an intra and/or extra textual revision or re-evaluation in order to discern, delimit or develop the novel meanings suggested by the foregrounded passages*"(in Miall & Kuiken, 1994a: 394). They propose, also, that,

in general, such reconsideration of the text surrounding foregrounded features will be guided by the feelings that have been evoked in response to those features.....The feelings accentuated while reading foregrounded passages sensitise the reader to other passages having similar affective connotations"(1994a:395).

In more explicit words, they propose that the novelty of an unusual linguistic variation is *defamiliarizing*, *defamiliarization* evokes feelings, and feelings guide *refamiliarizing* interpretive efforts (1994a:392).

In this study, Miall & Kuiken provide evidence that response to foregrounding is independent of literary competence or experience. This way, they suggest that foregrounding achieves its effect in relation to norms of language use outside literature, rather than norms established by especially trained communities with particular understanding of the literary, as stated by Fish(1980). Their assumption seems to fit the expectation of today's vision about literature, in that; they claim that there is nothing intrinsically literary about literary texts. At the end they suggest that the sequence *defamiliarization-feeling-refamiliarization* is distinctive of the literary domain.

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In addition to the interesting number of studies which has been undertaken relying on the theory of foregrounding and which, in fact, confirm the validity of the theory (see Van Peer, 2007), the development of the theory itself should be highlighted. After having initially started with one primary objective which is that of analysing the reading effects (principles close to the Formalists), such as the surprise effect of foregrounding, further studies went to back up some notions like the notion of *retardation* by Shklovsky, which at that time sounded too abstract. For the time being, or more exactly for the present studies, mainly Miall & Kuiken(1994a) and Sopak(in Van Peer, 2007), it has been found that readers indeed slow down their reading speed under the influence of the present foregrounding devices in the text. It can be advanced then that the theory has been reinforced by testable data that allowed it to strengthen. More interestingly, is the addition of the *affect* dimension by Miall & Kuiken (1994b). A fascinating finding is the one which has demonstrated that the accumulation of foregrounding devices prompt the affective part in the reader.

Another point to be underlined is the attempt to project the impact of foregrounding theory in other fields. Hakemulder (in Van Peer, 2007) investigated the impact of foregrounded elements in films on viewers, and interestingly enough, he could empirically demonstrate former results on literary texts and could open research relying on foregrounding in other fields.

In his turn, Miall(2007) extends the theory of foregrounding by associating it to the concept of the sublime. He defines the concept of the sublime as being rooted in defamiliarization, and states:

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Commentators have spoken of the moment of sublime experience as one of amazement, of being overwhelmed by the strikingness of the sublime appearance. The sublime, in other words, is the effect of defamiliarization. (Miall, 2007:156)

and, thus it should be seen as a special emanation of foregrounding. In other words, Miall seems to suggest that if poets were to embody the sublime experience in language (i.e., poetic sublime), they would expect the resources of linguistic foregrounding to be central to their efforts. The defamiliarizing moment would be, in fact, central to the modern conception of the response to foregrounding. (Id:156).

Colin Martindale's contribution brings this one step further, by predicting the direction in which literary history would move, and presenting the empirical evidence in favour of this claim. He hypothesises that stylistic innovation alternates with regression to alter states of mind to produce an ever-increasing line of novelty. (In Van Peer, 2007)

In his turn, Paul Sopcak is innovative. Previous studies of foregrounding correlated readers' responses to analyses of foregrounding density in texts. Sopcak compares readers' reactions to different stages in the production of a literary text. In particular, he made readers respond to excerpts from the different manuscript stages of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Over several aspects (surprise, affect, and reading time), readers' reactions correlated to the amount of foregrounding analysed in the text excerpts.(in Van Peer, 2007)

Van Peer & al. go further and hypothesise that if foregrounding theory is correct, the more foregrounding a line has, the stronger must be the correlation with readers'

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judgements (Van Peer, 2007:101). Hence, they created six different versions of one single line of poetry, at each stage taking out one more deviation, so that six ‘degrees’ of foregrounding were obtained. Readers were asked to rate these lines (either in isolation or in pair lines) on a number of aspects: aesthetic appreciation, evaluation of aesthetic structure, perceived cognitive, emotive, social and attitudinal impact. The study revealed, in fact, that it was not an easy task, yet, the results obtained were encouraging, in that they partly confirmed the predictions on foregrounding impact already done.

Olivia Fialho’s(2007) study remains one of the most interesting studies to my sense, since it is one of the first large-scale empirical studies of foregrounding conducted outside the English speaking world, carried out as it were in Brazil. The finding provided from the study could encourage the undertaking of similar studies on different kinds of learners, mainly non-native ones. It, in fact, represents one of the first qualitative investigations of readers’ reactions to foregrounding and an interesting further development of Miall & Kuiken’s concept of refamiliarization. Readers were requested to introspectively reflect on the story they were reading. Her concern did not fall so much with defamiliarization, but rather on the strategies that readers employ in the interest of refamiliarization. In fact, very little has been done so as to understand how readers incorporate the foregrounding features into their model of reality. Surprisingly, the results demonstrated that the appreciation of the formal elements of the text presents such a recurring refamiliarization strategy; one that, even more surprisingly, makes readers develop a new perspective on the world

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around them. The study remains also one of the first that offers an insight into the strategies that readers bring to the interpretation of foregrounding.

VI.1.6. Foregrounding: the theory between a highly promising future and limitations

IV.1.6.1. Discussion

In what follows, there will be a tentative depiction of some studies which present evidence against foregrounding theory, thus showing some of its limitations.

First of all, the relation between foregrounding and the evaluation of texts remains unclear. For instance, when readers focus on the way a text is written rather than its content, is it a matter of convention or an effect that can be attributed to text properties? The contribution of Shen(2007) searched for the existing constraints on the theory. The latter argues that the foregrounding theory rests on the assumption that deviations of the kind typically encountered in literary texts interfere with cognitive and communicative principles, and thus render communication possible between poet and reader (2007:169). While I would not venture into this controversial issue, little attention has been given to the question of whether there are constraints operating over such deviations and whether all kinds of deviations are to be expected? On the basis of a corpus analysis of the devices of simile and oxymoron, Shen replied negatively to the question raised earlier. He could demonstrate that while the two figures vary in complexity, poetic discourse, both cross-linguistically and cross-culturally, as well as cross-historically, clearly favours the simpler type of the device, thus proposing to complement the theory of foregrounding with a theory of cognitive constraints, and which in fact requires further research (2007:180).

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The argument so far held that in “literary language”, foregrounding is structured and, according to the Russian formalists and Miall & Kuiken (1994a), the material presence of devices of foregrounding leads the reader in their textual interpretation and fulfilment of their aesthetic needs. Therefore, one question comes to mind: *Is the response to foregrounding always responsible for enhancing in the reader a positive reaction?* As a matter of fact I assume the answer would be: *no, or not necessarily*. No indication has been given concerning the nature of feeling generated as a result to an acquaintance with foregrounded passages. Hence, are all literary texts, with different degrees of foregrounding, able to generate the same amount of pleasure and interest?, or are all kinds of readers, regardless of their literary training, ready to respond to the literary texts in a similar way?

The other crucial point that may appear problematic is the importance of convention in shaping the reading process. We may, seriously, wonder whether an Algerian student who has no notion of metaphysical poetry could understand a poem by John Donne? Yet, we have for so long a time been reminded by the cultural obstacles that impede the process of comprehension of a literary text, that we have never ventured and allowed that same student the opportunity to experience an aesthetic exchange which might, in fact be satisfactory. Thus, reflection on the empirical vision of literary conventions which, actually, aims at restricting its controlling effect on the reader, deserves systematic research in a context where literary conventions are absent.

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VI.1.7. Foregrounding and its Effects

In the following part of my discussion, room will be devoted to review the most relevant empirical studies which have examined the effects of foregrounding on the emergence of feelings and on the readers' process to build the necessary refamiliarizing strategies likely to construct an understanding.

VI.1.7.1. Foregrounding responsible for Strikingness

Early theorists of foregrounding and empirical researchers on literature agreed on the prominence of certain stylistic features that characterize literary texts and succeeded in proving that the latter strike readers and call for their attention. It is on the present argument, for instance, that Hunt & Vipond (1985) built their studies. In fact, they got inspired from an earlier study conducted by Labov (1972)⁵ and in which he examined what he called "discourse deviation". Similarly to Labov's study, Hunt & Vipond concentrated on the analysis of textual features as words, phrases, or events which are found to differ from the norm of the text and could convey the narrator's evaluation of the story characters and the unfolding of events. Hence, the distinctiveness of the research remains noteworthy since it proceeded through two levels of investigation. It first proposed the short story selected in its original form to readers and rated the phrases that struck them most and impacted on them. Second, it proceeded to a manipulation of the story so that those phrases that could arouse strikingness because highly foregrounded would be rewritten in a simpler and more

⁵ Note that the information concerning Labov (1972) and Vipond & Hunt (1985) was taken from Vipond & Hunt (1988).

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accessible way. The difference was clearly perceptible in that the original form of the story which kept the presence of foregrounding elements rated the highest level of strikingness among readers. Actually, Van Peer's(1986)⁶ study represents the core essence of Miall & Kuiken's⁷(1994) extended research because it showed that readers' literary background or competence is of no necessary need to determine the striking aspect of the phrases⁸. It, furtherly, shows that foregrounding is a result and not a construct that requires literary strength.

VI.1.7.2. The Relationship Foregrounding/ Reading Time

Everyday language is perceived easily and does neither strike nor calls for affect⁹, thus it is presumed that foregrounded passages; those which supposedly strike and call for affect, do logically require a longer time to be perceived. The prolonged reflection on the phonetic variations, for instance, which could require the use of a vocal articulation is necessarily time consuming and contributes to lengthen the reading time. Whereas, at the grammatical level, features like inversion or ellipsis may be responsible for comprehension difficulties, thus impeding the course of reading time. At the semantic level, the distortions of language like metaphors and personification and whose objective most of the time is to disguise ideas, do also

⁶ In the preceding part of this section, I have described in detail Van Peer's study of the six short poems.

⁷ One of the several reasons of my support of Miall & Kuiken's study is their use of short stories which may be implemented in the context of the present experience.

⁸ Another research could be added to reinforce the effects of Foregrounding on readers, the one of Harker(1996).

⁹ Note that the debate literary vs. literal language is so much controversial, yet, as mentioned previously, for the purposes of the study it is assumed that literary language is the language that contains a high array of foregrounding features.

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require longer time to be deciphered. In general, what is noticeable is that literary language engages with the reader in a process of comprehension usually longer and more complex than the engagement with an ordinary language. Part of this lengthy reading time process is the endeavour of the reader to situate the feelings generated in a context of understanding; what Miall & Kuiken call ‘refamiliarization’.

VI.1.7.3. Foregrounding generating Affect

One account of Vipond & Hunt (1985) and Van Peer (1986) studies refers to their lack of consideration of feeling while examining readers’ reaction to foregrounded passages. Despite the fact that they both proved strikingness as an unavoidable result of the presence of foregrounding features, they could not extend their investigation to explain the process post strikingness, which according to Miall & Kuiken is highly evocative of feelings; responsible for the construction of the comprehension process. Interestingly, Miall & Kuiken found their study on a research undertaken by Kutas & Halliyard (1982) which advanced that: “... *reading foregrounded text accentuates activity in cortical areas specialised in affect..*”(in Miall & Kuiken 1994a:396) They succeeded in showing that patients with right-hemispheric damage have difficulty understanding the meaning of metaphors. (see Winner & Gardner, 1977 for further information). Naturally, these ill-structured persons¹⁰ cannot experience the feelings that could emerge when foregrounded texts prompt defamiliarization. In addition, a former study conducted by Miall (1992)

¹⁰ I am using this personal terminology in order to distinguish ordinary readers from deficient ones.

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exposed all the noun phrases initially present in a line of poetry and surrounded with foregrounding separately to a number of readers. The analysis of the questionnaires given to the readers after, showed that a higher rate of feeling is generated, while the noun phrases are encountered within the line of poetry, than the amount of feeling when the noun phrases are encountered separately.

Thus, Miall & Kuiken's study came to confirm that affect takes part in the process post reading of foregrounded passages and accompanies strikingness in the process of construction of meaning.

It is in the light of the above studies, and most particularly in the light of studies which inquire about the impact of foregrounding on readers and the nature of *affect* generated after reading literary texts that I have directed my investigation. Actually, Miall and Kuiken's study does not provide satisfactory answers to contexts of reading literature in a foreign language or for readers of this same literature, hence my determination to experience these hypotheses in an Algerian university context of teaching English studies. Part II aims at providing answers to the following questions:

- 1- Is foregrounding responsible for generating response in Algerian readers of literary text written in English?
 - 2- Which kind of feeling does foregrounding generate then?
-
-

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I.2. Demonstration

Introduction

It is the same objective that nurtures the running of the present study; that of finding clues to how literary response is generated and what stimulates that response. In the previous parts of this study, priority was devoted to empirically enhance the point that young Algerian readers tend to favour short stories as their most appreciated literary genre, and that literary competence is not the key element to an appreciation of a text of literature regardless of its status of canonicity within the literary circle, even when written in a non-native language. Hence, a more specific aspect will be put under scrutiny in the following part of the study aiming at highlighting the relationship language/affect in the construction of a literary response.

In my analysis of the different recent researches undertaken in the field, I have come across an interesting Brazilian study conducted by Olivia Fialho¹¹ whose implementation stimulated the present study. The study at stake was nurtured by previous studies which demonstrated that Brazilian students developed an *emotional distance*¹² from literary texts(Barreto, J.J.; Fialho, O.C., 2006) hence assuming that if literary discourse has a particular effect on the mind, refreshing and changing the reader's mental representations of the world (Cook, 1994:1) and if feeling is a central part of the constructive work required by the reader of the literary text (Miall &

¹¹ A detailed description of Fialho's study is provided in the part *Foregrounding: Evolution of the Theory*.

¹² "This type of text [literary] is considered a challenge, a hard task for them to perform that they do not experience pleasure as they are not able to overcome the difficulties they face. This study seems to confirm previous studies..., indicating once again that students do not have a positive response towards literary texts and tend to build an emotional and critical distance towards them."(Barreto & Fialho, 2006: 9)

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Kuiken, 1994: 392), further research should concentrate on the question of how feelings can work towards making the literary experience memorable for readers. Hence, the major concern of Fialho lied in describing the different strategies readers use while striving to find an interpretation of the literary text they are reading.

In this view of things, the relevance of Fialho's study to my own study might appear in its examination of literary reading within a perspective that involves both *cognitive* and *affective* parts of the reading process.(Id:107) Apparently for the first time, to my knowledge, readings of Algerian readers of literature written in English would be examined under such a perspective which, actually, would disregard the held and already established prerequisites related to culture and which operate most of the time as obstacles to genuine appreciation of literary texts in a foreign language. On the contrary, such a perspective does not take into account the external factors that might intervene to affect the reading process and favours an inherent relationship with the text itself.

To understand the psychological processes readers undergo in response to foregrounding, Fialho proposes a *linguistic-psychological-aesthetical* model suggesting a cycle which is graphically displayed in Figure 6.1. She explains that 'psychological' refers to any aspect that does not relate to the physical. Interestingly, her cycle overlaps both cognition and affect. By 'cognitive', she refers to the intellect, to perception, thought, knowledge, or memory as related to mental constructions. Figure 6.1. illustrates the assumption that the *initial reading* produces a *first comprehension* of what is being read. At this moment, readers are affected by

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*foregrounding*¹³, provoking *defamiliarization* in its psychological mode. The feelings produced by foregrounded passages sensitize readers to other words in the text, to personal memories or world knowledge, with similar affective connotations, directing their attention to pieces of information considered important for interpretation. Readers, then, make a cognitive effort to *refamiliarize* by means of *refamiliarizing strategies*, that is, to locate familiar ground. This process leads to construct a *second comprehension* of the text. As readers reorganise mental structures, they develop a new comprehension and a new perspective involving both cognitive and affective engagements. Readers develop a renewed aesthetic perspective and experience a sense of the text as a whole. The same cycle may occur recursively through reading thus modifying readers and that is why it is not closed. (Fialho, 2007)

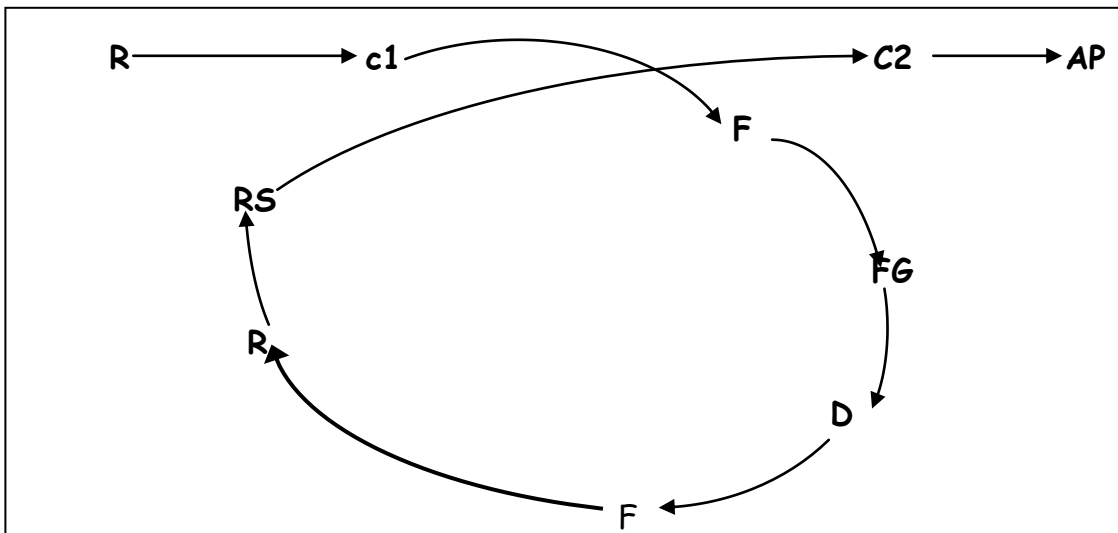


Figure 6.1. Linguistic- psychological-aesthetical cycle of refamiliarization (2007:107)
 R→ reading; C1→ comprehension 1; F → feeling; FG→ foregrounding;
 D→ defamiliarization; F→ feelings; R→ Refamiliarization; RS → refamiliarizing strategies; C2→comprehension 2; AP→ aesthetic perspective

¹³ Foregrounding does not exist per se and comes about in the reading process throughout the linguistic manifestations.

