

CONVERGENCE OF TEXT AND READER:  
A STUDY OF TEXTUAL STRATEGIES AND THE FORMATION OF  
CONFIGURATIVE MEANING IN SELECTED WORKS OF FICTION

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CONVERGENCE OF TEXT AND READER: A STUDY OF TEXTUAL STRATEGIES AND THE FORMATION OF CONFIGURATIVE MEANING IN SELECTED WORKS OF FICTION**

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In this study, first, the foundational developments in the domains of linguistics, philosophy of language and literary theory that have led to a transformation of the concept of the reader are reviewed closely. Then, to understand the nature of literary responses, an Interactionalist Model of Readership (IMR) is proposed to explore the two sides of the reader-text interaction and the nature of the final product of the reading act. Using various examples, the interaction between the text and the reader is, then, scrutinized in semiotic, discursive, narrative, and pragmatic levels to show how text communicates with its readers through various channels. Finally, the characteristics of the final product of

the readership, namely, the virtual existence of the text, or the aesthetic object, are explored. In the following chapters, this model of readership is put to practice to show how the narrative texts of *Tristram Shandy*, and *The Dispossessed* limit and delimit their reader's creative imagination, by employing a variety of textual techniques and narrative strategies. It is elucidated how these texts limit the arena for the readers' creative imagination by implementing certain narratorial modes, internal focalizations, and also by sequencing the action of their stories in certain manner. Then, it is demonstrated how these texts invite their readers to play a more active role in the act of concretization by implementing gaps, tantalizing omissions, digressions, alternate stories, and an unreliable narrator, and hence make the arena wider for the readers' creative imagination.

**Keywords:** Reader, Response, Creative Imagination, Interactionalist Model of Readership, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics

## ÖZ

METİN VE OKURUN YAKINSALLIĞI – SEÇME KURGU ESERLERDE  
METİNSEL STRATEJİLER VE YAPISAL ANLAMIN OLUŞUMU ÜZERİNE  
BİR ÇALIŞMA

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Son birkaç on yılda edebi çalışmalar alanında, okuyucu kavramı, okuyucunun rolü ve okuyucunun karakteristik özellikleriyle ilintili yenilenen bir ilgiye tanıklık etmiş ve edebi okuryazarlığın ayrılmaz mekanizmalarını açıklığa kavuşturmak için girişimlerde bulunulmuştur. Çalışmamızda, bu dönüşüme yol açan sebepler yakından incelenmiştir. Saussurecü dilbilimin dil ve gerçeklik arasındaki ilişkiyi nasıl bozduğu, dilin nasıl bir taşıyıcıdan ziyade anlamın belirleyicisi olarak görülmeye başladığı, edebi eser kavramının sabitlenmiş bir varlık olduğu anlayışının, sanat kavramının çoğulcu anlamlar üretmeye muktedir bir işlevi olduğu düşüncesiyle nasıl yer değiştirdiği tartışılmıştır. Bu tepkilerin doğasını anlamak

üzere, okuyucu-metin etkileşimini ve okuma eyleminin doğasını anlamak için Etkileşimci Okuryazarlık Modeli (EOM) önerilmiştir. Öncelikle, metnin kendi içinde gerçekliği temsil edemediği, boşluklarla belirsizliklerden oluştuğu, yalnızca şematik bir görünümünden oluşabileceği açıklığa kavuşturulmuştur. Sonrasında, çeşitli okuyucu kavramları, kavramın genelleştirilmiş bir varlığa indirgenmeye nasıl direndiğini göstermek için gözden geçirilmiştir. Son olarak, okuyucunun ürününün özellikleri olan metnin sanal varoluşu incelenmiştir. Okur merkezli eleştiriye değerlendimeci bir özelliğin eklenmesi için mütevazi bir öneri getirilmiştir. Devamında, bu okur modeli Laurence Stern'in *Tristram Shandy* ve Ursula le Guine'in *Dispossessed* isimli anlatısal metinlerinde, okuyucunun hayal gücünün, çeşitli metinsel teknikler kullanarak nasıl sınırlayıp kısıtladığını göstermek üzere uygulandığı üzerinde durulmuştur. Ardından, bu metinlerin okuyucuyu, boşlukları doldurarak, hikayeleri ve güvenilmez bir anlatıyı somutlaştırmaya teşvik edip, dolayısıyla da okurun hayal gücüne daha geniş bir alan açarak, nasıl bir rol oynamaya davet ettiği gösterilmiştir. Bu tez, okuyucunun kurgusal eserlere hayat vermedeki vazgeçilmez rolüne ve edebiyattaki hikâye anlatım mantığına büyük bir ölçekte ışık tutmayı ummaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Okuyucu, Okuyucu Yanıtı, Yaratıcı Hayal, Interaktif Okuyucular Modeli, Fenomenoloji, Hermeneutics

To My Mother,

For a goodness of heart, graciousness of soul, and a determination of will that goes far beyond anything words can convey.