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VI.2.1. Methodology

VI.2.1.1. Participants

As already explained, the participants who were involved in the series of experiments I undertook were twenty four volunteer 3rd year students of English from the university of Mostaganem. As they received three lectures of literature per week; British, American, and African literatures, it was expected that such participants would have been somehow sensitised to literary reading and would embark upon the last stage of experimentation without any *apriori*. Their ages vary from 19 to 31 years old and the majority was females¹⁴. These same students have already been investigated as regards their ability to appreciate texts of literature written in English and were to be used to scrutinize van Peer (1986), Miall and Kuiken's (1994), and Fialho (2007) observation that readers' response, Algerian readers responses' then, to a foregrounded text, is independent of background or literary interest.

Five evaluators, myself, two teachers whose interests fall within the stylistic study of language from the university of Mostaganem, and two post-graduate researchers, also participated in this study. They classified the texts selected for this study according to foregrounding and analysed the literary quality of such texts.

¹⁴ Based on a system of voluntary participation to the different experimentations, the sampling procedure was generally female dominant and that could be explained by the statistical finding which advances that there is one male student for six female students at the department of English at the University of Mostaganem. Furthermore, I noticed more enthusiasm and eagerness from the part of female students to undertake the experimentation stage. Females were ready to devote enough time and energy to the unfolding of the experiment and did not consider what they could obtain in return of such efforts, nor any rewarding.

IV.2.1.2. Methodology Procedures

The methodology employed in this study is both qualitative and quantitative. A method similar to the one used by Miall and Kuiken (1994) and Fialho(2007) for material selection and foregrounding analysis of texts was applied. The short story used in this study was *The Kiss* by Kate Chopin(1894) which contained 1088 words so that it could be used in a single one hour reading session. The story contained a variety of features that could be perceived as foregrounding. The story was then divided into roughly equal segments using sentence division. The number of segments per story was 54.

The five evaluators responded to a questionnaire. They were asked to read the entire text at one go without segmentation and then analysed each segment of the story for the presence of foregrounded features (at the phonetic, grammatical, and semantic levels). They also judged the literary quality of the text using their own criteria, responding on a five-point scale. It was found, however, that judgments of which features were identified as foregrounding sometimes varied: for instance, one evaluator might select alliteration [k]sounds as significant, while the other selected [s]sounds, thus, it appeared that individual differences in either sensibility or preference were playing a role in judgments of foregrounding that should not be disregarded. Nonetheless, it was found that judges tended to agree on which segments contained a larger or smaller array of features at all levels. A consensual list of foregrounded features was drawn up in Table 6.1.

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The amount of foregroundings within each segment was based on this list and was used as an index of foregrounding. In order to rate segments according to the amount of foregrounding features, a proposed ranking divided the segments to three categories: segments with high index of foregrounding (from position 1 to 7), segments with medium index of foregrounding (from position 8 to 13), and finally segments with low index of foregrounding (from position 14 to 19).

VI.2.1.3. The Kiss: The Short Story

The Kiss is a text considered modernist and recounts the story of the young Nathalie who is plotting to marry the good-natured but unattractive and rather insignificant Brantain while maintaining an affair with Mr Harvy.

Unlike most of the heroines of Chopin's stories, Nathalie does not face any emotional trials or true mental conflict. Instead, she acts as a woman who has already realised her potential ability to satisfy her desires and who now tries to adjust the actions of those around her in order to suit her wishes. More seriously, Nathalie is portrayed sympathetically in that we come to applaud her skill in turning bad luck into a *coup de grace*; what initially appears to be the destruction of her carefully arranged engagement turns into an opportunity to carry on her affair right in front of her husband. Later, when Harvy ironically fails to become one of her pawns, she shows her practical side and acknowledges her defeat, not only without rancour but even with an almost amused, philosophic resignation. The plot of the short story could be considered simple and the themes are by no means uncanny. (See appendix II)

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Table 6.1. Illustration of the questionnaire responded to by the evaluators and foregrounding analysis of all the segments of *The Kiss*

Foregrounding Analysis

- I. Read the entire text at once without any interruption
- II. The text you have just read is now divided into segments. Indicate, if you think they exist, the textual elements that draw your attention. Identify such elements according to the following classification: phonetic (alliteration, for instance) syntactic-grammatical (syntactic inversion, repetitions, for instance) or semantic(metaphors, neologisms, for instance) levels. The classification is not exclusive. Each element may be classified according to different levels.(See the Table below)

Segments	Phonetic	Grammatical	Semantic	n°=F.F/Position
[1]It was still quite light out of doors, but inside with the curtains drawn and the smouldering fire sending out a dim, uncertain glow, the room was full of deep shadows.	s x 5 d x 8 ai x 3	2 sub.phrases	Oppo: light/dim Out/inside	20/3
[2]Brantain sat in one of these shadows; it had overtaken him and he did not mind.	h x 3 d x 6 æ x 3	1 compound sent. 2 independent clauses	Met. these shadows	16/6
[3]The obscurity lent him courage to keep his eyes fastened as ardently as he liked upon the girl who sat in the firelight.	ai x 3 k x 4	1 relative clause	Oppo: Obscurity/firelight Personification	10/12
[4]She was very	b x 2 n x 6	Adj: handsome,	Comparison	16/12

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handsome, with a certain fine, rich colouring that belongs to the healthy brune type.		fine, rich, healthy, brune 2 sub. Phrases		
[5]She was quite composed, as she idly stroked the satiny coat of the cat that lay curled in her lap, and she occasionally sent a slow glance into the shadow where her companion sat.	Alli.kx2 l x 6 t x 8 s x 6	Complex sent.	Met. satiny coat	24/1
[6]They were talking low, of indifferent things which plainly were not the things that occupied their thoughts.	θ x 3	1 simple phrase, 1 sub. Phrase 1 relative clause Rep. things	Emphasis through the use of plainly	8/14
[7]She knew that he loved her-a frank, blustering fellow without guile enough to conceal his feelings, and no desire to do so.	l x 6 f x 4	2 phrases Adj: frank, blustering		14/8
[8]For two weeks past he had sought her	s x 6 t x 6 ly x 2	The use of "For" with the past perfect	Emphasis by the use of adv	13/9

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society eagerly and persistently.				
[9]She was confidently waiting for him to declare himself and she meant to accept him.	t x 6	The use of the past simple with past continuous	Emphasis: confidently	8/14
[10]The rather insignificant and unattractive Brantain was enormously rich; and she liked and required the entourage which wealth could give her.	k x 5 ai x 2	Compound sentence Inversion: which wealth could give her.	Irony	10/12
[11]During one of the pauses between their talk of the last tea and the next reception the door opened and a young man entered whom Brantain knew quite well.	O: x 3	Complex sentence		4/18
[12]The girl turned her face toward him.	≈: x 2	Simple sentence		3/19
[13]A stride or two brought him to her side, and bending over her chair--	h x 7 s x 5 b x 2 ai x 3	Complex sentence		16/6

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before she could suspect his intention, for she did not realize that he had not seen her visitor-				
[14]he pressed an ardent, lingering kiss upon her lips.	p x 3 s x 3	Adj: ardent, lingering Simple sentence		9/13
[15]Brantain slowly arose; so did the girl arise, but quickly, and the newcomer stood between them, a little amusement and some defiance struggling with the confusion in his face.	z x 5 s x 5	Complex sentence Inversion: so did the girl arise...	Met. ...some defiance struggling	13/9
[16]"I believe," stammered Brantain, "I see that I have stayed too long."	S x 3	Direct speech		4/18
[17]"I--I had no idea--that is, I must wish you good-by." He was clutching his hat with both hands,	ai x 5 h x 4	Rep. "I" Simple sentence		11/11
[18]and probably did	p x 2 h x 3	Relative clause		6/16

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not perceive that she was extending her hand to him,				
[19] her presence of mind had not completely deserted her; but she could not have trusted herself to speak.	H x 5	Compound Sentence	Metonymy: presence of mind may refer to part of her conscience	7/15
[20]"Hang me if I saw him sitting there, Nattie! I know it's deuced awkward for you.	i x 8 s x 4	Dialogue Exclamatory sentence	The use of the word deuced (which refers to tennis jargon)	15/7
[21]But I hope you'll forgive me this once—this very first break. Why, what's the matter?"	f x 2 w x 2	Dialogue	Met. break(for mistake)	6/16
[22]"Don't touch me; don't come near me," she returned angrily.	D x 3	Imperative sentence Rep: don't/ me	Emphasis: angrily	6/16
[23]"What do you mean by entering the house without ringing?"	Rhyme: entering/ringing	Dialogue Interrogative sentence		3/19
[24]"I came in with your brother, as I often do," he answered	K x 3	Dialogue 1 compound sentence	Emphasis: coldly, in self justification	7/15

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coldly, in self-justification.				
[25]"We came in the side way. He went upstairs and I came in here hoping to find you. The explanation is simple enough and ought to satisfy you that the misadventure was unavoidable.	W x 3 h x 3 f x 2	Dialogue 2 sentences Rep: came		12/16
[26]But do say that you forgive me, Nathalie," he entreated, softening.		Dialogue Insisting: do say	Emphasis: softening	3/19
[27]"Forgive you! You don't know what you are talking about. Let me pass. It depends upon-a good deal whether I ever forgive you."	D x 5	Dialogue Complex sentence Exclamatory Sent. Imperative Sent.		9/13
[28]At that next reception which she and Brantain had been talking about she approached the young man with a delicious	S x 3	Complex sent. 1 relative clause Inversion: she and Brantain	Delicious frankness of manner?	7/15

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frankness of manner when she saw him there.				
[29]"Will you let me speak to you a moment or two, Mr. Brantain?" she asked with an engaging but perturbed smile.	M x 4	Dialogue Interrogative sent.	Oxymoron: Engaging/ perturbed smile	7/15
[30]He seemed extremely unhappy; but when she took his arm and walked away with him, seeking a retired corner, a ray of hope mingled with the almost comical misery of his expression.	Rhyme: away/ ray w x 3	Complex sentence, many subordinate phrases	Personification and metaphor: a ray of hope mingled Oxymoron: comical misery	9/13
[31]She was apparently very outspoken.	p x 2	Simple sentence		3/19
[32]"Perhaps I should not have sought this interview, Mr. Brantain; but--but, oh, I have been very uncomfortable, almost miserable	b x 7 able x 2	Dialogue Complex sentence Repetition: but Adj. : uncomfortable, miserable		14/8

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since that little encounter the other afternoon. When I thought how you might have misinterpreted it, and believed things" –				
[33]-hope was plainly gaining the ascendancy over misery in Brantain's round, guileless face-	l x 4	Simple sentence Adj: round, guileless	Personification: hope was plainly gaining	8/14
[34]-"Of course, I know it is nothing to you, but for my own sake I do want you to understand that Mr. Harvy is an intimate friend of long standing. Why, we have always been like cousins-- like brother and sister, I may say.	w x 6 s x 6 z x 4	Dialogue Complex sentence Emphasis: I do want...	Simile: like cousins-like brother and sister	22/2
[35]He is my brother's most intimate associate and often fancies that he is entitled to the same	M x 5 f x 3 t x 8	Dialogue Compound sentence		18/4

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privileges as the family.				
[36]Oh, I know it is absurd, uncalled for, to tell you this; undignified even," she was almost weeping,	Rhyme: Absurd/uncalled/undignified	<u>Dialogue</u> <u>Many Sub.</u> <u>Phrases</u>		5/17
[37]"but it makes so much difference to me what you think of--of me."	m x 4	<u>Dialogue</u> <u>Rept. Of</u>		6/16
[38]Her voice had grown very low and agitated.	w x 2	Simple sentence Adj: low, agitated		5/17
[39]The misery had all disappeared from Brantain's face.	m x 2 f x 2			4/18
[40]"Then you do really care what I think, Miss Nathalie?"	k x 2	Dialogue Word order: you do really.... Interrogative sentence		5/17
[41]May I call you Miss Nathalie?"	m x 2	Dialogue Interrogative sentence		4/18
[42]They turned into a long, dim corridor that was lined on either side with tall,	l x 8 ai x 2	Adj.: long, dim, tall, graceful		14/8

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graceful plants. They walked slowly to the very end of it.				
[43]When they turned to retrace their steps Brantain's face was radiant and hers was triumphant.	r x 8 f x 2 s x 4 rhyme: radiant/triumphant	Relative clause		17/5
[44]Harvy was among the guests at the wedding; and he sought her out in a rare moment when she stood alone.	S x 4 w x 2	Compound sentence		7/15
[45]"Your husband," he said, smiling, "has sent me over to kiss you."	S x 4 z x 2	Dialogue	Emphasis: smiling	8/14
[46]A quick blush suffused her face and round polished throat.	∫ x 2 f x 2	Adj.: quick, round, polished		7/15
[47]"I suppose it's natural for a man to feel and act generously on an occasion of this kind.	s x 4 f x 2	Dialogue Simple sentence		8/14
[48] He tells me he doesn't want his	z x 5 m x 4	Dialogue	Met. pleasant intimacy	11/11

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marriage to interrupt wholly that pleasant intimacy which has existed between you and me.				
[49]I don't know what you've been telling him," with an insolent smile, "but he has sent me here to kiss you."	s x 4	Dialogue Compound sentence	Emphasis: insolent smile	7/15
[50]She felt like a chess player who, by the clever handling of his pieces, sees the game taking the course intended.	Rhyme: handling/taking s x 4 z x 2	Complex sentence 1 relative clause 2 subordinate phrases	Simile: like a chess player	13/9
[51]Her eyes were bright and tender with a smile as they glanced up into his; and her lips looked hungry for the kiss which they invited.	ai x 4 s x 3	Compound sentence Adj.: bright, tender, hungry	Personification and euphemism: her lips looked hungry	13/9
[52]"But, you know," he went on quietly, "I didn't tell him	S x 5	Dialogue Complex sentence.	Emphasis: quietly	8/14

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so, it would have seemed ungrateful, but I can tell you. I've stopped kissing women; it's dangerous."				
[53]Well, she had Brantain and his million left.	h x 2	Simple sentence		3/19
[54]A person can't have everything in this world; and it was a little unreasonable of her to expect it.	n x 6 w x 2	Declarative, compound sentence	Metonymy: world may refer to life	11/11

III. Now, classify the text according to its literary quality, indicating the number that better corresponds to your opinion. The text is: Non-literary 1 2 3 4 5 literary

VI.2.1.4. Research Tools

The qualitative part¹⁵ of the research was carried out as follows. In order to study the de-automatization of perception due the defamiliarization experienced by readers, thus impeding reading, readers were asked first to read the entire text at once silently. Then, these same readers were presented the text divided into roughly equal segments

¹⁵ O.Fialho (2007) instead used the Pause Protocol Technique as devised by Cavalcanti (1987). The technique consisted in presenting the text without segmentation and if the readers paused while they were reading, they were asked to interrupt their reading immediately. At this moment, they should: 1- locate the element or segment that caused impact, underline it and read it aloud; 2- relate to the interviewer the reason why the element or segment drew their attention; 3- if the pause in their reading was caused by problems they had to solve, they were asked to try to 'think aloud' while they looked for a solution.

Despite the advantages of the Pause Protocol Technique for my experiment, It was not possible for me to use it since first it required a subsequent number of interviewers that I could not provide, and second it was assumed that the technique would increase the amount of anxiety and as such would disturb the reading activity.

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and were asked to read each segment separately and assess its direct or indirect relevance to the unfolding of the story. The instrument used was a 3 point Likert-scale rating from 1: highly important, to 3: non-important. (See appendix V)

In judging the segments for *importance*, it was aimed at highlighting the most prominent segments according to the readers' appreciation and then proceeding to a comparison with the most foregrounded segments already decided by the evaluators and check whether they are the same. Put differently, it was assumed that the segments containing the highest array of foregrounding features would be those considered most important by the readers. Implementing such a tool was also premised under the assumption that readers would judge the segments separately without being aware of the different foregrounded features present per segment and as such my hypothesis would benefit from the status of reliability. Afterwards, readers were asked to provide written comments on their responses to the story as a whole, before and after undertaking ratings.

Despite my intentions to preserve the 'ecology' of reading, it was acknowledged that the anxiety of readers in such a context would gain the study. In order to control variables like this, participants were encouraged to put their feelings to the fore in relation to the test situation in general as they finished their reading. Such information helped subsequent analysis of the data.

VI.2.2.1. Analytical Framework

VI.2.2.1. A. Results and Discussion

In an attempt to check whether the segments containing the highest array of foregrounding features were the ones judged highly important by readers, the results obtained after experimentation are illustrated in Figures 6.2. and 6.3. bellow. The evaluators' findings qualified the text as *literary* and agreed on the distribution of the number of foregrounding features per segment as shown in Figure 6.2.,

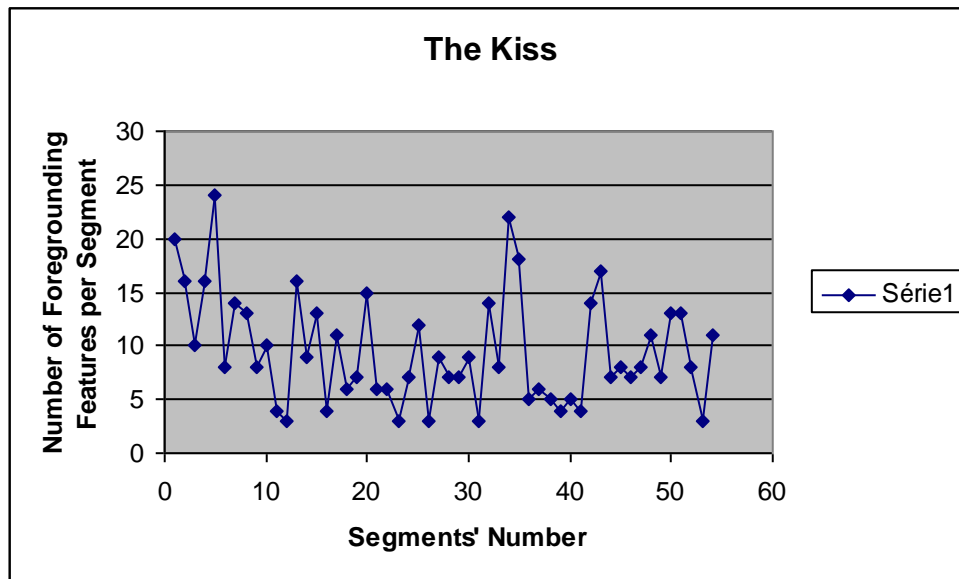


Figure 6.2. Evaluators' Distribution of Foregrounding Features per Segment in *The Kiss*

The figure highlights segments n°= 1, 2, 4, 5, 13, 20, 34, 35, and 43 as being the segments containing the highest array of foregrounding features. Actually, the proposed ranking methodology helped distinguish 9 segments upon 54 rated segments containing a high index of foregrounding, 29 segments containing a medium index of foregrounding and 16 segments containing a low index of

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foregrounding. As previously stated, foregrounding is considered cumulatively; in the sense that a segment is weighed according to the sum of its phonetic, grammatical, and semantic deviations.

In their turn, readers' judgments of segments' importance of the short story *The Kiss*- a process quite similar to Miall & Kuiken (1994.a) and Van Peer (1986)' concept of *Strikingness*-, provided interesting ground of analysis. At first it should not be dismissed that these judgments were the results of an authentic interaction reader/text that was not influenced by the evaluators' findings. The experiment was held separately with a particular care to preserve the authenticity of the context of reading. Figure 6.3. shows the Mean of importance attributed to each segment by the readers,

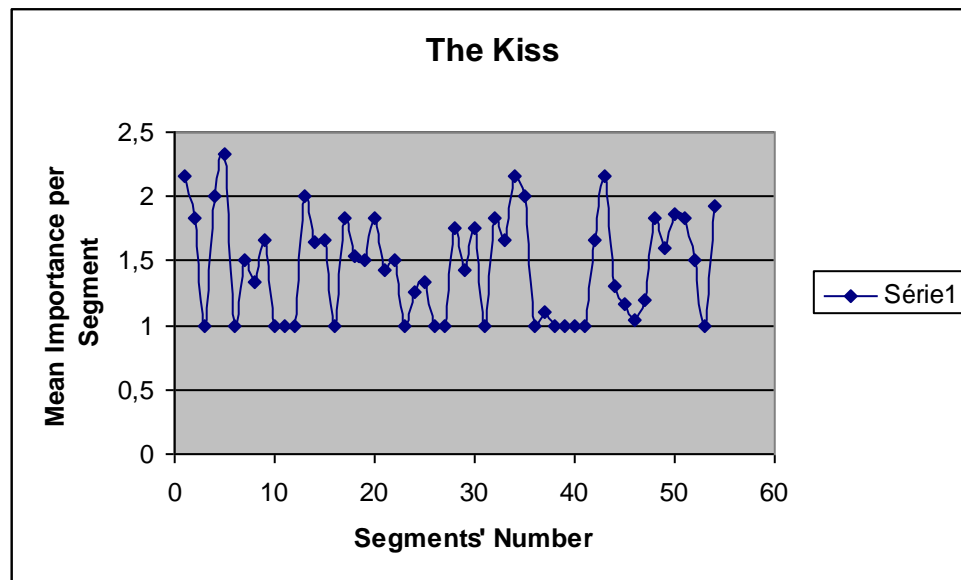


Figure 6.3. Readers' Mean Importance Distribution per Segment in *The Kiss*

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As expected, the figure highlights a number of segments judged highly important and which appear to be the same already decided by the evaluators as being the ones containing the highest array of foregrounding. Segments 1, 4, 5, 13, 34, 35, and 43 are the segments obtaining a Mean ≥ 2 and thus ranged the most important segments by the readers. Figure 6.4. shows the found similarities between the evaluators' findings and the readers' judgments; notably segments 1, 4, 5, 34, 35, and 43 and as such might offer an interesting spectrum of speculation.

The present experiment was premised under the assumption that readers would find highly important the segments which were to be rated highly foregrounded by the evaluators. Put differently, early theories of foregrounding demonstrated that segments with a high array of foregrounding features are the ones that call the readers' attention and slow down their reading thus making them pay particular attention to these particular textual segments. Thus, in this context, it could be advanced that the segments judged by readers as highly important are the ones that contribute to shape a meaning of the literary text, and if we consider that they are the same containing the highest array of foregrounding features, thus it is these features which help shape that meaning.

On the other hand, the graph, as Figure 6.4. might show, does not depict other interesting similarities. For instance, segments with medium index of foregrounding would be expected to correspond to those which obtained a Mean $\geq 1,5$ by readers, but actually the results did not confirm such a speculation. It might be argued, then, that the text written in a language that is different from the readers' native language

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may manage to make readers sensitive only to very high prominent foregrounding features and make them on the other hand unable to be sensitised to less prominent foregrounding features. This observation questions in fact the literary competence of these readers and the role of the latter in enhancing better readings of literary texts written in a foreign language.

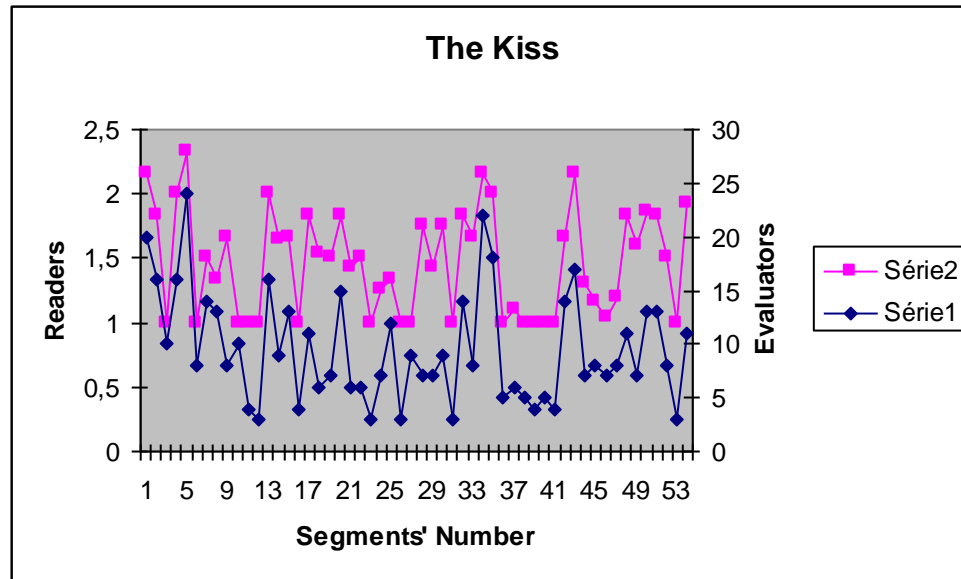


Figure 6.4. Comparison between the Evaluators' distribution of Foregrounding features per Segment and Readers' Mean Importance Distribution per Segment in The Kiss

VI.2.2.1.B. Results and Discussion

After having empirically demonstrated that foregrounding proceeds through a process of *defamiliarization* in Algerian readers of literary texts in English, the second part of the experiment aimed at experimenting the role of *affect* these same readers employ in building their strategies of *refamiliarization*; strategies used to build a meaning of the literary text.

As earlier mentioned, the participants were asked to support their ratings of

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the segments with written protocols that sum up their overall impressions about the short story and the reading process and most importantly the nature and amount of feelings that accompanied the whole process of understanding. For the purpose to organise the linguistic content of these protocols, I have used O.Fialho's model which identifies four main categories: *null*, *textual*, *transitional*, and *extra textual*,

*The categories **null** and **textual** represent a moment in which readers begin to act, trying to understand what is being read, mentioning intra-textual aspects exclusively. The category **transitional** represents an intermediary moment between attempts to act upon the experience of reading and relating what is being read to other experiences. The fourth category, **extra-textual**, represents the higher level of abstraction. At this moment, readers do not mention intra-textual aspects of the text anymore and the text represents a trigger to reflect on aspects outside the text. (2007:110/11)*

Actually, the categories as perceived by Fialho permit a systematic organization of what she calls strategies of *refamiliarization*. In more accessible words, the categories null, textual, transitional, and extra-textual offer an acute explanation to the different moments the reader undergoes in his process of reading. They trace a gradual interaction that starts from the world of the literary text to finally reach the world outside the text.

Unfortunately, as for affect, the reactions experienced by readers could not be audio-recorded, such as laughing, for instance. Again, for the unfolding of the experiment I followed Fialho's analytical framework devised for affect and which consisted of four categories that describe four different emotional states during the process of familiarization: *Uncertainty*, *Anxiety*, *Satisfaction*, and *Joy*.(Id: 113)

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Table 6.2¹⁶. Analytical Framework for Affect

<i>Categories of Affect</i>	<i>Linguistic Manifestations</i>
Uncertainty	Expressions: I think/ I don't know/ it seems that/ keep questioning myself/ I didn't get it/ difficult to understand/ it complicates life/ difficult meaning/ maybe / questions.....
Anxiety	Expressions: It might be my ignorance/ it's driving me mad, it's driving me crazy, I'm lost/ let's keep on reading to come to an explanation/ I'm lazy/ It bothers me, I still couldn't figure this out/
Null affect	Participants do not position themselves
Satisfaction	Expressions: I liked it! Nice/ interesting/
Joy	Expressions: I loved it!/ How beautiful!/ admire/ very nice/ touching/ so interesting/.....

The above table presents the different moments of *affect* experienced during the reading process. It does not distinguish between positive or negative reactions either. It also organises the different kinds of affect according to an already established model which should not disregard other kinds of affect inherent to the particularity of

¹⁶ The present table was inspired by Fialho's Framework for affect and some data inserted are

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each experiment. But I believe that the four categories as devised by Fialho overlap the most important kinds of affect that could be generated during a reading process.

Table 6.3¹⁷. Coding for categories of language affect

<i>Language</i>	<i>Affect</i>
0. Null	-2. Anxiety
1. Textual	-1. Uncertainty
2. Transitional	0. Null
3. Extra- textual	1. Satisfaction
	2. Joy

After having adopted Fialho’s analytical framework for both language and affect, a coding method was necessary; in that there was a need to decipher the written protocols of the readers and sort out an explanation of their understanding of the text. **Table 6.3.** illustrates the numbers, used mainly for practical purposes and do not obey a hierarchical distribution, I allocated to each phase and each moment during the reading process.

Readers’ comments on the different segments are divided into meaningful units. Each of them corresponds both to a category of Language and Affect. To each unit, three values are attributed: (x, y, z), x= Language; y= Affect; z= number of words, for instance:

P2:

“ I’ve found some difficulties when I was reading the text(1, -2, 11), it took me about eight minutes(1, 0, 6) but then I could understand that the girl in the story was a materialistic girl (2, -1, 15)... ”(see Figure 6.5. for the illustration)

collected from the results obtained out of the written protocols implemented in this experimentation.

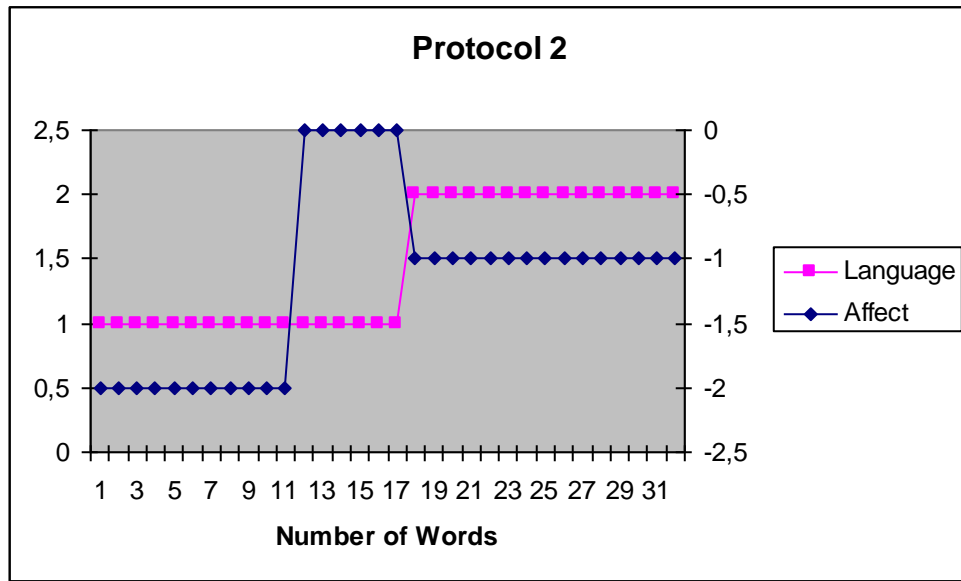


Figure 6.5. Protocol 2

VI.2.3.1. Investigating the Process: Qualitative Analysis

Figure 6.6. shows the graph illustrating the reading process of P1, represented by Protocol 1 after having been coded as follows,

P1:

“My first feeling when I have finished the story is a mixture of ambiguity and indifference (2, -2, 15), it seems to me that it has given a bad picture of women (2, -1, 13)... in the sense that she is very selfish and wants to have everything love and wealth; a person to love and another one who would satisfy all her demands and orders (3, -2, 31) I also think that Nathalie is always eager to more and more and she deserves her end because she is greedy (3, -1, 21). She has lost the two (3, 0, 5). Actually I appreciated the story because it has shed light on a very nowadays phenomenon(2, 1, 15). But on the other hand, I find girls of nowadays, not all of them, materialistic and even guys but at the end loose their happiness and fail in their life sooner or later (3, -2, 33).”

¹⁷ As far as the coding process is concerned, I used the same coding system used by Fialho(2007).

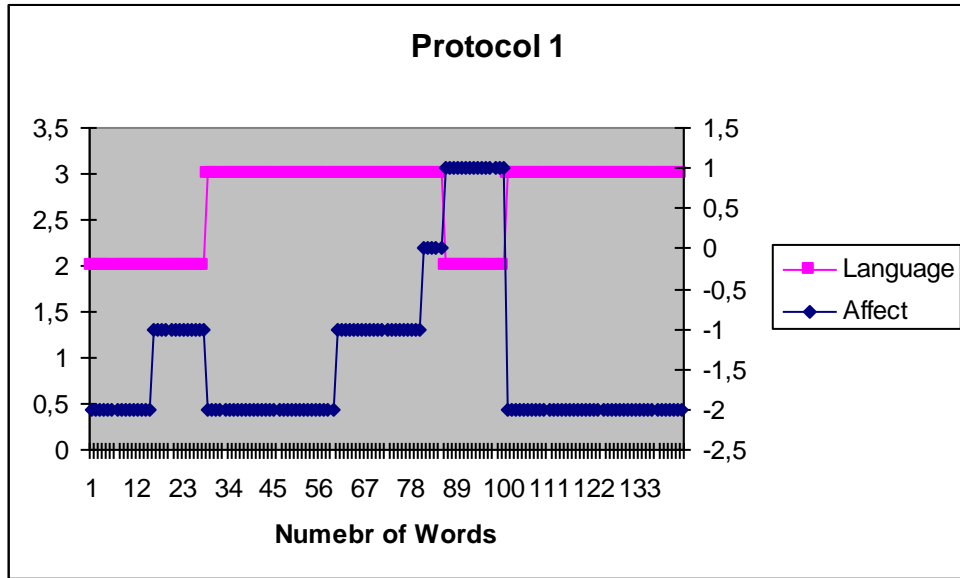


Figure 6.6. Protocol 1

The participant in Figure 6.6., for example, wrote 143 words. His/her comments were characterised first by the category *transitional* (pink line, item 2 of the scale) and he/she demonstrated *anxiety* (blue line, item -2). Gradually, the comments shifted to the category *extra-textual* (pink line, item 3) to remain nearly the same till the end of the protocol. All along the protocol, the participant moved from *anxiety* to *uncertainty*, only for a moment did she/he experience little *satisfaction* (blue line, item 1). The situation described above allows the detection of a similar pattern among the different readings: most participants started their reading experiencing *null* affect, that is, indifference, *uncertainty*, or even *anxiety*.