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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the last few decades the domain of literary studies has witnessed a renewed interest in the concept of reader, reader's role and reader's characteristic features, and various attempts have been made to expound and clarify the integral mechanisms of literary readership. Although the significance of the reader or audience in the process of giving life to any given artwork has not been a mystery and has been acknowledged since Greek antiquity, the full reification of the centrality of the process of readership in conceiving and consuming art had not been fully investigated until the relatively recent developments in philosophy of language, linguistics, hermeneutics, and literary theory. This study will attempt to outline the relatively recent conceptualizations and findings in the above-mentioned fields and explicate how advances in the notion of language, and in the recognition of the centrality of linguistic competence in the process of cognition have revolutionized the concept of literary reader over the past decades. Appropriating concepts from the hermeneutics of Gadamer, the reception theory of Jauss and Iser, the phenomenological hermeneutics of Ricoeur as well as the theoretical findings of Stanley Fish, this study hopes to contribute to the assembling of a working theory of readership capable of clarifying both the role of the reader and that of the text in the process of reading a literary text. This theoretical framework, which will be called Interactionalist Model of Readership or IMR will be formed and expounded by

reorganizing the key concepts of the field and offering new analytical aspects to the already existing concepts. The focus will then turn to the secondary subject of this study, which will be the careful analysis of a select group of techniques from the vast repertoire of textual strategies that each literary text<sup>1</sup> utilizes in order to create its intended aesthetic response by progressively limiting and de-limiting the reader's creative imagination in the act of reading. In brief, the second part of this thesis will be a text-oriented reader-response analysis of the selected texts, which will build upon, but not remain limited to, recent developments in the domains of linguistics, hermeneutics, phenomenology, narratology and literary theory. The study hopes to bring concepts from these mentioned disciplines together, especially from narratology and hermeneutics, to form a working model of readership and then demonstrate how these ideas can be related to reading fictional literature in general.

Out of the three major agents of a narrative discourse which are, following Michael Toolan's simplified schema, the author, the text and the reader (65-68), it was the author who received much of the attention of the pre-modern literary theoreticians. During this long lasting era it was the author "where the locus of meaning was perceived to inhere" (Lang 2). The major questions which pervaded the minds of literary critics or commentators were the aims and undertakings of the author and his or her social, political and psychological status at the time of creating the narrative work, and the reader's task was reduced to unraveling the message that had been planted and fixed in the text by the author. Text, indeed, was not regarded

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<sup>1</sup> The terms text, art, and artwork are apparently distinct concepts and must be defined independently, but as far as a theory of response is concerned, they are synonymous and thus, may usually be used interchangeably in this dissertation. The same rule may be applied to the concepts of reader, audience, observer, and even critic, that are all used to refer to individuals who respond to a certain work of art.

as anything more than a tool to impart the author's knowledge, viewpoints, and advice to the reader. Biographical criticism is a representative of an attitude commonly found and expressing this older and long-lasting viewpoint. As will be explored later in this study, the centrality of authorial meaning in literature was rooted in a perception of language which considered it as nothing more than a vehicle of ideas. Language in this sense, was considered as carrier of the authorial meaning, and the reader's task was nothing more than uncovering that meaning.

During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century several developments in the philosophy of language, linguistics and literary theory lead to the development of a revolutionized concept of language and, hence, of literary art. These developments questioned the established principle of the authenticity of authorial meaning and, holding that language itself contributes to the formation of meaning, started to put the text itself at the center of literary analysis. This is what Chris Lang calls “a shift in the locus of meaning” (3), the consequential effect of developments in academia which revolutionized the concept of language and elevated it from a simple tool, a mere carrier of meaning, to what makes the understanding of the world possible. This ongoing unraveling of the concept of language as the shaper of meaning rather than a naïve and neutral carrier of authorial message is at the center of modern understandings of the concepts of text and has had extensive repercussions in twentieth and twenty-first century literary theory and philosophical thought.

In linguistics this revolution partly originated with the works of Swiss linguist and semiotician, Ferdinand de Saussure in whose works a fresh concept of language and linguistic competence emerged. Building upon Immanuel Kant's idealism, Saussure was the key figure in paving the way for looking at language as

a self-referent self-sufficient semiotic system which represents its internal values rather than worldly objects and issues outside of the realm of language *per se*. Kant's epistemological conceptualizations, especially his theorem regarding the inaccessibility of the "thing as it is (*Ding an sich*)" to consciousness can be seen as the founding elements of Saussure's semiotics as well as of Husserl's later phenomenology. Kant essentially shut the outer world out of the subject's consciousness, and left us with only phenomena, or the appearances of noumena (real world objects) in our consciousness. It requires only a small leap from there to seeing language as the aggregate of the independent constituents of subjective meaning. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant got quite close to making that leap by asserting that "there are no judgments without language" (Bennett 87) but didn't quite take that leap. Some commentators argue that Kant took the importance of language for granted and they wonder "whether the dearth of explicit attention to language in the first *Critique* is the result of a purposeful eschewal on Kant's part or of the fact that the intimate link between language and thought was already an assumption in need of no mention" (Muller 1).

Under the influence of Kant's philosophical idealism, Saussure suggested his famed semiotic understanding of language, best put forward in the seminal *A Course in General Linguistics* (*Cours de linguistique générale*), which was students' notes based upon his lectures, published posthumously in 1916. Saussure saw language as a sign system and defined the linguistic sign as comprising of two sides: the signified and the signifier. Saussure's definition of the sign is the foundation of modern linguistics, which has had colossal consequences through 20<sup>th</sup>-century thought. His so-called semiology or semiotics, a term which in fact first appeared in

John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1720; bk.4, ch.21), proposed that language is comprised of signs, that linguistic signs do not refer to the real world, and that the relation between the signifier and the signified is purely analytical, arbitrary, and differential. His emphasis on the synchronic study of *Parole* (the spoken system of a language) in order to extrapolate the internal functions of the *Langue* (language in the abstract, as a system of rules and conventions), along with his revolutionary definition of the sign detached conceptualizations of language from long held perceptions of objective reality and paved the way for the freedom from the authorial meaning in literature that was about to come later. Saussure's ideas, along with the theories of another influential semiotician of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Charles Sanders Peirce, have had an undeniable role in the formation of the modern concept of language and will receive necessary attention in Chapter Two of this study.