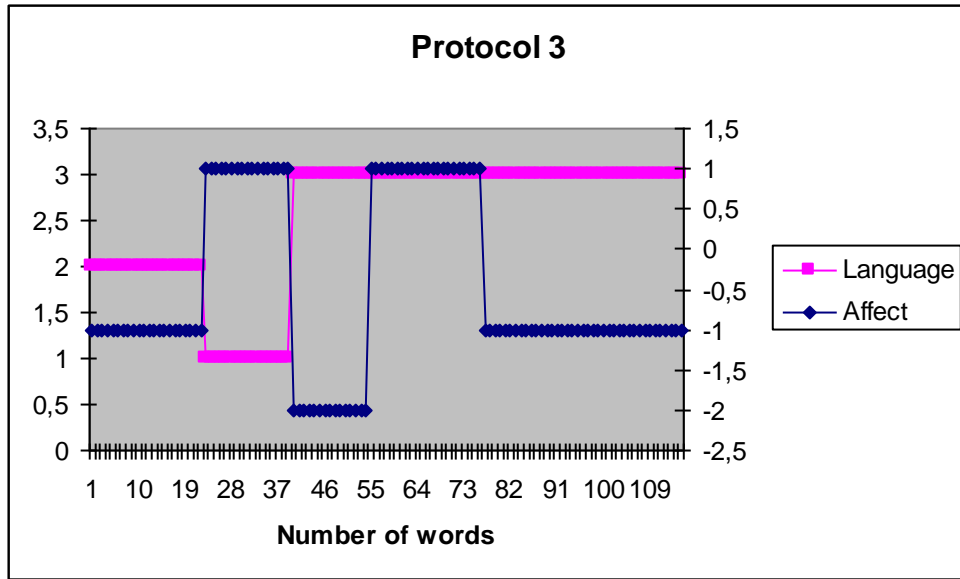


Figure 6.7. Protocol 3

P3:

“I think that this story is portraying some realities of the majority of nowadays’ women who are becoming more and more materialistic (2, -1, 22). Though some difficult words prevented me from carrying reading, I could get the idea at the end (1, 1, 17). From my point of view I cannot digest scarifying love for the sake of wealth (3, -2, 15). We all agree that love plus social and financial comfort are good unless they are not achieved through cheating whatsoever the reason is (3, 1, 22).” Scarifying love for wealth is very stupid and not advisable, I couldn’t even imagine what life would be without love (3, -1, 21). In general such sacrifice would be forgivable only if it were for noble intention, like health for instance (3, -1, 18)”.

While it is supposed that participants’ comments would have started by the category *textual*, Figure 6.7. (115 words) shows that P3 like P1 initiated reading with *transitional* comments (pink line, item 1) demonstrating *uncertainty*. Then, this same participant experienced *satisfaction* while his/her comments concentrated this time on

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the text. At this moment, the participant experienced satisfaction with the language, although he/she could not understand exactly what that meant, but the relationship form/satisfaction did not last for a long time, the comments soon shifted to become more frequent *extra-textual* comments, which could be explained by the fact that the appreciation of formal components leads readers to the understanding of the text as a whole generating maybe an interpretation. In addition to that, it could be noticed that the text has offered an opportunity for readers to reflect on their world and the world around them, assimilating and accommodating information to their mental structures. On the other hand, it should not be dismissed that the feeling of *anxiety* was present in both protocols, which portray it as a necessary step of change. Its role could be one of a bridge between *uncertainty* to *satisfaction* or *joy*.

P4:

“ What I have noticed from my reading of this short story is that it contains many words which express feeling such as I think, I believe (1,0, 25)... speaking about the language, I found the vocabulary easy to understand, i.e., I didn’t consult my dictionary because there was no need to do that (1, 0, 25). In addition to the accessibility of the language, the structure of the story is well organised (1, 0, 16). This makes me more interested as reading advances (1, 1, 8). Actually, what I appreciated the most is the implicit message of the writer in which he advised women not to be too greedy (2, 2, 23). This goes along with an Algerian saying which says: “Do not let what is in your hands goes away, and run after what you don’t have” (3, 0, 27). The text provides interesting figures of speech like: “her lips look hungry” and “she felt like a chess player” which contribute to imagine the ‘attractive’ character of Nathalie (1, 2, 28)”.

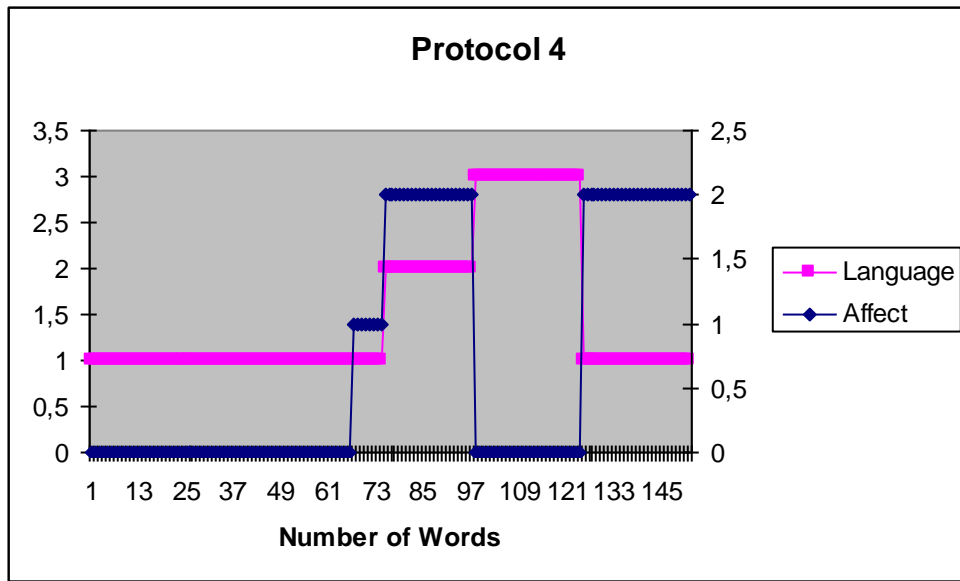


Figure 6.8. Protocol 4

Participant 4 wrote 154 words, thus making of his protocol the longest one among the other participants. His/her comments shifted from *textual* to *transitional* to *extra-textual* categories which justifies the coherence employed to build the strategies of familiarization, departing from the text towards the outer text, which did not happen for instance with P1 and P3. Yet, the coherence used to build the strategies of familiarization did not lead the participant to end his reading reflecting on the world and assimilating personal experiences, on the contrary, the participant came back to the text examining acutely its form as if a deeper appreciation of language form was further required to proceed to the process of generating a meaning. As far as affect is concerned, P4 experienced a lot of *joy* and *satisfaction* passing through various moments in which no feeling was present which again could be explained by the fact that individual readers experience various kinds of affect that help them build their strategies, and in no way these feelings obey a logic or coherent explanation.

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As far as the other protocols were concerned, it was observed that the participants did not appreciate the reading of the short story in particular. They found it “difficult” (P 8), ‘not interesting’ (P 6 and P7), and sometimes ‘boring’ (P9). Very few protocols advanced having appreciated the reading experience after having grasped the formal components of the language.

VI.2.3.2. Discussion

After having investigated the written protocols of each participant relying on two levels: language and affect, it was found that the greatest number of occurrences were *transitional* and *uncertainty*. This implies that readers did not focus on the text and its formal components, rather they right from the start, build a bridge between the ideas of the text and the world outside the text. As for affect, which undeniably was present and accompanied their readings, the category *uncertainty* seems to represent a transitional moment necessary to shape a new schema amenable to build a meaning. More interestingly, in certain protocols, all categories of *affect* were present (for instance P4) indicating then that the individuality of the strategies used to build a meaning is proper to each participant. Of course more investigation is needed on similar samples to confirm the above finding.

Apparently, the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the protocols present evidence that seems to sustain the cycle [linguistic-psychological- aesthetical] as proposed by Fialho (2007) to some extent however. Put differently, although participants recognised most of the segments evaluated high in foregrounding features as highly important, at the first part of the experimentation, confirming then

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the *de-automatization* process that causes *defamiliarization*, they could not, at the second part of the experimentation, build their strategies departing from a formal appreciation of the language of the text. Except two protocols which constructed their mental schemata departing from an appreciation of the formal components of the text, the majority of protocols organised their strategies according to an understanding of the text that was independent from its language mastery.

Thus, this seems to infirm Miall and Kuiken's (2002) suggestion that aesthetic feelings (producing textual comments while experiencing *satisfaction* or *joy*) seem to initiate changes in readers' grasp of textual meaning and motivate attempts of revision and reconstruction of interpretive schemata¹⁸. At least this finding shows that the majority of the participants involved in the experimentation, Algerian readers of a text of literature written in English, did not fit in the cycle proposed by Fialho. The latter indicates that although readers' strategies overlap both the *cognitive* and *affect* parts which correspond respectively to part *psychological* and *aesthetic* of the cycle, their *de-automatisation* process is not necessarily caused by the part *language* which corresponds to the part *linguistic* of the cycle.

Conclusion

The analysis of the participants' protocols depicted for the second time a profile of students of English as a foreign language capable of appreciating a text of literature in English. But unfortunately, in no way this analysis could reveal that

¹⁸ I have already exposed the four-part framework for the feelings involved in literary response as proposed by Miall and Kuiken (2002) in the part *Limitation of Interpretation*.

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response to foregrounding is independent of literary training, as advanced by Kuiken & Miall (1994a) and Fialho(2007)'s studies. On the contrary, the results obtained appear to accuse the poor literary equipment of Algerian readers as *the obstacle* to a genuine literary response. Despite their appreciation of the literary text written in English and more particularly despite their critical and emotional interaction with this same text, these readers did not show the adequate competence that could have permitted them to look for more efficient strategies of interpretation. Thus, it seems necessary to promote, to my sense, the role of literary education in its broadest sense in the process of acquiring a foreign language context.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to provide more insight into ways of re-enhancing literary appreciation among Algerian university readers of texts of literature in English language. While the context in which literature in a foreign language at university is delivered has always been seen as an impoverished environment, where all agents of education share the responsibility of an ill implementation of suitable approaches and theories, my work was motivated by the need to reattribute the literature subject its deserved status among its learners. Put differently, I aimed at ameliorating the literature classes focusing on the prime responsible for the process; the reader.

Indeed, a particular characteristic of this research could appear in the need to implement an approach which would disregard the cultural barriers for a long time accused of being responsible for widening the gap between the learners' culture and that of the foreign language. This implied an approach which overlapped literary discourse, schema theory, stylistics, affect, and the teaching of literature, putting under scrutiny the interaction reader/literary text from an empirical perspective.

Summary of the Main Findings

On Reader response theory and its implementation

While Reader-response theories have considerably contributed to the process of understanding the responses to literary texts, their assumptions did not take into account the nature of language, its formal features and the impact of the latter on the reader interpretive processes. Hence, on the ground that responses of readers to texts of literature in a foreign language bear a closer relationship to the

General Conclusion

language of these texts, I assumed that the power of words in the text on readers and their ability to guide them in their process of reading would be the guiding principle in any reader-response approach to be implemented in an EFL context; notably an Algerian university context. Indeed, I assumed too that the linguistic competence of these readers, who share common practices of the foreign language, could be sufficient to build their process of understanding and shape converging yet not identical responses to the same literary text.

As far as the pedagogical implications of Reader response theory are concerned, which are not to be dismissed however, my observations centred on the teacher, the institution, and the perpetuation of canons and the conclusions to be drawn seem to favour a more solid ground on which these agents would reconsider the validity of their contributions.

On the limitation of interpretation

After having attempted to depict the shortcomings of Reader response theories, as traditionally conceived, my aim was to advocate a mere *experience* of the text instead of a sole search for its meaning, i.e. its interpretation. This distinction, as already advocated by Miall & Kuiken(2002) and Danaher(2006), highlighted other mechanisms, inherent to the reader, responsible for a unique interaction with the literary text. Rather than considering the literary text relying on the critics' sole vision, psychological analysis must come to supplement their resources and highlight the ways in which readers and texts are situated within a culture. More particularly, light was shed on the importance of both the cognitive and affective aspects that characterise the process of interpretation, engaging then

General Conclusion

the reader and only the reader, thus offering new insights on how readers engage with literary texts to produce an understanding among many.

On the need of becoming empirical

In the light of the depicted shortcomings both in the Reader response theories and the conception of interpretation as traditionally approached, I attempted to propose a portrayal of the major empirical researches which have been undertaken in the domain of literary reading. The purpose of this survey was to demonstrate how researchers could carry on focusing on the reader as their principal object of study while accompanying their assumptions with solid evidence. More importantly, my objective was motivated by the desire to implement such an approach in an EFL context, where literature in English would be attributed a status of testability. In other terms, the prerequisite that literary processes are institutionally and thus socially determined was clearly disregarded under such an approach. Hence, I favoured Miall & Kuiken's (1994) study which seemed to satisfy the inquiries of any literature teacher who wonders whether the lack of enthusiasm that dominates his classes could be overcome.

It was important to explain all the theoretical support that has contributed to shape the line of thought of this research and ripen the hypotheses on which I built my different experiments with Algerian university readers, hence, my support of Miall & Kuiken's theory to be tested in an Algerian university context.

On literary reading in an EFL context

Conducting the first stage of experimentation has permitted the depiction of the profile of a sample of Algerian University readers of literary texts in English. First, it was found that these readers manifested a considerable

General Conclusion

enthusiasm while being at the heart of the experiment, which is in itself an indication that these readers are willing to change the way they are perceived by the institution. More importantly, the results showed a preference for certain teaching methods over others, another indication that the way literature is taught affects considerably its appreciation. Finally, readers preferred to read short stories over the other literary genres, which is crucial evidence that these readers are capable of generating an appreciation of literary texts written in a foreign language.

On the importance of literary competence in an EFL context

The second stage of experimentation demonstrated that Algerian readers could appreciate both short stories proposed for the research and that in spite of their poor literary competence. Indeed, these same readers showed more appreciation towards the non canonical text. Although this conclusion is not the one expected by specialists of literature, who would have supposed a more substantial appreciation of a literary text written by the great Guy de Maupassant, it is, actually, the conclusion we, teachers of literature of a foreign expression, face everyday with our students. The canonicity of a text written by Guy de Maupassant is not sufficient to justify a better appreciation of it and should not determine curriculum designers to transmit it to non-native students of English. Such a finding should be primarily credited for shedding light on that body of non-canonical texts' capacity to enhance a re-appreciation of literature in general in the Algerian students of English.

Furthermore, initially it was quite unconceivable that our group of readers who have limited reading skills or comprehension abilities would appreciate little of

General Conclusion

the short stories' art and style and would not show the depth of appreciation we observed in our experiment. The implication from such an empirical finding may lead literature specialists to rethink the assumption about literary competence and the skills acquired through literary training especially for our non-native students of English. This by no means suggests that literary training is not necessary for the appreciation of literature, and that the readings of all untrained readers are just as profound and enlightening as those of informed and skilled readers. It does seem, hence, that naïve and unsophisticated readers are sensitive to intrinsic values of the literary text that surpass any extrinsic impact.

A crucial result from our perspective is the demonstration of the use of new methodological tools for investigating literariness and interpretation as devised by Dixon et al. (1993) in a sample of Algerian readers of literary texts written in English. Following Dixon et al. instructions, the experiment helped verify that emergent effects can be measured in a rereading paradigm in which participants are asked for their evaluation after both first and second reading. Moreover, the relative larger change from first to second reading obtained with *Letter from the Understudy* suggests that the emergent effects were associated with the literariness of the story. In this sense, the results sounded consistent with my assumption that literary effects may guide the appreciation of the text regardless of its canonicity or the literary competence of its reader.

On Foregrounding in an EFL context

The last stage of experimentation depicted for the second time a profile of students of English as a foreign language capable of appreciating a text of literature in English. Unfortunately, in no way this analysis could reveal that

General Conclusion

response to foregrounding is independent of literary training, as advanced by Kuiken & Miall (1994a) and Fialho(2007)'s studies. On the contrary, the results obtained appear to accuse the poor literary equipment of Algerian readers as *the obstacle* to a genuine literary response. Despite their appreciation of the literary text written in English and more particularly despite their critical and emotional interaction with this same text, these readers did not show the adequate competence that could have permitted them look for more efficient strategies of interpretation. Thus, it seems necessary to promote the role of literary education in its broadest sense in the process of learning a foreign language context.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

In the light of these findings some pedagogical implications may be proposed. First, the role of instruction is a beneficial aspect to be implemented in FL literature context. Actually, implementing specific instructional treatments may foster the Algerian university reader's ability to better appreciate literary texts in English. The results have showed that reading literary texts is no more perceived the way it used to be and that media and web supports, for instance, are warmly welcomed in literature classes. The disappearance of the culture of reading and the emergence of the digital era could also be responsible for this shift. Hence, taking these constraints into consideration, through instruction and suitable teaching methods, literary appreciation could be regenerated. Second and in the same frame, exposing Algerian readers to different literary genres has allowed us understand some of the reasons behind their rejection of literary texts in English. Put differently, EFL readers tend to favour short and accessible texts of literature, in less than one hour, which do not require from them time and

General Conclusion

energy. Therefore, if we assume that literary texts, of whatsoever kind, are capable of generating an appreciation in Algerian readers, proposing a selection of literary texts made of short stories exclusively deserves to be tested in an EFL context.

Third, the recommendations from this study points more particularly to the need to broaden the scopes of the literary texts proposed to Algerian readers of English language and propose texts that are more to fit their context and expectations. Canonical texts, however, are not to be removed from their priorities, yet approaching them should come at a secondary level leaving room to more contemporary and appealing texts.

Fourth, the poor literary background of Algerian readers could demonstrate two realities. First, readers' ability to appreciate literary texts in English was possible; an indication that the predispositions of these readers towards literature in a foreign language are not to be dismissed, and readers, students then, should no more be accused as being unwilling to acquire the other's literature. On the contrary, other mechanisms of the teaching procedures should be reconsidered. Second, while the poor literary equipment allowed readers appreciate the literary text, it, on the other hand, could not allow them respond to foregrounding features present per segment and build the adequate interpretive strategies of interpretation. Hence, the recommendation is to provide Algerian readers of literary texts with more knowledge about the texts they are engaging with, thus allowing them trust their capacities to reflect on the language of the text using their schematic knowledge and affect to construct a meaning.

Limitations

A number of difficulties stand, however, in the way of the approach I am advocating. First, while it is assumed that Algerian readers of literary texts at university level are more motivated by some instructional methods as the use of film-aided instruction and web resources, the question to be asked is: is this possible, feasible in all EFL settings?

Second, while this study also assumed that introducing non canonical texts to Algerian learners would be more stimulating, are all teachers ready to proceed to change in their syllabuses and place the exigencies of their students before theirs? I am not that optimistic concerning the will of certain teachers to change their already established agendas of literary texts and are all students willing to engage with contemporary texts?

This last point leads me to think about the main limitation of the research since undertaken on a sample of voluntary students. As mentioned earlier, it was important for the fulfilment of the research not to impose participation on the students and leave them total freedom to embark upon the experiment. Yet, the major shortcoming lies in the fact that maybe these students represent the most interested ones among the huge number of students we do actually have in our department. Hence, despite the promising results obtained through the experiment, it appears quite difficult to generalise the findings on larger population of readers of literature in EFL contexts.

While, this work was inspired by the belief that a stylistic approach along with the consideration of both cognitive and affect mechanisms would be sufficient to cure the malaise of literature in English teaching at university level in

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Algeria, the practical implications were far remote from the ambitious expectations I have devised at the beginning of my research. However, and at least thanks to the few promising results I obtained, I am quite convinced about the need for a shift from the traditional delivery of this literature in a foreign language to more appropriate delivery that considers the inherent predispositions of the Algerian readers and aims at analysing them empirically.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I. Pre and Post course Questionnaires

Pre-course Questionnaire (before being exposed to the literary selection)

Number:

Gender: Male☐ Female☐

Directions: This pre-course questionnaire contains three parts. The first part constitutes students' attitudes toward reading in general and reading literature in particular at university level and opinions on proper hour allotment for foreign literature course, while the second is concerned with the students' preferred teaching methods and activities. The third part is related to the students' preferred literary genres.

Instruction: Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below by circling the number that best describes your agreement or disagreement.

- 1- strongly disagree 2- disagree 3- slightly disagree
4- slightly agree 5- agree 6- strongly agree

Questions	Instrument	Mean	S.D.
1- I like reading in general	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.75	1.15
2-I like reading in English	1 2 3 4 5 6	5.09	0.77
3-I like reading literature in English	1 2 3 4 5 6	3.72	1.46
4- I like to read poems	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.69	1.51
5- I like to read novels	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.45	0.59
6- I like to read short stories	1 2 3 4 5 6	5.60	1.30
7- I like to read dramas	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.45	1.12
8- I like to read newspaper articles	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.57	1.10
9- I like to read songs	1 2 3 4 5 6	5.27	1.25
10- I usually read for meaning	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.93	1.25
11-I usually read to enrich my vocabulary	1 2 3 4 5 6	5.21	1.22
12-I usually read to solve problems	1 2 3 4 5 6	3.75	1.74
13-I usually read to get grammar structures	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.84	1.47
14-I usually read to get acquainted with the author's background	1 2 3 4 5 6	3.84	1.41
15-I usually read to predict what might happen	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.24	1.32
16- I usually read for pleasure	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.39	1.25

Appendix I. Pre and Post course Questionnaires

17- I usually read because of academic constraints	1	2	3	4	5	6	3.75	1.39
18- I like the literature in English subject at university	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.15	1.15
19- I find literature in English interesting	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.24	1.25
20- I find literature in English boring	1	2	3	4	5	6	2.69	1.48
21- I find literature in English of no interest	1	2	3	4	5	6	2.51	1.55
22- I find weekly provided hours for literature in English not enough	1	2	3	4	5	6	2.96	1.44
23- I find weekly provided hours for literature in English enough	1	2	3	4	5	6	3.39	1.41
24- I find weekly provided hours for literature in English too much	1	2	3	4	5	6	2.72	1.52
25- I find weekly provided hours for literature in English of no need	1	2	3	4	5	6	1.87	1.03
26- I like the 2 nd year university content of literature in English as taught in the department of English	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.18	1.31
27- I'd like to read for a memoir in literature in English	1	2	3	4	5	6	3.96	1.48
28- I'd like to carry on post-graduate studies in literature in English	1	2	3	4	5	6	3.81	1.64
29- I'd like to develop an university academic career in literature in English	1	2	3	4	5	6	3.81	1.54
30- I'd like to teach literature in English at university level	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.15	1.74
31- I like to be given a lecture	1	2	3	4	5	6	5.24	1.04
32- I like film-aided instruction	1	2	3	4	5	6	5.03	0.83
33- I like internet- based activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.87	1.03
34- I like cooperative group work	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.51	1.41
35- I like question posing and answering	1	2	3	4	5	6	5	0.88
36- I like being assigned to written reports	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.33	1.17
37- I like being assigned to oral reports	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.42	1.27
38- I like being encouraged to search for literature in English related information on websites and libraries	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.84	1.43
39- I'd like to be introduced to more literary works	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.42	1.43
40- I'd like to read tragedies	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.42	1.57
41- I'd like to read comedies	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.96	1.24

Appendix I. Pre and Post course Questionnaires

42- I'd like to read classic works	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.15	1.30
43- I'd like to read contemporary literature	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.27	0.89
44- I'd like to read children literature	1	2	3	4	5	6	5.06	0.88
45- I'd like to read young adult literature	1	2	3	4	5	6	5.21	0.97
46- I'd like to read realistic fiction	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.36	1.36
47- I'd like to read romantic fiction	1	2	3	4	5	6	5.30	0.93
48- I'd like to read fantasies	1	2	3	4	5	6	4.51	1.20
49- I'd like to read science fiction	1	2	3	4	5	6	3.45	1.67
50- I'd like to read historical fiction	1	2	3	4	5	6	3.66	1.56
51- I'd like to read biographies or autobiographies	1	2	3	4	5	6	3.51	1.30
52- I'd like to read movie novels	1 4	2	3	4	5	6	4.90	1.13

Appendix I. Pre and Post course Questionnaires

II/Questionnaire (after the literature selection)

Number:

Gender: Male☐ Female☐

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help demonstrate students' perceptions (attitudes) toward texts after being exposed to the literature selection.

Instruction: Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below by circling the number that best describes your agreement or disagreement.

- 1- strongly disagree 2- disagree 3- slightly disagree
4- slightly agree 5- agree 6- strongly agree

Questions	Instrument	Mean	S.D.
I find literature in English interesting	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.30	1.26
I find literature in English boring	1 2 3 4 5 6	2.63	1.45
I find literature in English of no interest	1 2 3 4 5 6	2.51	1.55
I find weekly provided hours for literature in English not enough	1 2 3 4 5 6	3.06	1.47
I find weekly provided hours for literature in English enough	1 2 3 4 5 6	2.96	1.60
I find weekly provided hours for literature in English too much	1 2 3 4 5 6	2.45	1.28
I find weekly provided hours for literature in English of no need	1 2 3 4 5 6	1.87	0.84
I like the 2 nd year university content of literature in English as taught in The department of English	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.21	1.29
I'd like to read for a memoir in literature in English	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.09	1.44
I'd like to carry on post-graduate studies in literature in English	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.06	1.51
I'd like to develop an university academic career in literature in English	1 2 3 4 5 6	3.87	1.53
I'd like to teach literature in English at university level	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.06	1.77
I liked reading <i>Sonnet 130</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6	3.72	-
I liked reading the poem by <i>W.H.Auden</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6	3.81	-
I liked reading <i>Evelyne</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6	5.60	-
I liked reading <i>The Kiss</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.84	-
I liked reading <i>Wuthering Heights</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6	4.93	-
I liked reading <i>Crying of Lot 49</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6	3.96	-

Appendix I. Pre and Post course Questionnaires

I liked reading <i>An Ideal Husband</i>	1 6	2	3	4	5	4.36	-
I liked reading <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	1 6	2	3	4	5	4.45	-

Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun,
Coral is far more red, than her lips red,
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun:
If hair be wires, black wires grow on her head:
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight,
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know,
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.

And yet by heaven I think my love as rare,
As any she belied with false compare.

By W. Shakespeare

Untitled

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with a muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come. [...]

He was my North, my South, my East, my West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My moon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;
Pour away the ocean and sweep the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

By W. H. Auden (1907-73) in (Klarer, 1999:30)

Appendix II. The Literary Selection

Evelyn

by James Joyce

SHE sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired.

Few people passed. The man out of the last house passed on his way home; she heard his footsteps clacking along the concrete pavement and afterwards crunching on the cinder path before the new red houses. One time there used to be a field there in which they used to play every evening with other people's children. Then a man from Belfast bought the field and built houses in it--not like their little brown houses but bright brick houses with shining roofs. The children of the avenue used to play together in that field --the Devines, the Waters, the Dunns, little Keogh the cripple, she and her brothers and sisters. Ernest, however, never played: he was too grown up. Her father used often to hunt them in out of the field with his blackthorn stick; but usually little Keogh used to keep nix and call out when he saw her father coming. Still they seemed to have been rather happy then. Her father was not so bad then; and besides, her mother was alive. That was a long time ago; she and her brothers and sisters were all grown up her mother was dead. Tizzie Dunn was dead, too, and the Waters had gone back to England. Everything changes. Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home.

Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from. Perhaps she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided. And yet during all those years she had never found out the name of the priest whose yellowing photograph hung on the wall above the broken harmonium beside the coloured print of the promises made to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. He had been a school friend of her father. Whenever he showed the photograph to a visitor her father used to pass it with a casual word:

"He is in Melbourne now."

She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise? She tried to weigh each side of the question. In her home anyway she had shelter and food; she had those whom she had known all her life about her. O course she had to work hard, both in the house and at business. What would they say of her in the Stores when they found out that she had run away with a fellow? Say she was a fool, perhaps; and her place would be filled up by advertisement. Miss Gavan would be glad. She had always had an edge on her, especially whenever there were people listening.

"Miss Hill, don't you see these ladies are waiting?"

"Look lively, Miss Hill, please."

She would not cry many tears at leaving the Stores.

But in her new home, in a distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then she would be married--she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then. She would not be treated as her mother had been. Even now, though she was over nineteen, she sometimes felt herself

Appendix II. The Literary Selection

in danger of her father's violence. She knew it was that that had given her the palpitations. When they were growing up he had never gone for her like he used to go for Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl but latterly he had begun to threaten her and say what he would do to her only for her dead mother's sake. And no she had nobody to protect her. Ernest was dead and Harry, who was in the church decorating business, was nearly always down somewhere in the country. Besides, the invariable squabble for money on Saturday nights had begun to weary her unspeakably. She always gave her entire wages--seven shillings--and Harry always sent up what he could but the trouble was to get any money from her father. He said she used to squander the money, that she had no head, that he wasn't going to give her his hard-earned money to throw about the streets, and much more, for he was usually fairly bad on Saturday night. In the end he would give her the money and ask her had she any intention of buying Sunday's dinner. Then she had to rush out as quickly as she could and do her marketing, holding her black leather purse tightly in her hand as she elbowed her way through the crowds and returning home late under her load of provisions. She had hard work to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly. It was hard work--a hard life--but now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life.

She was about to explore another life with Frank. Frank was very kind, manly, open-hearted. She was to go away with him by the night-boat to be his wife and to live with him in Buenos Ayres where he had a home waiting for her. How well she remembered the first time she had seen him; he was lodging in a house on the main road where she used to visit. It seemed a few weeks ago. He was standing at the gate, his peaked cap pushed back on his head and his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze. Then they had come to know each other. He used to meet her outside the Stores every evening and see her home. He took her to see *The Bohemian Girl* and she felt elated as she sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him. He was awfully fond of music and sang a little. People knew that they were courting and, when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor, she always felt pleasantly confused. He used to call her Poppens out of fun. First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him. He had tales of distant countries. He had started as a deck boy at a pound a month on a ship of the Allan Line going out to Canada. He told her the names of the ships he had been on and the names of the different services. He had sailed through the Straits of Magellan and he told her stories of the terrible Patagonians. He had fallen on his feet in Buenos Ayres, he said, and had come over to the old country just for a holiday. Of course, her father had found out the affair and had forbidden her to have anything to say to him.

"I know these sailor chaps," he said.

One day he had quarrelled with Frank and after that she had to meet her lover secretly.

The evening deepened in the avenue. The white of two letters in her lap grew indistinct. One was to Harry; the other was to her father. Ernest had been her favourite but she liked Harry too. Her father was becoming old lately, she noticed; he would miss her. Sometimes he could be very nice. Not long before, when she had been laid up for a day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. Another day, when their mother was alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth. She remembered her father putting on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh.

Appendix II. The Literary Selection

Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne. Down far in the avenue she could hear a street organ playing. She knew the air Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could. She remembered the last night of her mother's illness; she was again in the close dark room at the other side of the hall and outside she heard a melancholy air of Italy. The organ-player had been ordered to go away and given sixpence. She remembered her father strutting back into the sickroom saying:

"Damned Italians! coming over here!"

As she mused the pitiful vision of her mother's life laid its spell on the very quick of her being--that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness. She trembled as she heard again her mother's voice saying constantly with foolish insistence:

"Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!"

She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness. Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her.

She stood among the swaying crowd in the station at the North Wall. He held her hand and she knew that he was speaking to her, saying something about the passage over and over again. The station was full of soldiers with brown baggages. Through the wide doors of the sheds she caught a glimpse of the black mass of the boat, lying in beside the quay wall, with illumined portholes. She answered nothing. She felt her cheek pale and cold and, out of a maze of distress, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty. The boat blew a long mournful whistle into the mist. If she went, tomorrow she would be on the sea with Frank, steaming towards Buenos Ayres. Their passage had been booked. Could she still draw back after all he had done for her? Her distress awoke a nausea in her body and she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer.

A bell clanged upon her heart. She felt him seize her hand:

"Come!"

All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. She gripped with both hands at the iron railing.

"Come!"

No! No! No! It was impossible. Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish.

"Eveline! Evvy!"

He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow. He was shouted at to go on but he still called to her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.

Appendix II. The Literary Selection

Title: The Kiss

Author: Kate Chopin

It was still quite light out of doors, but inside with the curtains drawn and the smouldering fire sending out a dim, uncertain glow, the room was full of deep shadows.

Brantain sat in one of these shadows; it had overtaken him and he did not mind. The obscurity lent him courage to keep his eyes fastened as ardently as he liked upon the girl who sat in the firelight.

She was very handsome, with a certain fine, rich coloring that belongs to the healthy brune type. She was quite composed, as she idly stroked the satiny coat of the cat that lay curled in her lap, and she occasionally sent a slow glance into the shadow where her companion sat. They were talking low, of indifferent things which plainly were not the things that occupied their thoughts. She knew that he loved her--a frank, blustering fellow without guile enough to conceal his feelings, and no desire to do so. For two weeks past he had sought her society eagerly and persistently. She was confidently waiting for him to declare himself and she meant to accept him. The rather insignificant and unattractive Brantain was enormously rich; and she liked and required the entourage which wealth could give her.