Meanwhile, the domain of philosophical inquiry was forming an elevated notion of language as well. Taking an oversimplified vantage point which, though essentially reductionist and somehow crude, may still offer some enlightenment on the nature of 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy, three distinct phases can be identified in the history of philosophy. Since its inception in Greece in 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, philosophy was preoccupied with offering a unified theory of the outside world. This is what we can term *The Metaphysical Period*, which lasted up to Descartes's rationalist revolution in philosophy. The Cartesian breakthrough marked the beginning of the second phase, which can be roughly titled *The Epistemological Turn*, and which was basically the switching from the "What is the world?" question to a "How do we understand the world?" question. Such epistemological endeavors, in both Realist



and Idealist camps entailed a considerable portion of the philosophical inquiries from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The beginning years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the rise of analytical philosophy, however, brings us to the third phase, which can be entitled *The Philosophy of Language*, or the study of that phenomenon which alone, or above all, makes the understanding of the world possible (Sluga 1).

This transition towards the primacy of language in the conception and transmission of human experience can be traced in the works of many philosophical minds of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Friedrich Nietzsche in his *Will to Power* announced that we can only think within language and moving beyond language is equal to ceasing to think (266, 283). Ludwig Wittgenstein also focused on language as a dominant factor in human understanding of the world. His early work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was essentially an attempt to uncover the relationship between language and the world. In assigning to language the role of empowering humans with understanding, he went so far as to declare: “The limits of my language means the limits of my world” (*Tractatus* 68). Martin Heidegger, another widely influential German philosopher was following a similar path as well. As Babak Ahmadi outlines, “Heidegger theorized that we have been encircled by language, and language has no signification related to outer world. Reality is nothing but a word inside the language and humans have no way of moving outside language, and seeing it from outside.” (*Text Structure* 134)

The domain of literary theory was also ripe for new developments at the time. Along with these revolutionary developments in linguistics and philosophy, a group of Russian literary theorists started to move the focus of attention in literature from author to text. Later acquiring the appellation that had initially been given to

them by their adversaries in contempt, they became known as Formalists. Being under the influence of the scientific method of the time, they yearned to develop a positivistic view of literature that at times was referred to as literary science. Having such a purpose in mind, the Russian formalists found their stronghold in linguistics (Eagleton, *Literary Theory* 3), and under the influence of Saussure proposed a synchronic study of literature which advocated detachment from both historical analysis and from the quest for an authorial meaning. Preoccupied with poetry rather than prose, they strove to define poetry as a deviation from the norms of other language usage, and devised a range of textual analysis techniques, some of which are still in use in today's literary criticism, in order to dig out the literary text's latent meaning. Formalism, which can be considered as the forerunner of structuralism, did not succeed in crafting their so-called Literary Science, but their attempts culminated in the transition from the author-centered analysis of literature to a text-centered one that can be taken as one of the foundations of contemporary literary theory. Apart from anthropological repercussions and reifications, French Structuralism and its Anglo-American version, New Criticism can be considered as logical offshoots of concepts that formalists put forward in the first place, or at the least, they were largely influenced by ideas of formalist movement.

Formalism, Structuralism and New Criticism put text at the center of literary analysis by successfully freeing it from the long rule of the author and authorial meaning. The best reiteration of this vantage point can probably be seen in the works of William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley whose co-authored essays, "The Intentional Fallacy" (1946) and "The Affective Fallacy" (1949) marked the epitome of text-centered analysis of literature, and strove to detach the meaning of literary

text from its authors and from its potential readers. In “The Intentional Fallacy” Wimsatt and Beardsley argued that the psychological processes of the author are inaccessible to the interpreter. We are locked out of the mind of the author and have only the text available to us and it is this text<sup>2</sup> that should be examined, not the author. They concluded that “the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art” (468). Likewise, in “The Affective Fallacy” they criticized “the confusion between the poem and its results” (31) and argued for the independence of the meaning of literature from the effect it has on its readers. The later publication of Roland Barthes's extensively noted 1967 article: “The Death of the Author” and the almost equally famous 1970 article by Michelle Foucault “What is an Author?” can also be seen as another recapitulation of the same inclination in literary theory to put text at the center of literary analysis, by declaring the independence of the meaning of text from its author or potential readers.

The next major transition in the focus of literary theory, which coincided with the advent of deconstruction and post-structuralism on one hand and developments in postmodern semiotics on the other hand, may be observed in what can be called the rise of the reader in later 20<sup>th</sup> century theory. Terry Eagleton noted that “there has been a marked shift of attention to the reader over recent years. The reader has always been the most underprivileged of this trio [author, text, reader] -- strangely, since without him or her there would be no literary texts at all” (*Literary*

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<sup>2</sup> In modern literary theory the word ‘text’ has come to denote something more than the mere object comprised of words on the page, and thus, is sometimes used without an article. In this dissertation, I have chosen to use it without an article, a, or the, when I refer to the concept of text in its entirety rather than a particular piece of writing, and confine the usage of articles to cases when a particular piece of writing is intended by the word, text. The same standard has been applied to the term, ‘reader’.