During one of the pauses between their talk of the last tea and the next reception the door opened and a young man entered whom Brantain knew quite well. The girl turned her face toward him. A stride or two brought him to her side, and bending over her chair--before she could suspect his intention, for she did not realize that he had not seen her visitor--he pressed an ardent, lingering kiss upon her lips.

Brantain slowly arose; so did the girl arise, but quickly, and the newcomer stood between them, a little amusement and some defiance struggling with the confusion in his face.

"I believe," stammered Brantain, "I see that I have stayed too long. I--I had no idea--that is, I must wish you good-by." He was clutching his hat with both hands, and probably did not perceive that she was extending her hand to him, her presence of mind had not completely deserted her; but she could not have trusted herself to speak.

"Hang me if I saw him sitting there, Nattie! I know it's deuced awkward for you. But I hope you'll forgive me this once--this very first break. Why, what's the matter?"

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"Don't touch me; don't come near me," she returned angrily. "What do you mean by entering the house without ringing?"

"I came in with your brother, as I often do," he answered coldly, in self-justification. "We came in the side way. He went upstairs and I came in here hoping to find you. The explanation is simple enough and ought to satisfy you that the misadventure was unavoidable. But do say that you forgive me, Nathalie," he entreated, softening.

"Forgive you! You don't know what you are talking about. Let me pass. It depends upon--a good deal whether I ever forgive you."

At that next reception which she and Brantain had been talking about she approached the young man with a delicious frankness of manner when she saw him there.

"Will you let me speak to you a moment or two, Mr. Brantain?" she asked with an engaging but perturbed smile. He seemed extremely unhappy; but when she took his arm and walked away with him, seeking a retired corner, a ray of hope mingled with the almost comical misery of his expression. She was apparently very outspoken.

"Perhaps I should not have sought this interview, Mr. Brantain; but--but, oh, I have been very uncomfortable, almost miserable since that little encounter the other afternoon. When I thought how you might have misinterpreted it, and believed things" --hope was plainly gaining the ascendancy over misery in Brantain's round, guileless face--"Of course, I know it is nothing to you, but for my own sake I do want you to understand that Mr. Harvy is an intimate friend of long standing. Why, we have always been like cousins--like brother and sister, I may say. He is my brother's most intimate associate and often fancies that he is entitled to the same privileges as the family. Oh, I know it is absurd, uncalled for, to tell you this; undignified even," she was almost weeping, "but it makes so much difference to me what you think of--of me." Her voice had grown very low and agitated. The misery had all disappeared from Brantain's face.

"Then you do really care what I think, Miss Nathalie? May I call you Miss Nathalie?" They turned into a long, dim corridor that was lined on either side with tall, graceful plants. They walked slowly to the very end of it. When they turned to retrace their steps Brantain's face was radiant and hers was triumphant.

Harvy was among the guests at the wedding; and he sought her out in a rare moment when she stood alone.

Appendix II. The Literary Selection

"Your husband," he said, smiling, "has sent me over to kiss you. "

A quick blush suffused her face and round polished throat. "I suppose it's natural for a man to feel and act generously on an occasion of this kind. He tells me he doesn't want his marriage to interrupt wholly that pleasant intimacy which has existed between you and me. I don't know what you've been telling him," with an insolent smile, "but he has sent me here to kiss you."

She felt like a chess player who, by the clever handling of his pieces, sees the game taking the course intended. Her eyes were bright and tender with a smile as they glanced up into his; and her lips looked hungry for the kiss which they invited.

"But, you know," he went on quietly, "I didn't tell him so, it would have seemed ungrateful, but I can tell you. I've stopped kissing women; it's dangerous."

Well, she had Brantain and his million left. A person can't have everything in this world; and it was a little unreasonable of her to expect it.

-THE

END-

Kate Chopin's short story: The Kiss

Wuthering Heights(1848)

Plot Overview

IN THE LATE WINTER MONTHS OF 1801, a man named Lockwood rents a manor house called Thrushcross Grange in the isolated moor country of England. Here, he meets his dour landlord, Heathcliff, a wealthy man who lives in the ancient manor of Wuthering Heights, four miles away from the Grange. In this wild, stormy countryside, Lockwood asks his housekeeper, Nelly Dean, to tell him the story of Heathcliff and the strange denizens of Wuthering Heights. Nelly consents, and Lockwood writes down his recollections of her tale in his diary; these written recollections form the main part of *Wuthering Heights*.

Nelly remembers her childhood. As a young girl, she works as a servant at Wuthering Heights for the owner of the manor, Mr. Earnshaw, and his family. One day, Mr. Earnshaw goes to Liverpool and returns home with an orphan boy whom he will raise with his own children. At first, the Earnshaw children—a boy named Hindley and his younger sister Catherine—detest the dark-skinned Heathcliff. But Catherine quickly comes to love him, and the two soon grow inseparable, spending their days playing on the moors. After his wife's death, Mr. Earnshaw grows to prefer Heathcliff to his own son, and when Hindley continues his cruelty to Heathcliff, Mr. Earnshaw sends Hindley away to college, keeping Heathcliff nearby.

Three years later, Mr. Earnshaw dies, and Hindley inherits Wuthering Heights. He returns with a wife, Frances, and immediately seeks revenge on Heathcliff. Once an orphan, later a pampered and favored son, Heathcliff now finds himself treated as a common laborer, forced to work in the fields. Heathcliff continues his close relationship with Catherine, however. One night they wander to Thrushcross Grange, hoping to tease Edgar and Isabella Linton, the cowardly, snobbish children who live there. Catherine is bitten by a dog and is forced to stay at the Grange to recuperate for five weeks, during which time Mrs. Linton works to make her a proper young lady. By the time Catherine returns, she has become infatuated with Edgar, and her relationship with Heathcliff grows more complicated.

When Frances dies after giving birth to a baby boy named Hareton, Hindley descends into the depths of alcoholism, and behaves even more cruelly and abusively toward Heathcliff. Eventually, Catherine's desire for social advancement prompts her to become engaged to Edgar Linton, despite her overpowering love for Heathcliff. Heathcliff runs away from Wuthering Heights, staying away for three years, and returning shortly after Catherine and Edgar's marriage.

When Heathcliff returns, he immediately sets about seeking revenge on all who have wronged him. Having come into a vast and mysterious wealth, he deviously lends money to the drunken Hindley, knowing that Hindley will increase his debts and fall into deeper despondency. When Hindley dies, Heathcliff inherits the manor. He also places himself in line to inherit Thrushcross Grange by marrying Isabella Linton, whom he treats very cruelly. Catherine becomes ill, gives birth to a daughter, and dies. Heathcliff begs her spirit to remain on Earth—she may take whatever form she will, she may haunt him, drive him mad—just as long as she does not leave him alone. Shortly thereafter, Isabella flees to London and gives birth to Heathcliff's son, named Linton after her family. She keeps the boy with her there.

Appendix II. The Literary Selection

Thirteen years pass, during which Nelly Dean serves as Catherine's daughter's nursemaid at Thrushcross Grange. Young Catherine is beautiful and headstrong like her mother, but her temperament is modified by her father's gentler influence. Young Catherine grows up at the Grange with no knowledge of Wuthering Heights; one day, however, wandering through the moors, she discovers the manor, meets Hareton, and plays together with him. Soon afterwards, Isabella dies, and Linton comes to live with Heathcliff. Heathcliff treats his sickly, whining son even more cruelly than he treated the boy's mother.

Three years later, Catherine meets Heathcliff on the moors, and makes a visit to Wuthering Heights to meet Linton. She and Linton begin a secret romance conducted entirely through letters. When Nelly destroys Catherine's collection of letters, the girl begins sneaking out at night to spend time with her frail young lover, who asks her to come back and nurse him back to health. However, it quickly becomes apparent that Linton is pursuing Catherine only because Heathcliff is forcing him to; Heathcliff hopes that if Catherine marries Linton, his legal claim upon Thrushcross Grange—and his revenge upon Edgar Linton—will be complete. One day, as Edgar Linton grows ill and nears death, Heathcliff lures Nelly and Catherine back to Wuthering Heights, and holds them prisoner until Catherine marries Linton. Soon after the marriage, Edgar dies, and his death is quickly followed by the death of the sickly Linton. Heathcliff now controls both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. He forces Catherine to live at Wuthering Heights and act as a common servant, while he rents Thrushcross Grange to Lockwood.

Nelly's story ends as she reaches the present. Lockwood, appalled, ends his tenancy at Thrushcross Grange and returns to London. However, six months later, he pays a visit to Nelly, and learns of further developments in the story. Although Catherine originally mocked Hareton's ignorance and illiteracy (in an act of retribution, Heathcliff ended Hareton's education after Hindley died), Catherine grows to love Hareton as they live together at Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff becomes more and more obsessed with the memory of the elder Catherine, to the extent that he begins speaking to her ghost. Everything he sees reminds him of her. Shortly after a night spent walking on the moors, Heathcliff dies. Hareton and young Catherine inherit Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, and they plan to be married on the next New Year's Day. After hearing the end of the story, Lockwood goes to visit the graves of Catherine and Heathcliff.

Available at :

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/wuthering/summary.html>

Appendix II. The Literary Selection

The Crying of Lot 49(1966)

Thomas Pynchon

Summary

Oedipa Maas, the young wife of a man named Mucho, lives in Kinneret, California. One day, she receives a letter from a law firm telling her that her ex-boyfriend, Pierce Inverarity, has died and named her the executor of his estate. Oedipa resolves to faithfully execute her duty, and she travels to San Narciso (Pierce's hometown) where she meets the lawyer, Metzger, assigned to help her, with whom she spontaneously begins an affair.

As they go about sorting through Pierce's tangled financial affairs, Oedipa takes note of the fact that Pierce owned an extensive stamp collection. One night, Oedipa and Metzger go to a bar called The Scope, where they meet Mike Fallopian, a member of a right-wing fanatical organization called the Peter Pinguid Society. In the bathroom of the bar, Oedipa sees a symbol that she later learns is supposed to represent a muted post horn. Written below the symbol are the acronym W.A.S.T.E. and the name "Kirby." Oedipa makes a note of all this info before returning to chat with Mike at the bar.

Oedipa and Metzger take a trip one day to Fangoso Lagoons, an area in which Pierce owned a substantial amount of land. There, they meet a man named Manny di Presso, a lawyer who is suing the Inverarity estate on behalf of his client, who recovered and sold human bones to Inverarity but did not receive proper payment. Pierce wanted the bones to make charcoal for cigarette filters. A member of The Paranoids, a hippie band that follows Oedipa around, points out that Manny's story is similar to that of the 17th-century play *The Courier's Tragedy*. Oedipa and Metzger decide to see a production of the play nearby. The play mentions the word "Tristero," a word that fascinates Oedipa because of its placement within the play. She goes backstage to speak with the director, Randolph Driblette, who tells her to stop overanalyzing the play. She resolves to call him back later.

After rereading Pierce's will later on, Oedipa goes to a stockholders' meeting for the Yoyodyne company, a firm owned in part by Inverarity. After taking a brief tour, she stumbles into the office of Stanley Koteks, who is drawing the muted post horn symbol on his pad of paper. He tells her about a scientist named John Nefastis who has built a type of Maxwell's Demon, or a physically impossible machine that allows for perpetual motion by violating the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Koteks encourages Oedipa to meet with Nefastis.

Wanting to learn more about *The Courier's Tragedy*, Oedipa gets an anthology of Jacobean revenge plays. She notices that the paperback copy has no mention of the Tristero, however, which puzzles her. She decides to go to Berkeley to meet with the publisher. In the meantime, she stops by an elderly care home that Pierce had owned, where she meets an old man with a ring depicting the muted post horn. She also hires a philatelist (stamp expert) named Genghis Cohen to go through Pierce's stamp collection. After doing so, Genghis tells her that some of Pierce's stamps have a muted post horn in their watermark. Oedipa begins to realize that she is uncovering a large mystery.

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Oedipa goes to Berkeley to meet with John Nefastis, who shows her his perpetual motion machine. It can only be operated by people with special mental capabilities allowing them to communicate with the machine, and he tells Oedipa that she has no such mental skills. He then propositions her, causing her to run out screaming. Oedipa then begins a very, very long night of wandering around aimlessly all over the Bay area. She encounters the muted post horn symbol almost everywhere, leading her to believe that she may be hallucinating. Just before dawn, however, she encounters an old man who hands her a letter and asks her to deliver it via W.A.S.T.E. under the freeway. After helping the man to his room, Oedipa finds a W.A.S.T.E. facility under the freeway, drops in the letter and waits for the delivery man, whom she follows to Oakland and back to Berkeley after he picks up the letters and delivers them. Oedipa returns to her home in Kinneret to see her doctor, who begins shooting at her as she pulls up. He has gone crazy, obsessed with the idea that Israelis are coming to kill him because he assisted the Nazis in World War II. After he is arrested, Oedipa sees her husband, Mucho, and spends some time with him, although she quickly sees that he has become addicted to LSD, making it difficult to communicate effectively.

Increasingly alone, Oedipa seeks out Emory Bortz, an English professor at San Narciso College who has extensive knowledge of Jacobean revenge plays. With his help, she pieces together the history of the Tristero, which dates back to mid-16th-century Europe. She learns that Driblette has died, which means she will never know why he included the lines about the Tristero in his production of *The Courier's Tragedy* (these lines are not ordinarily included in the play). Oedipa begins to give up as she realizes that she is very lonely and has no real friends. She visits Mike Fallopian again, who suggests that the whole Tristero mystery may be nothing more than a huge, complex joke played on her by Pierce. Oedipa will not accept this possibility but realizes that every route leading to the Tristero also leads to the Inverarity Estate. Meanwhile, Genghis Cohen helps her piece together some mysteries about Pierce's stamp collection, which is to be auctioned off by a local dealer as Lot 49. Genghis has heard that a secretive bidder will attend the auction to bid on Lot 49, but he will not reveal himself beforehand. Oedipa goes to the auction, excited to find out who the bidder is, thinking that he may know the key to the Tristero. The novel ends as Oedipa sits in the room waiting for the crying of Lot 49, when she will discover the identity of the mystery bidder

Available at :

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/lot49/summary.html>

Appendix II. The Literary Selection

Plot Overview

Oscar Wilde(1895)

An Ideal Husband opens during a dinner party at the home of Sir Robert Chiltern in London's fashionable Grosvenor Square. Sir Robert, a prestigious member of the House of Commons, and his wife, Lady Gertrude Chiltern, are hosting a gathering that includes his friend Lord Goring, a dandified bachelor and close friend to the Chilterns, his sister Mabel Chiltern, and other genteel guests.

During the party, Mrs. Cheveley, an enemy of Lady Chiltern's from their school days, attempts to blackmail Sir Robert into supporting a fraudulent scheme to build a canal in Argentina. Apparently, Mrs. Cheveley's dead mentor, Baron Arnheim, convinced the young Sir Robert many years ago to sell him a Cabinet secret, a secret that suggested he buy stocks in the Suez Canal three days before the British government announced its purchase. Sir Robert made his fortune with that illicit money, and Mrs. Cheveley has the letter to prove his crime. Fearing both the ruin of career and marriage, Sir Robert submits to her demands.

When Mrs. Cheveley pointedly informs Lady Chiltern of Sir Robert's change of heart regarding the canal scheme, the morally inflexible Lady, unaware of both her husband's past and the blackmail plot, insists that Sir Robert renege on his promise. For Lady Chiltern, their marriage is predicated on her having an "ideal husband"—that is, a model spouse in both private and public life that she can worship: thus Sir Robert must remain unimpeachable in all his decisions. Sir Robert complies with the lady's wishes and apparently seals his doom. Also toward the end of Act I, Mabel and Lord Goring come upon a diamond brooch that Lord Goring gave someone many years ago. Goring takes the brooch and asks that Mabel inform him if anyone comes to retrieve it.

In the second act, which also takes place at Sir Robert's house, Lord Goring urges Sir Robert to fight Mrs. Cheveley and admit his guilt to his wife. He also reveals that he and Mrs. Cheveley were formerly engaged. After finishing his conversation with Sir Robert, Goring engages in flirtatious banter with Mabel. He also takes Lady Chiltern aside and obliquely urges her to be less morally inflexible and more forgiving. Once Goring leaves, Mrs. Cheveley appears, unexpected, in search of a brooch she lost the previous evening. Incensed at Sir Robert's reneging on his promise, she ultimately exposes Sir Robert to his wife once they are both in the room. Unable to accept a Sir Robert now unmasked, Lady Chiltern then denounces her husband and refuses to forgive him.

In the third act, set in Lord Goring's home, Goring receives a pink letter from Lady Chiltern asking for his help, a letter that might be read as a compromising love note. Just as Goring receives this note, however, his father, Lord Caversham, drops in and demands to know when his son will marry. A visit from Sir Robert, who seeks further counsel from Goring, follows. Meanwhile, Mrs. Cheveley arrives unexpectedly and, misrecognized by the butler as the woman Goring awaits, is ushered into Lord Goring's drawing room. While she waits, she finds Lady Chiltern's letter. Ultimately, Sir Robert discovers Mrs. Cheveley in the drawing room and, convinced of an affair between these two former loves, angrily storms out of the house.