*Theory* 74). This renewed interest in the role and functions of the reader in literature took several distinct directions which ultimately resulted in what is generally categorized today under the titles of Hermeneutics, Reader-Response Criticism, and Reception Theory.

The significance of the reader in the process of bringing literature to life has never been a mystery. Aristotle based his famous definition of tragedy in his *Poetics* on the effects that it creates upon certain readers. “A tragedy”, he claimed, “is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in appropriate and pleasurable language; in a dramatic rather than narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish a catharsis of these emotions” (76; ch.6). In the modern age, Saussure defined the signified as a conceptual or mental image of objects or ideas that was relevant to the mental encounter of the individual with the objects or ideas (Ahmadi, *Text Structure* 15). Even Formalists, who rank amongst the most devout proponents of the autonomy of the text, paid special attention to the significant role of the reader in conceptualizing literature: Viktor Shklovsky in “Art as Technique” (1917) discussed the significance of interpretation in his critique of Alexander Potebniya, for example. It can also be argued that the Formalists’ definition of the *estrangement* or *defamiliarization* effect is basically reliant upon the reception and interpretation of the reader, without whom no such effect is conceivable. New Criticism was also curious about the role of the reader. I. A. Richards in *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), wrote that literary criticism cannot ignore the experience of facing a literary work, “because such experience has the potential to alter meaning” (101-102). Later, Empson in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1961) explained that the main concepts that Richards had

discussed, including meaning, tone, sensation, and intention, are all transformed in the process of reading, but he concluded that criticism should leave the study of such nuances to psychology (238-239). American pragmatism was another prominent school of thought which was careful in examining the details of experiencing art, and went as far as defining art as experience, even as early as in John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934), which is a speculative work on the significance of paying credit to aesthetic response in defining art in general. Yet, the full recognition of the role of the reader in giving life to literature was still to come.

In contrast to the objective study of the text which was the ultimate purpose of Formalism, later reader-oriented approaches emphasized the subjective nature of meaning and introduced ideas such as the “constructive meaning or configurative meaning” (Iser, *Act* 119) of the text. The question of “what does the text mean to the reader?” was gradually replaced by the question of “What does the text do to the reader?” (Iser, *Act* 49 -51). This shift in the locus of meaning had the ideas of German philosopher Edmund Husserl and his phenomenological approach as its starting point. As it will be explicated in Chapter Two of this study, Husserl's tradition of phenomenology, which “stresses the centrality of consciousness in all investigations of meaning (Lodge 188)” turned out to be a semantic theory which distinctively undermines the text-centered concept of the meaning that had been suggested by the formalist-structuralist movement.

Modern conceptions of language along with the phenomenology of Husserl had extended reverberations in the domain of epistemology as well as in aesthetics, and virtually put an end to the previously dominant paradigm that “took it for granted that art, as the loftiest form of knowledge, was representation of a whole, if

not the actual form of truth itself” (Iser, *Act* 13). It successfully established that truth is just a cognitive concept. “Following Descartes' dream of absolute certainty in knowing, Husserl focused on things as they show themselves. The philosophy of this movement, and probably the most famed philosophical slogan of the century, was to “let things appear as they are” or to refrain from reading our presuppositions into a text” (Lang 4). A key concept in Husserl's theory was phenomenological reduction, or bracketing, which was essentially an emphasis on an absolute concentration on what is immediate to experience, discarding all subjective (authorial) meaning associated with *noumena*. Following Kant's footsteps in asserting that “the thing as it is” is outside our reach, and subjective experience is only the experience of phenomena in subject's consciousness, Husserl proposed that the phenomenon as it appeared in consciousness should be stripped of all its secondary connotations, and reduced to its essential element in order for the cognition to be historically or ontologically true. He insisted that “Everything not 'immanent' to consciousness must be rigorously excluded” (qtd. in Eagleton, *Literary Theory* 55). Husserl himself adhered to the traditional concept of language and believed that text has a central meaning which has been fixed by the language and exists in an “idealist” sense (Lang 2), but his approach is important in that it puts the experience of phenomena in the subject's consciousness at the center of the cognition process, and provides the basis for further developments in that direction. His theory will be explored in more detail in Chapter Two of this study.

Husserl's pupil Martin Heidegger is the one who went beyond Husserl's essentialist approach and, in *Being and the Time* (1927), rejected the notion of objective historical knowledge. In Heidegger's view, man finds himself “thrown

into” (Lang 3) the world in which language, culture and the institutions of life are givens. Heidegger's rejection of the subject-object, ‘I-it’ duality leads him to the position of denying that meaning is fixed in a text. In Heidegger's argument truth is then revealed, not as an objective grasp of meaning, but as the unveiling of *Being* through the medium of language (Lang 4). This can also be seen as a significant step towards the understanding of the dynamic nature of meaning or, in Heidegger’s cosmos, truth.