Appendix II. The Literary Selection

When she and Lord Goring confront each other, Mrs. Cheveley makes a proposal: claiming to still love Goring from their early days of courtship, she offers to exchange Sir Robert's letter for her old beau's hand in marriage. Lord Goring declines, accusing her of defiling love by reducing courtship to a vulgar transaction and ruining the Chilterns' marriage. He then springs his trap. Removing the diamond brooch from his desk drawer, he binds it to Cheveley's wrist with a hidden device. Goring then reveals how the item came into her possession: apparently Mrs. Cheveley stole it from his cousin years ago. To avoid arrest, Cheveley must trade the incriminating letter for her release from the bejeweled handcuff. After Goring obtains and burns the letter, however, Mrs. Cheveley steals Lady Chiltern's note from his desk. Vengefully she plans to send it to Sir Robert misconstrued as a love letter addressed to the dandified lord. Mrs. Cheveley exits the house in triumph.

The final act, which returns to Grosvenor Square, resolves the many plot complications sketched above with a decidedly happy ending. Lord Goring proposes to and is accepted by Mabel. Lord Caversham informs his son that Sir Robert has denounced the Argentine canal scheme before the House. Lady Chiltern then appears, and Lord Goring informs her that Sir Robert's letter has been destroyed but that Mrs. Cheveley has stolen her letter and plans to use it to destroy her marriage. At that moment, Sir Robert enters while reading Lady Chiltern's letter, but he has mistaken it for a letter of forgiveness written for him. The two reconcile. The ever-upright Lady Chiltern then attempts to drive Sir Robert to renounce his career in politics, but Lord Goring dissuades her from doing so. When Sir Robert refuses Lord Goring his sister's hand in marriage, still believing he has taken up with Mrs. Cheveley, Lady Chiltern is forced to explain last night's events and the true nature of the letter. Sir Robert relents, and Lord Goring and Mabel are permitted to wed.

Available at:

<http://www.sparknotes.com/drama/idealhusband/summary.html>

Appendix II. The Literary Selection

Plot Overview

Tennessee Williams(1945)

THE GLASS MENAGERIE is a *memory play*, and its action is drawn from the memories of the narrator, Tom Wingfield. Tom is a character in the play, which is set in St. Louis in 1937. He is an aspiring poet who toils in a shoe warehouse to support his mother, Amanda, and sister, Laura. Mr. Wingfield, Tom and Laura's father, ran off years ago and, except for one postcard, has not been heard from since.

Amanda, originally from a genteel Southern family, regales her children frequently with tales of her idyllic youth and the scores of suitors who once pursued her. She is disappointed that Laura, who wears a brace on her leg and is painfully shy, does not attract any gentlemen callers. She enrolls Laura in a business college, hoping that she will make her own and the family's fortune through a business career. Weeks later, however, Amanda discovers that Laura's crippling shyness has led her to drop out of the class secretly and spend her days wandering the city alone. Amanda then decides that Laura's last hope must lie in marriage and begins selling magazine subscriptions to earn the extra money she believes will help to attract suitors for Laura. Meanwhile, Tom, who loathes his warehouse job, finds escape in liquor, movies, and literature, much to his mother's chagrin. During one of the frequent arguments between mother and son, Tom accidentally breaks several of the glass animal figurines that are Laura's most prized possessions.

Amanda and Tom discuss Laura's prospects, and Amanda asks Tom to keep an eye out for potential suitors at the warehouse. Tom selects Jim O'Connor, a casual friend, and invites him to dinner. Amanda quizzes Tom about Jim and is delighted to learn that he is a driven young man with his mind set on career advancement. She prepares an elaborate dinner and insists that Laura wear a new dress. At the last minute, Laura learns the name of her caller; as it turns out, she had a devastating crush on Jim in high school. When Jim arrives, Laura answers the door, on Amanda's orders, and then quickly disappears, leaving Tom and Jim alone. Tom confides to Jim that he has used the money for his family's electric bill to join the merchant marine and plans to leave his job and family in search of adventure. Laura refuses to eat dinner with the others, feigning illness. Amanda, wearing an ostentatious dress from her glamorous youth, talks vivaciously with Jim throughout the meal.

As dinner is ending, the lights go out as a consequence of the unpaid electric bill. The characters light candles, and Amanda encourages Jim to entertain Laura in the living room while she and Tom clean up. Laura is at first paralyzed by Jim's presence, but his warm and open behavior soon draws her out of her shell. She confesses that she knew and liked him in high school but was too shy to approach him. They continue talking, and Laura reminds him of the nickname he had given her: "Blue Roses," an accidental corruption of pleurosis, an illness Laura had in high school. He reproaches her for her shyness and low self-esteem but praises her uniqueness. Laura then ventures to show him her favorite glass animal, a unicorn. Jim dances with her, but in the process, he accidentally knocks over the unicorn, breaking off its horn. Laura is forgiving, noting that now the unicorn is a normal horse. Jim then kisses her, but he quickly draws back and apologizes, explaining that he was carried away by the moment and that he actually has a serious girlfriend. Resigned, Laura offers him the broken unicorn as a souvenir.

Appendix II. The Literary Selection

Amanda enters the living room, full of good cheer. Jim hastily explains that he must leave because of an appointment with his fiancée. Amanda sees him off warmly but, after he is gone, turns on Tom, who had not known that Jim was engaged. Amanda accuses Tom of being an inattentive, selfish dreamer and then throws herself into comforting Laura. From the fire escape outside of their apartment, Tom watches the two women and explains that, not long after Jim's visit, he gets fired from his job and leaves Amanda and Laura behind. Years later, though he travels far, he finds that he is unable to leave behind guilty memories of Laura.

Available at:

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/menagerie/summary.html>

Appendix III. Letter from the Understudy and The Confession

Kathryn Simmonds

Letter from the Understudy

Dear Malcolm,

The first thing to say is, I'm sorry. I know it won't be easy for you to believe after recent events, but I deeply regret the mess I've made and the embarrassment I've caused you. I've had time to turn it all over since I've been here – to be honest, there's not much else to do but ruminate once you've wandered around the market and visited the Orang-utan sanctuary - so I'm writing to try and explain. It's true, Alex and I didn't have the best relationship, but I wasn't the only one in the cast who found him difficult. He's a fine actor, of course, but it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say he also has an ego the size of a small planet. As a director, you wouldn't know what it was like to be around that all the time. The way he strutted around back stage in those tights. We used to say the only reason he'd climb a balcony in real life was if he knew there'd be a reflective surface at the top. You don't know what it was like to come in and see him every evening, warming his voice, poring over his notices, practising his Jude Law smile. I knew he'd never give me a chance. Apart from anything else, he seemed to have the constitution of a Shire horse – not so much as a runny nose, a headache. Actually, my own head is pounding rather. It must be the heat. Apparently it's so hot because the rains are due, that's what one of the local children told me anyway. There are a little gang of them who like to practise their English on me. They're a welcome diversion from my thoughts. They were asking me questions this morning.

'What is your name?'

'Gavin.'

'Where do you come from?'

'London.'

Then one of them, a little girl of about seven, asked me, 'What are you doing here?' I didn't have the phrase in my book for 'I've committed actual bodily harm against one of the rising stars of British theatre,' so I said I was having a holiday. 'Where is your wife?' she asked. There was a blinding shaft of sunlight between us, and the ground was wobbling with the heat. All of a sudden I felt so terribly wretched. *The theatre is my wife*, I thought, *And now I've lost her*. And I began to sob. Right there in front of them. Well, they all ran away of course in hysterics and who could blame them. But this is what I want to explain. The theatre is the only thing I've ever wanted, since I was a child myself - almost before I knew what it meant to be an actor. I don't come from a theatrical family. Mum and Dad didn't take us for a quick burst of Chekhov and a Zeffirelli double-bill; it was *Bob's Full House* and *The Daily Mirror*, so they had no idea where I got the notion from. Actually, it started with *The Wizard of Oz* at primary school, I was a nine year-old Tin Man and I had a costume made out of foil-covered boxes. I can still remember the song:

Just to register emotion
Jealousy – devotion
And really feel the part.
I could stay young and chipper

Appendix III. Letter from the Understudy and The Confession

And I'd lock it with a zipper
If I only had a heart.

Later on I used to sing that song to myself at castings, except it became 'If I only had a part.'

So Mum and Dad helped me through drama school, even though they wanted me to get a nice safe job, something with a pension plan. My younger sister, Dianne, works in risk management and drives a convertible Golf GTI. Mum's always impressed because Dianne buys bottles of balsamic vinegar which are tied with raffia around the neck. Mum had never eaten an olive until Di introduced her to one. All I've managed to introduce her to is a feeling of vague anxiety. As I said, my parents aren't middle-class, they don't understand what we affectionately call 'The Arts'. So my motivation wasn't all self-interest, you see. I owed them. You can't have your parents carrying on the same awkward conversations for years. 'Oh yes, Gavin's still acting...Hm? No, he's done a bit of radio work though. Yes, *The Archers*. Yes, just the one episode. An assistant vet. He's in a play at the moment. No, we hadn't heard of it either. It's touring. Middlesbrough, we think.' At the very least you need to show them a picture, a press cutting. Something. But I knew, I *knew* in my heart, that I didn't lack talent. I just needed the opportunity to prove myself as the Gavin Pollard I could be; not the bit-playing, spear-carrying walk-on, but the scene-stealing, balcony-scaling leading man. The prospect of becoming one of those unemployed older actors terrified me, a lifetime spent creaking about in the shadows, gradually filling up with a sort of Jimmy Porter vitriol, hanging around in WH Smith to skim read copies of *The Stage*. So I decided I wouldn't, *couldn't* let it happen. This has all been my own doing, and I'm *not* laying blame at your door, but I do wonder, would this have happened if I'd had a chance sooner? Perhaps if you'd put me on for the occasional Wednesday matinee? Lets be honest, it doesn't bother a party of school children who's playing the lead, they're only there to show off in front of their mates - like that time one of them called out, 'Oi, Romeo, when you gonna give her one?' and the entire balcony erupted. But I never did get a matinee, and it was quite clear that Alex wasn't going to give way. So desperation took over. After a couple of trips to a Chinese herbalist on the Old Kent Road, and a bit of experimentation, I found something that would do the trick: short term effects with no lasting damage. I was too cautious at first, sprinkled some into his pre-performance Campari and he barely noticed, just murmured something later about indigestion (as I said, Shire horse). So next time I was more generous, and it worked like a charm. Within fifteen minutes he was complaining about stomach cramps, and soon after that he was sleeping like a baby. Of course, I felt a bit guilty, rather like a benign Macbeth, but I knew he wouldn't be seriously affected. How can I describe what it was like to stand there at last and do what I'd dreamed about all my life, to speak those lines, to move an entire audience to tears? It's true, I gave an immaculate performance, but I needed to be seen by the people who mattered - the critics. So I got a mate of mine to round up some journalists and casting agents to come and see the performance the following night. I knew the part inside out, I'd studied every subtlety and mannerism. I was ready. So imagine how I felt when Alex phoned up the next morning right as rain and ready to go back on. The critics would be turning up to see me, it was my big chance. But Alex was fighting fit. I was in a fever. I wasn't being rational, as Shakespeare has it, 'These violent delights have violent ends, and in their triumphs die, like fire and powder, which as they kiss, consume.' It was too late. I was already consumed. My entire professional life was hanging in the balance. It was a blustery afternoon, and I remember there was a child flying a kite as I walked through the park towards Alex's house. I remember watching the wind toying with the kite, hardly conscious of my body, as if I were walking through a dream. When I got there I hid behind a Clematis bush beside the front door and put the masque on that I'd filched from the props department. I didn't know when he'd be back, but he was usually at the theatre by six, so I waited. My heart was

Appendix III. Letter from the Understudy and The Confession

going like a train, and I was sweating – let me tell you Malcolm, it was worse, far worse than any stage fright. At five o'clock Alex rounded the corner and as he put his key in the lock I sprang out swinging the cricket bat. It was going to be a mild knock on the head, a gentle concussion, but he turned at the vital moment and pushed me back - he has very quick reactions, it must be all that fencing. There was some kind of tussle and I was sort of swinging at him with the bat, then he made a lunge for me and that's when the masque became dislodged. We stood there staring at each other for a fraction of a second, and I could see the word beginning to form in his mouth, 'Gav...' and that's when I panicked and took another swing at him. You must believe me, I didn't want to harm him seriously. Perhaps I was in shock, because the next bit is blurry, but I remember kneeling down to check his breathing, which sounded regular. There was some blood, just a little bit of a trickle around the nose, which looked a different shape, sort of squashed. I called the ambulance from a pay phone and went home. An hour or so later you rang me to say I'd be on.

'Gavin Pollard gave a charged performance,' said *The Times*. But I wasn't acting that night, that was the real thing. I held Juliet to me as if she were my dying career, and all I could do was weep and rage. Afterwards I got on a plane and came here. It's getting dark. They'll be setting up the tables soon for dinner, and I've said all I needed to say so I'll stop now. I hope Alex is willing not to press charges, but that seems unlikely, given the circumstances – after all, who wants to swap a career as Romeo for one as Richard III? I intend to write to him, I just need to find the right words.

Forgive me if I don't include a return address, I'm keeping a low profile for a little while. But then again, I suppose I'm used to anonymity.

Guy de Maupassant
The Confession

Marguerite de Thérèlles was dying. Although but fifty-six, she seemed like seventy-five at least. She panted, paler than the sheets, shaken by dreadful shivering, her face convulsed, her eyes haggard, as if she had seen some horrible thing. Her eldest sister, Suzanne, six years older, sobbed on her knees beside the bed. A little table drawn close to the couch of the dying woman, and covered with a napkin, bore two lighted candles, the priest being momentarily expected to give extreme unction and the communion, which should be the last. The apartment had that sinister aspect, that air of hopeless farewells, which belongs to the chambers of the dying. Medicine bottles stood about on the furniture, linen lay in the corners, pushed aside by foot or broom. The disordered chairs themselves seemed affrighted, as if they had run, in all the senses of the word. Death, the formidable, was there, hidden, waiting. The story of the two sisters was very touching. It was quoted far and wide; it had made many eyes to weep. Suzanne, the elder, had once been madly in love with a young man, who had also been in love with her. They were engaged, and were only waiting the day fixed for the contract, when Henry de Lampierre suddenly died. The despair of the young girl was dreadful, and she vowed that she would never marry. She kept her word. She put on widow's weeds, which she never took off. Then her sister, her little sister Margu rite, who was only twelve years old, came one morning to throw herself into the arms of the elder, and said: "Big Sister, I do not want thee to be unhappy. I do not want thee to cry all thy life. I will never leave thee, never, never! I — I, too, shall never marry. I shall stay with thee always, always, always!" Suzanne, touched by the devotion of the child, kissed her, but did not believe. Yet the little one, also, kept her word, and despite the entreaties of her parents, despite the supplications of the elder, she never married. She was pretty, very pretty; she refused many a young man who seemed to love her truly; and she never left her sister more. They lived together all the days of their life, without ever being separated a single time. They went side by side, inseparably united. But Margu rite seemed always sad, oppressed, more melancholy than the elder, as though perhaps her sublime sacrifice had broken her spirit. She aged more quickly, had white hair from the age of thirty, and often suffering, seemed afflicted by some secret, gnawing trouble. Now she was to be the first to die. Since yesterday she was no longer able to speak. She had only said, at the first glimmers of day-dawn: "Go fetch Monsieur le Cur , the moment has come." And she had remained since then upon her back, shaken with spasms, her lips agitated as though dreadful words were mounting from her heart without power of issue, her look mad with fear, terrible to see. Her sister, torn by sorrow, wept wildly, her forehead resting on the edge of the bed, and kept repeating: "Margot, my poor Margot, my little one!" She had always called her, "Little One," just as the younger had always called her "Big Sister." Steps were heard on the stairs. The door opened. A choir boy appeared, followed by an old priest in a surplice. As soon as she perceived him, the dying woman, with one shudder, sat up, opened her lips, stammered two or three words, and began to scratch the sheets with her nails as if she had wished to make a hole. The Abb  Simon approached, took her hand, kissed her brow, and with a soft voice: "God pardon thee, my child; have courage, the moment is now come, speak." Then Margu rite, shivering from head to foot, shaking her whole couch with nervous movements, stammered: "Sit down, Big Sister ... listen." The priest bent down toward Suzanne, who was still flung upon the bed's foot. He raised her, placed her in an armchair, and taking a hand of each of the sisters in one of his own, he pronounced: "Lord, my God! Endue them with strength, cast Thy mercy upon them." And Margu rite began to speak. The words issued from her throat one by one, raucous, with sharp pauses, as though very feeble. "Pardon, pardon, Big Sister; oh, forgive! If thou knewest how I have had