Although Heidegger failed to understand the full primacy of language in producing meaning and not just expressing it, i.e. the linguistic nature of cognition, his ideas paved the way for more radical reader-centered approaches. Terry Eagleton calls Heidegger’s approach a “hermeneutic phenomenology” (Eagleton, *Literary Theory* 66). It was Heidegger’s student Hans Georg Gadamer who followed his teacher’s footsteps and provided an adequate view of linguistics in hermeneutical theory. He was the first theoretician to recognize the privileges of both the text and the reader in the process of reading. His theories on the hermeneutical mechanisms of reading play a key role in the formation of an interactionalist model of readership, and will be discussed along with the ideas of Iser, Fish, and others in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

Gadamer was not alone in his endeavors to clarify the relationship between the reader and the text or, as he may have put it, to define the limits of interpretation. The literary theory of the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which had been freed from the rule of text due to the works of thinkers such as Gadamer and others, started to pay more and more attention to the reader and increasingly to privilege him or her in the process of reading. The consequence of this interest was

a range of reader-centered theories that paid extensive attention to the reader and persistently tried to answer the question of how different readers respond to texts according to their historical, ideological, psychological, and epistemological backgrounds. Some of these theories such as the later ideas of Stanley Fish, as stated in his 1980 compilation of essays entitled *Is There a Text in This Class?* have gone so far in acknowledging the reader in the process of reading and creating meaning that they deprived the text of any share in the process and even sometimes denied the epistemological and ontological existence of the text. Lang's summary of Fish's ideas is clarifying: "According to Fish meaning no longer inheres in the text, but is fully located within the reading community and it is the reader who, as a member of a reading community constructs meaning according to the interpretive strategies of the community" (Lang 11). Fish, in his reluctance to give text any importance but a minor one, concludes in his article "Interpreting the Variorum" that "it follows then that what utterers do is give hearers and readers the opportunity to make meanings (and texts) by inviting them to put into execution a set of strategies" (173). Fish's theory of reading is practically fruitful in offering new interpretations of literary texts, as can be demonstrated by the range of interpretations that he has offered in his books, but his ideas fail to describe clearly the role of both the text and the reader in the reader-text interaction that Iser calls "the act of reading".

The search for a theory which clarifies the role of both the reader and the text in the act of reading may lead us to the ideas of German literary theoretician Wolfgang Iser. His works, along with the works of his colleague at the University of Constance, Hans Robert Jauss, construct a working model of readership which recognizes the shares of both the reader and the text. Iser, following Gadamer's key



ideas in hermeneutics and under the influence of Polish thinker, Roman Ingarden, suggests a text-centered theory which he calls “the phenomenological approach” (Lodge 188) to the reading process. According to Iser the world of text, by its very own nature, is incomplete, consisting of inevitable gaps and indeterminacies. Following Ingarden he calls this “the schematized view” (*Act* 21 and 98) of the text and suggests that during the act of reading these gaps and indeterminacies are filled in or, in Ingarden's terms, “concretized”, giving rise to an entity that he calls “the virtual existence” (*Act* 225) of the text. This virtual existence which is the true and real existence of the text is within neither the text nor the reader but lies half way between them. To paraphrase, the final configurative meaning of the text emerges as the result of the dialectic between the work and the reader. Iser uses his phenomenological approach to “adequately describe” (*Act* 173) the reading process. In his important work, *Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1978) he clarifies the mechanisms through which the text offers gaps and indeterminacies and through a complicated mechanism of anticipation and retrospection, grouping together, illusion making and other strategies through which the reader concretizes the text, which gives rise to its “virtual existence.” His concepts, which have since been appreciated as being “scientific” and “impressively coherent” (Lodge 188), are the building blocks of the interactionalist model of readership which this dissertation hopes to develop, and hence, will receive full attention in Chapter Two.

Iser's theory helps us to understand how the text and the reader are lifeless on their own and how they come to life in the process of reading. His theory on one hand sets out to account for different strategies that are used by readers in order to concretize the schematized view of the text and on the other hand sets the scene for

textual analysis in order to expound the textual techniques that have been put in the text in the first place by the author to influence the reader's response in the act of reading. Iser's definition of the boundaries within which the text works, or rather within which the dynamic between textual overdetermination and textual underspecification act: "boredom and overstrain" (*Act* 108), clarifies the nature of the reading process and demonstrates how a literary text, through sentences, provides the reader with some stimuli while leaving out some other clues deliberately in order to activate the reader's imagination and allow him or her to participate in the process of giving life to the literary text. In brief, the concepts introduced by Iser, as it will be discussed in this study, can be put to use to explain and clarify the nature and nuances of the interaction between the text and the reader in the act of readership, and offer a novel and fruitful angle to practical literary analyses. However, partly due to his difficult, and at times, confusing writing style in the spirit of German idealism, and his inadequate attention to the relevance of his concepts to reading fiction, his illuminating conceptualizations have not been sufficiently adapted and put to use in literary studies throughout the last decades. This dissertation hopes to fill in this gap, by reorganizing the key concepts of Iser and others in the field, and thus, making them more appealing in the first place, and then pursuing them to their logical consequences in analyzing two well-known works of fiction.

Following Iser, several other developments have been made, mostly during recent years, to clarify the limits and potentials of what *ad arguendo* will be called the Interactionalist Model of Readership, or IMR. Dorit Cohn's work on indeterminacies and tantalizing omissions (61-65), Stanzel's work on the effects of

textual and narratorial elements on the process of reading and his definition of the complimentary story, and Dolezel's conceptualization of implicit and explicit meaning within the text (see Kearns 56) are among those enterprises which, under the direct or indirect influence of the Iserian model, have tried to come up with a more promising theory of fiction. The body of works that these critics have developed over the recent years demonstrates the potential fruitfulness of readership theories, and will be a matter of analysis in Chapter Two.

Another formulation of the sophisticated give and take relationship between the text and the reader can be found in the works of Paul Ricoeur, the French philosopher whose work is usually referred to as phenomenological hermeneutics. Ricoeur defines text as “a discourse fixed by writing” (*Hermeneutics and Human Sciences* 146). His definition entails an important point, which is that “text is reliant upon the discourse and cannot be reduced to its constituent components: words, or sentences” (*Hermeneutics and Human Sciences* 159, 164, 166). So, in a phenomenological analysis of readership, it is discourse that should be the unit of aesthetic response, not words or sentences. He sees metaphor and symbol as central functions of language and moves on to propose that metaphor can only be comprehended within a discourse. He considers metaphor as the “creative aspect of language” whose main function is related to the multiplicity of meaning in discourse” (*Interpretation Theory* 53), and that enables “language to redefine reality” (*Interpretation Theory* 47). In other words, for Ricoeur, metaphor is the power by which discourse is able to reconstruct reality, and literature is the playground in which language practices this power.

“Symbol” is a key concept for Ricoeur. He calls the symbol “the presence of multiplicity of meaning” (*Interpretation Theory* 53) and defines it as “any signifying structure within which the primary denotative meaning brings about a secondary connotative meaning, in which the secondary meaning is determined based on the primary one” (*Interpretation Theory* 53). For him, literary language is metaphorical in its entirety and the analysis of symbolic or metaphorical meaning is equal to interpretation, and interpretation means the excavation of the latent meaning of the text using the explicit meaning. In short, Ricoeur suggests that literary language is metaphorical and symbolic, and because of this feature it entails the ability to redefine or reconstruct reality.

The metaphorical nature of literary language gives rise to the multiplicity of meaning which in turn brings in the role of the reader’s creative imagination as a decisive factor in interpretation. “Ricoeur’s account of the way in which narrative represents the human world of acting (and, in its passive mode, suffering) turns on three stages of interpretation that he calls mimesis1 (prefiguration of the field of action), mimesis2 (configuration of the field of action), and mimesis3 (refiguration of the field of action)” (*Time and Narrative* 52). Whereas mimesis1 or prefiguration refers to certain common competencies such as in the use of symbols, or the temporality of actions, and mimesis2 or configuration refers to the imaginative configuration of elements of action [i.e. text], it is the third mimesis or the reconfiguration of the field of action which might interest us the most. Refiguration in Ricoeur’s definition concerns the integration of the imaginative or “fictive” perspective offered at the level of mimesis2 [= narrative text] into actual, lived experience. Ricoeur’s model for this is a phenomenology of reading, which he

describes as "the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader" (*Time and Narrative* 71). Ricoeur's attempt to describe the process of refiguration is here evidently influenced by Gadamer's model of a fusion of horizons. He emphasizes the dialectic nature of readership and explicates how the time of the narrative meets the time of the reader, and Then becomes Now. It is worth noting here that mimesis for Ricoeur is more than imitation. For him, mimesis is re-creation, and thus the process of reconfiguration or readership is nothing less than creation on its own. In his words, reading is equal to actualization of the text.

As stated earlier, this study hopes to contribute to the formation of a comprehensive theory of reader-response by reorganizing the key concepts in a more practical way, and introducing new analytical aspects to the theory, which will be capable of addressing a wide variety of questions that has engaged the attention of literary theoreticians for long; questions such as how a literary text is constituted in the first place, and how significant is the role of reader or audience in the production and consumption of it? How can we define reader and readership and to what extent can the dialectic of readership be described? How do artworks, or literary texts, control the process of receiving an artwork or readership? What are the boundaries of the reader/text dialectical interaction? Why does a second reading of the same text produce variant meanings? What are the priori requirements for a successful act of reading? Why do readers engage in interaction with the text? and the like.

In order to address these issues, this study will primarily focus on bringing together elements from the above-mentioned frames of thought to elucidate what actually happens at the time of reading, and how the configurative meaning, or

virtual existence of text is formed. To meet that purpose, Ingarden's phenomenology, Gadamer's hermeneutics, Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics, and Iser's readership theory will be discussed along with more recent developments in the field which can be traced in the works of Lubomir Dolezel, Franz K. Stanzel, and Dorit Cohn. The ultimate purpose here will be to set up a working model of interactionist readership which will be capable of shedding light on the many persistent questions in the fields of literary theory that were counted above. The originality of this study is in its reorganization of some fundamental concepts in reader-response criticism. Iser's work in *Act of Reading* represented tremendous progress in this field, but due to the pioneering nature of his work, and partially to his almost indecipherable style of writing, a need for a clearer formulation of his theoretical findings is felt when reading his canonical work. Iser wrote his book in the tradition of German idealist thinkers, a fact that has made it "too difficult to read and understand" (Ahmadi, *Text Structure* 685). In a subsection entitled "Levels of Interaction" I will try to describe the interaction between the reader and the text on four different levels — semiotic, discursive, narrative and pragmatic — which I hope will serve to clarify the complex nature of this dialectical interaction better, and make this entire theoretical endeavor more readable, and hopefully pave the way for further application of the theory. An attempt will also be made to systemically address some other problems in reader-response studies, such as the definition and role of the reader, and the driving force behind the reader's interaction with text as well.