Appendix III. Letter from the Understudy and The Confession

fear of this moment all my life...." Suzanne stammered through her tears: "Forgive thee what, Little One? Thou hast given all to me, sacrificed everything; thou art an angel...." But Marguérite interrupted her: "Hush, hush! Let me speak ... do not stop me. It is dreadful ... let me tell all ... to the very end, without flinching. Listen. Thou rememberest ... thou rememberest ... Henry...." Suzanne trembled and looked at her sister. The younger continued: "Thou must hear all, to understand. I was twelve years old, only twelve years old; thou rememberest well, is it not so? And I was spoiled; I did everything that I liked! Thou rememberest, surely, how they spoiled me? Listen. The first time that he came he had varnished boots. He got down from his horse at the great steps, and he begged pardon for his costume, but he came to bring some news to papa. Thou rememberest, is it not so? Don't speak — listen. When I saw him I was completely carried away, I found him so very beautiful; and I remained standing in a corner of the *salon* all the time that he was talking. Children are strange ... and terrible. Oh yes ... I have dreamed of all that. "He came back again ... several times ... I looked at him with all my eyes, with all my soul ... I was large of my age ... and very much more knowing than anyone thought. He came back often ... I thought only of him. I said, very low: "Henry ... Henry de Lampierre!" "Then they said that he was going to marry thee. It was a sorrow; oh, Big Sister, a sorrow ... a sorrow! I cried for three nights without sleeping. He came back every day, in the afternoon, after his lunch ... thou rememberest, is it not so? Say nothing ... listen. Thou madest him cakes which he liked ... with meal, with butter and milk. Oh, I know well how. I could make them yet if it were needed. He ate them at one mouthful, and ... and then he drank a glass of wine, and then he said, 'It is delicious.' Thou rememberest how he would say that? "I was jealous, jealous! The moment of thy marriage approached. There were only two weeks more. I became crazy. I said to myself: 'He shall not marry Suzanne, no, I will not have it! It is I whom he will marry when I am grown up. I shall never find anyone whom I love so much.' But one night, ten days before the contract, thou tookest a walk with him in front of the chateau by moonlight ... and there ... under the fir, under the great fir ... he kissed thee ... kissed ... holding thee in his two arms ... so long. Thou rememberest, is it not so? It was probably the first time ... yes ... Thou wast so pale when thou earnest back to the *salon*. "I had seen you two; I was there, in the shrubbery. I was angry! If I could I should have killed you both! "I said to myself: 'He shall not marry Suzanne, never! He shall marry no one. I should be too unhappy.' And all of a sudden I began to hate him dreadfully. "Then, dost thou know what I did? Listen. I had seen the gardener making little balls to kill strange dogs. He pounded up a bottle with a stone and put the powdered glass in a little ball of meat. "I took a little medicine bottle that mamma had; I broke it small with a hammer, and I hid the glass in my pocket. It was a shining powder ... The next day, as soon as you had made the little cakes ... I split them with a knife and I put in the glass ... He ate three of them ... I too, I ate one ... I threw the other six into the pond. The two swans died three days after ... Dost thou remember? Oh, say nothing ... listen, listen. I, I alone did not die ... but I have always been sick. Listen ... He died — thou knowest well ... listen ... that, that is nothing. It is afterwards, later ... always ... the worst ... listen. "My life, all my life ... what torture! I said to myself: 'I will never leave my sister. And at the hour of death I will tell her all ...' There! And ever since, I have always thought of that moment when I should tell thee all. Now it is come. It is terrible. Oh ... Big Sister! "I have always thought, morning and evening, by night and by day, 'Some time I must tell her that ...' I waited ... What agony! ... It is done. Say nothing. Now I am afraid ... am afraid ... oh, I am afraid. If I am going to see him again, soon, when I am dead. See him again ... think of it! The first! Before thou! I shall not dare. I must ... I am going to die ... I want you to forgive me. I want it ... I cannot go off to meet him without that. Oh, tell her to forgive me, Monsieur le Curé, tell her ... I implore you to do it. I cannot die without that...." She was silent, and remained panting, always scratching the sheet with her withered nails. Suzanne had hidden her face in her hands,

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and did not move. She was thinking of him whom she might have loved so long! What a good life they should have lived together! She saw him once again in that vanished bygone time, in that old past which was put out forever. The beloved dead — how they tear your hearts! Oh, that kiss, his only kiss! She had hidden it in her soul. And after it nothing, nothing more her whole life long! All of a sudden the priest stood straight, and, with a strong vibrant voice, he cried: "Mademoiselle Suzanne, your sister is dying!" Then Suzanne, opening her hands, showed her face soaked with tears, and throwing herself upon her sister, she kissed her with all her might, stammering: "I forgive thee, I forgive thee, Little One."

Appendix V

The following is a segmented version of the short story *The Kiss* by Kate Chopin.

Instruction: Please read the following segments separately. Then, indicate your opinion on each segment's degree of importance by referring to:

1. Highly important
2. Important
3. Non important

Segments	1	2	3	Mean
[1]It was still quite light out of doors, but inside with the curtains drawn and the smouldering fire sending out a dim , uncertain glow, the room was full of deep shadows.				2,16
[2]Brantain sat in one of these shadows; it had overtaken him and he did not mind.				1,83
[3]The obscurity lent him courage to keep his eyes fastened as ardently as he liked upon the girl who sat in the firelight.				1
[4]She was very handsome, with a certain fine, rich colouring that belongs to the healthy brune type.				2
[5]She was quite composed, as she idly stroked the satiny coat of the cat that lay curled in her lap, and she occasionally sent a slow glance into the shadow where her companion sat.				2,33
[6]They were talking low, of indifferent things which plainly were not the things that occupied their thoughts.				1
[7]She knew that he loved her-a frank, blustering fellow without guile enough to conceal his feelings, and no desire to do so.				1,5
[8]For two weeks past he had sought her society eagerly and persistently.				1,33
[9]She was confidently waiting for him to declare himself and she meant to accept him.				1,66
[10]The rather insignificant and unattractive Brantain was enormously rich; and she liked and required the entourage which wealth could give her.				1
[11]During one of the pauses between their talk of the last tea and the next reception the door opened and a young man entered whom Brantain knew quite well.				1
[12]The girl turned her face toward him.				1

Appendix V. The Kiss : A Segmented Version

[13]A stride or two brought him to her side, and bending over her chair--before she could suspect his intention, for she did not realize that he had not seen her visitor-				2,16
[14]he pressed an ardent, lingering kiss upon her lips.				1,65
[15]Brantain slowly arose; so did the girl arise, but quickly, and the newcomer stood between them, a little amusement and some defiance struggling with the confusion in his face.				1,66
[16]"I believe," stammered Brantain, "I see that I have stayed too long."				1
[17]"I--I had no idea--that is, I must wish you good-by." He was clutching his hat with both hands,				2
[18]and probably did not perceive that she was extending her hand to him,				1,54
[19] her presence of mind had not completely deserted her; but she could not have trusted herself to speak.				1,5
[20]"Hang me if I saw him sitting there, Nattie! I know it's deuced awkward for you.				2
[21]But I hope you'll forgive me this once—this very first break. Why, what's the matter?"				1,43
[22]"Don't touch me; don't come near me," she returned angrily.				1,5
[23]"What do you mean by entering the house without ringing?"				1
[24]"I came in with your brother, as I often do," he answered coldly, in self-justification.				1,26
[25]"We came in the side way. He went upstairs and I came in here hoping to find you. The explanation is simple enough and ought to satisfy you that the misadventure was unavoidable.				1,33
[26]But do say that you forgive me, Nathalie," he entreated, softening.				1
[27]"Forgive you! You don't know what you are talking about. Let me pass. It depends upon--a good deal whether I ever forgive you."				1
[28]At that next reception which she and Brantain had been talking about she approached the young man with a delicious frankness of manner when she saw him there.				1,76
[29]"Will you let me speak to you a moment or two, Mr. Brantain?" she asked with an engaging but perturbed smile.				1,43
[30]He seemed extremely unhappy; but when she took his arm and walked away with him, seeking a retired corner, a ray of hope mingled with the almost comical misery of his expression.				1,76

Appendix V. The Kiss : A Segmented Version

[31]She was apparently very outspoken.				1
[32]"Perhaps I should not have sought this interview, Mr. Brantain; but--but, oh, I have been very uncomfortable, almost miserable since that little encounter the other afternoon. When I thought how you might have misinterpreted it, and believed things" –				1,83
[33]-hope was plainly gaining the ascendancy over misery in Brantain's round, guileless face-				1,66
[34]-"Of course, I know it is nothing to you, but for my own sake I do want you to understand that Mr. Harvy is an intimate friend of long standing. Why, we have always been like cousins--like brother and sister, I may say.				2,16
[35]He is my brother's most intimate associate and often fancies that he is entitled to the same privileges as the family.				2
[36]Oh, I know it is absurd, uncalled for, to tell you this; undignified even," she was almost weeping,				1
[37]"but it makes so much difference to me what you think of--of me."				1,11
[38]Her voice had grown very low and agitated.				1
[39]The misery had all disappeared from Brantain's face.				1
[40]"Then you do really care what I think, Miss Nathalie?"				1
[41]May I call you Miss Nathalie?"				1
[42]They turned into a long, dim corridor that was lined on either side with tall, graceful plants. They walked slowly to the very end of it.				1,66
[43]When they turned to retrace their steps Brantain's face was radiant and hers was triumphant.				1,83
[44]Harvy was among the guests at the wedding; and he sought her out in a rare moment when she stood alone.				1,3
[45]"Your husband," he said, smiling, "has sent me over to kiss you."				1,16
[46]A quick blush suffused her face and round polished throat.				1,04
[47]"I suppose it's natural for a man to feel and act generously on an occasion of this kind.				1,2
[48] He tells me he doesn't want his marriage to interrupt wholly that pleasant intimacy which has existed between you and me.				1,83
[49]I don't know what you've been telling him," with an insolent smile, "but he has sent me here to kiss you."				1,6

Appendix V. The Kiss : A Segmented Version

[50]She felt like a chess player who, by the clever handling of his pieces, sees the game taking the course intended.				1,87
[51]Her eyes were bright and tender with a smile as they glanced up into his; and her lips looked hungry for the kiss which they invited.				1,83
[52]"But, you know," he went on quietly, "I didn't tell him so, it would have seemed ungrateful, but I can tell you. I've stopped kissing women; it's dangerous."				1,5
[53]Well, she had Brantain and his million left.				1
[54]A person can't have everything in this world; and it was a little unreasonable of her to expect it.				1,92

لقد قيّدت القراءة الأدبية منذ زمن بعيد ضمن مجموعة من الاتفاقيات المقررة وفق ما يمكن تسميته بالمنظر؛ هذا الأخير الذي استطاع أن يعكس حقيقة معرفية مفادها امتلاكه لجرأة علمية تجعله بحق قادرا على تجاوز عقبات القائمة في واقع النص الأدبي؛ الأمر الذي جعل من غالبية القراء العاديين عند تعاملهم مع تلك الاتفاقيات المعمول بها في أوساط النظم الأكاديمية يشعرون بنوع من الضوابط غير العلمية المتماشية مع واقع النظام اللغوي الأجنبي، وهذا ما حدى بكثير من القراء على اختلاف مستوياتهم من أن يصل بهم المقام إلى تدهور لا نظير له مع اللغة الأجنبية، تماما ما حاولنا تتبعه في سياق الحرم الجامعي لكثير من الطلبة محاولين صبر آراء ثلاثة وثلاثين طالبا جامعيًا جزائريًا، سواء من جهة المعرفة أم الوجدان الذي يعد بحق شيئًا ذا بال في عملية الاكتساب. والجدير بالذكر أنّ هذا التصور القائم في علاقة النص الأدبي بمتلقيه، هو الذي أهّلنا لإثبات ما إذا كانت الاستجابة الأدبية تتبع فعلا من قدرات ذاتية لهؤلاء القراء؛ الشيء الذي جعلنا في ما بعد نستحضر في ظل هذا النوع من الدراسة بعضا من التساؤلات لعل من أهمها أثر ما يأتي: هل بمقدور النصوص الأدبية باللغة الإنجليزية أن تولد لدى القارئ الجزائري قابلية تجعله يقدر مثل هذه النصوص؟ هل الكفاءة الأدبية شرط لازم للقارئ الجزائري لحظة تعامله مع نص أدبي باللغة الإنجليزية؟ هل بمقدور التقديم أن يحقق استجابة بيداغوجية بين النص الأدبي باللغة الإنجليزية وواقع القراء الجزائريين؟ أي نوع من الشعور يستطيع التقديم توليده لدى القراء؟ على هذه الشاكلة توزعت خطة البحث على ستة فصول؛ حاولت الفصول الثلاثة الأولى تناول أهمية المنهج التجريبي للقراءة الأدبية على حساب استعراض النظريات الرئيسة لاستجابة القارئ كما هي في صورتها التقليدية والتي تعكس أهم عوائق التفسير الأدبي. بعدها راح الفصل الرابع يقترح تجربة أمبيرية لثلاثة وثلاثين قارئًا جامعيًا جزائريًا قصد تصوير وصفهم الشخصي والاستعداد المحتمل في كيفية التعامل مع واقع النصوص الأدبية في اللغة الإنجليزية. في الفصل الخامس حاولنا أن نقيس إمكانية وتقدير القراء عن طريق تقديم نوعين من القصص؛ إحداهما كلاسيكي والأخرى معاصرة، وذلك قصد الكشف عن الكفاءة الأدبية لمثل هذه النصوص الأدبية ومدى تحقيق الأثر لدى هؤلاء القراء. أما في الفصل السادس فقد تناولنا تجربة أخيرة تهدف إلى قياس مدى تأثير القراء بصلاحيات مبدأ التقديم الظاهرة في النص الأدبي الناطق على لسان اللغة الإنجليزية و ما هي أنواع العاطفة المولدة عندهم على عقبة ذلك. تأتي الخاتمة والمجسدة في النتائج لتشير إلى أنّ غالبية القراء الجزائريين يملكون القدرة الكافية في التعامل مع النصوص الأدبية بشكل عام والقصص القصيرة على وجه أخص التي جاءت على لسان اللغة الإنجليزية، كما تشير الدراسة إلى أنّ القراء السذج لهم إحساس خاص تجاه القيم الجوهرية للنص الأدبي التي تفوق بحق أيّ تأثير خارجي؛ وهذا دليل على أنّ الكفاءة الأدبية ليست شرطًا ضروريًا للتقدير. أبعد من ذلك على الرغم من تحقيق مبدأ التقدير لا القائم في عملية تلقي النص الأدبي إلا أنّ عدم توفر استراتيجيات ملائمة لواقع التفسير النص وتأويله؛ لا يؤهل هؤلاء الصنف من المتلقين أن يبنوا تصورًا ملحوظًا في فهم النص وفق ما تقتضيه طبيعة العصر.

Résumé

La lecture littéraire a été bâillonnée pendant longtemps par un ensemble de conventions établies préalablement par les théoriciens et mieux encore, elle a été considérée du ressort de seulement quelques esprits atypiques, capable d'habiter le texte littéraire et d'y déceler ses moindres nuances. Dans ce sillage, il va sans dire que les lecteurs ordinaires qui souhaiteraient comprendre ce même texte à partir de leur propre perspective, se sentent aliénés par la complexité des conventions imposées, ce qui par conséquent contribue une fois de plus au dénigrement du statut des études littéraires en milieux universitaires. La situation n'est que plus sérieuse quand ces mêmes pratiques sont importées dans un contexte de langue étrangère où la plupart du temps le lecteur est considéré idiosyncrasique et ne bénéficie d'aucune attention particulière. L'objectif de cette recherche est donc d'examiner, de manière empirique et à travers la collecte de données, les réponses, à la fois cognitives et affectives, de trente trois étudiants/lecteurs algériens à une sélection de textes littéraire en langue anglaise. Afin de démontrer si les réponses répondent à des prédispositions intrinsèques ou extrinsèques aux lecteurs concernés, quatre questionnements sont soulevés: Les lecteurs sont-ils capables de générer une appréciation de toute sorte de texte littéraire confondue? La compétence littéraire est-elle fondamentale chez le lecteur algérien afin qu'il puisse apprécier un texte littéraire en anglais? La mise en avant (*foregrounding*) est-elle suffisante pour générer une appréciation littéraire? Et enfin, quelle sorte d'émotions est née à la suite de cette appréciation? L'étude est divisée en six chapitres, les trois premiers tendent à démontrer l'importance de l'approche empirique quant à la lecture littéraire au détriment des principales théories de réception telle que traditionnellement conçues et implémentées et qui soulignent les limites de l'interprétation littéraire. Le quatrième chapitre propose une expérience empirique sur trente trois étudiants algériens afin de dépeindre leur profil et leurs prédispositions potentielles à s'engager avec les textes littéraires d'expression anglaise. Dans le cinquième chapitre, la profondeur d'appréciation de deux histoires courtes, une dite canon et l'autre plus contemporaine, est mesurée et comparée chez ces mêmes lecteurs. Le sixième et dernier chapitre propose une troisième expérience qui vise à mesurer l'impact du principe de la mise en avant sur les lecteurs et le genre d'émotion généré par la suite. Les résultats de cette étude suggèrent que les lecteurs algériens sont capables d'apprécier toute sorte de texte littéraire d'expression anglaise et plus particulièrement du genre histoire courte. Aussi, ces mêmes lecteurs, considérés naïfs et peu sophistiqués, sont sensibles à certaines valeurs intrinsèques au texte, ce qui montre que la compétence littéraire n'est pas essentiellement nécessaire pour une simple appréciation du texte. Enfin, bien que les lecteurs aient apprécié le texte d'expression anglaise à travers les caractéristiques de la mise en avant, ils n'ont pas pu développer les stratégies d'interprétation appropriées à la construction de leur propre compréhension de ce même texte.