Upon elucidating the capabilities and expounding the limitations of such a theory, the study will turn to its major research question by taking a road less

travelled, that is, by analyzing the repertoire of the textual nuances and techniques through which the aesthetic response of the reader is controlled, limited or delimited by the text. In other words, instead of focusing on the set of factors that affect the reader at the time of reading, i.e. the pragmatic side of interaction, a task that has been frequently undertaken by many modern critics such as feminists, Marxists, poststructuralists, and others, the focus of this study will be on the text-oriented aspect of reader-response theory, which has been somehow overlooked by theoreticians until now. This is where hermeneutics should join forces with narratology to explain how a fictional text manages to keep its reader in the act of readership, by constantly maintaining him within the boundaries of interaction. To adequately explore the text's grasp upon the reader's aesthetic response, a range of textual techniques and strategies will be analyzed closely under the light of the IMR in order to figure out how the selected texts manage to engage the reader in the process of meaning creation, or, in Ingarden's terms, the concretization. As Dolezel points out: "we are far from knowing all the markers of implicit meaning" (7) (and, I might add, the explicit meaning), but the philosophical foundations of the above mentioned strains of thought, and the range of tools that have been created for textual analysis by Russian formalism, structuralism and post structuralism can be used to analyze the consequences of some of the recurrent literary strategies. These strategies will include the implementation of narratorial modes, such as homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators, and internal focalization, as well as the deliberate manipulation of semantic gaps, and tantalizing omissions, the effects of unreliable narrators, and the implementation of digressions and alternative stories within the text.

The selected texts will be used as specimens to demonstrate how text limits and de-limits the reader's creative imagination and, by doing so, keeps the reader's attention between the two extreme limits of overdetermination and underspecification, in other words, overstrain and boredom. The study at this stage will aim to clarify the textual techniques by which any given narrative text keeps its readers between these two limits, and thus drives them to continue with the act of reading, or meaning creation. This perspective may also add an evaluative facet to reader-response criticism, which in my opinion it is in dire need of.

I hope to be able to use various examples from the vast repository of narrative fiction that can come in handy for the sake of delineating the theoretical framework and shedding light on the less exposed corners of the theory. However, most of the discussions will be centered around two works of fiction. The first of these, a text already studied by Iser, is *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (1759)* (henceforth *Tristram Shandy*) by Laurence Sterne. This novel recommends itself as one of the best possible specimens to analyze and demonstrate the interactive model of readership. Due to its conversational structure and deliberately-manipulated chaotic style, it is not difficult to follow and demonstrate the dialectical nature of reading the literary work in *Tristram Shandy*, although this dialectical nature is an inherent characteristic of all literary narratives, as will be explored in this study. As Stanzel truly points out "here, as so often happens, the obvious and close at hand was first recognized in its more unusual manifestations" (2). The narrator, Tristram, manifestly promises to share the content with the reader fairly and leave something for him or her to practice his or her imagination:



Writing, when properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a different name for conversation. As no one, who knows what he is about in good company, would venture to talk all; —so no author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good-breeding, would presume to think all: The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself. (*Tristram Shandy* 75)

In Iser's words, “Sterne’s concept of the literary work is that it is something like an arena in which the author and the reader participate in the game of imagination” (*Act* 108) and it is these qualities that make the work ideal for this analysis and even a prototype of what we can truly call dialectic narrative. It is worth to remember, however, that the path that will be taken in this study is utterly different from the thematic analysis of *Tristram Shandy* that has been offered by Iser<sup>3</sup>. The focus will be on establishing the dialectic nature of sense making in the novel, and then to use narratological concepts to clarify how the text provokes, controls, and manipulates the creative imagination of its readers by careful implementation of textual techniques. The study will also use a more recent fictional work, *The Dispossessed, An Ambiguous Utopia* (henceforth *The Dispossessed*) by Ursula Le Guin. This science fiction novel has been chosen on the merits of its peculiar narratorial strategy and well-structured plot and will lend itself fruitfully to analyzing the execution of narratorial modes in contemporary fiction under the light of IMR. Through the analyses of several textual strategies in these two narratives the study hopes to establish the theoretical claim that all fictional writings, especially in the genre of novelistic fiction, be it modern, or classical, follow the same logic of representation that will have been discussed in this dissertation. The choice of these two highly distinct novels which belong to disparate eras and

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<sup>3</sup> It can be argued that Iser, in his analysis of *Tristram Shandy* has not put his own reader-response concepts to much work, and has not followed those concepts to their logical consequences. However, this argument lies beyond the scope of this current study.

subgenres in the rich history of novel, is, in itself, hoped to contribute to proving the universal validity and applicability of the theory of readership that will be developed in this dissertation. As stated earlier, the study is not to offer any new interpretations of these two novels, but sets out to shed light on the mechanism of reading and interpretation by using examples from these two works. Thus, though the theoretical framework that will be put together is applicable almost to all fictional writings, the discussions will be confined to these two novels in order to avoid unnecessary repetitions or redundancy.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONVERGENCE OF TEXT AND READER

The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the complicated interactions between the reader and the text in the act of readership, and to offer insights on various issues related to this interaction. In order to meet this purpose, first, two significant developments in the domain of modern philosophy and aesthetics, namely hermeneutics and phenomenology will be explored and their relevance to a theory of readership that is to come will be established. It will be elucidated how a modern understanding of text, reader and the relationship between the two is deeply rooted in the concepts that have been introduced and matured in these two disciplines. Attention will then be paid to the two sides of the reader-text interaction separately, and the nature of artwork, or to be more precise, the literary text as well as various reifications of the notion of reader will be extensively explored. How texts are inherently incapable of representing reality in its entirety will be argued in detail, along with how the notion of reader, which is a necessary element for any theory of reading, resists philosophical generalization. Once the significant concepts of reader and text are adequately addressed, the study will focus on the interaction between these two in the act of readership<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Numerous Reader-Response theorists, including Fish and Iser, use the terms “readership” and “reading” synonymously. However, in this study, I have tried to use reading to refer to the process of reading that is happening now, and readership to the general sum of the interaction that happens between the text and the reader; that is, readership is more general in this thesis, and includes all aspects of the interaction.

Although the domain of reader-response criticism is ripe with plenty of useful concepts and theorizations, a satisfactory description of the interaction between the reader and the text in the act of readership is yet to be offered. Proposing that the text and the reader interact with one another in several distinct levels, namely semiotic, discursive, narrative and pragmatic, this research hopes to offer some insights on the nature of text/ reader interaction and clarify the rather confusing, abstruse and involute set of ideas that have already been presented by various theorists on that matter. The proposition that the text communicates with its reader in various levels, that were mentioned above, is a key addition of this research to the domain, and will serve as an organizing framework for a set of already existing, but perplexingly sporadic concepts. Having established the significant role of the levels of interaction in gaining a clear view of the nature of the reader/ text relation, the study will then attempt to explicate how this dialectic of readership gives form to what Iser calls the virtual existence of the text, or the aesthetic object, which is the final product of the act of readership. Various features of the aesthetic object will be explored in detail before turning to the question of the boundaries of interaction. Using theory and exemplification, how the reader is not at absolute liberty in responding to the literary text, and how text controls this process of concretization by implementing a variety of techniques that *ad arguendo* will be referred to as “textual strategies”, will be illustrated. These textual strategies are in charge of limiting and de-limiting the reader’s creative imagination, in other words, keeping him between the boundaries of boredom and overstrain, and are thus to be scrutinized in the following chapters of this study.

Finally, a criticism of the lack of evaluative measures in reader-response will be offered before proposing a conceptual frame of evaluation that can be used to evaluate individual works of fiction based on the degree of their success in attracting and controlling reader's creative imagination, that is to say, based on their interpretive richness. This chapter will function as a theoretical framework for the practical analyses of the two works of fiction that will come in the following chapters.

## **2.1 Phenomenological Hermeneutics and the Emergence of Active Reader**

As briefly outlined in the introduction to this study, the concept of language was revolutionized throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the advent and development of new theories in philosophy of language, semiotics, and literary theory. Instead of being thought of as a mere carrier of meaning or a vehicle of thought, in the works of influential philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein, language came to be seen as the shaper of meaning, or instrument by which "the understanding of the world is possible" (Ahmadi, *Text Structure* 57), or as Eagleton puts it: as "the constitutive of the reality or experience, rather than simply a vehicle for it" (*Read Literature* 3). The transition from epistemology to language played such a canonical role in contemporary thought that some encyclopedists refer to the philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the Philosophy of language. This colossal reorientation of western thought is summarized in the words of the philosopher Ernst Cassirer who, in 1945, wrote: "in the whole history of science there is perhaps no more fascinating chapter than the rise of the new science

of linguistics. In its importance it may very well be compared to the new science of Galileo which in the seventeenth century changed the whole concept of the physical world. (Cassirer 1) As a consequential effect of this revolution, the nature of literary texts was brought under increasing philosophical scrutiny, the meaning of literary meaning was remodeled and the relationship between authors, texts and readers started to receive unprecedented attention.

This paradigm change is manifest in the distinction that was later made between positive romantic, or rhetorical hermeneutics and a negative, or postmodern one. Hermeneutics as a methodological approach to interpretation first emerged in the biblical exegesis of the Middle Ages. It found its strongest voice in more recent times in Friedrich Schleiermacher's attempts to decipher sacred texts. Building on Schleiermacher's ideas, Wilhelm Dilthey tried to set up a disciplined methodology which could account for the interpretation of religious and non-religious texts as well. This line of theoretical development is what is usually referred to as traditional hermeneutics, which was predicated upon a pre-20<sup>th</sup> century conception of language. Traditional hermeneutics, which is also referred to as 'Romantic hermeneutics' (Ahmadi, *Truth and Beauty* 403), or 'Positive hermeneutics' (Ricoeur), was based "on a rhetorical model and considered reading as decoding" (Suleiman 8). It started from the fact that text is abundant with "Immutable and empirical fact(s) which interpretation simply has to discover" (Shusterman 107). The ideal end of this discipline was "to rid interpretation of subjectivist or romantic overtones and to establish the notion (in Dilthey's words) of universally valid interpretation, which is the basis of all historical certainty" (Suleiman 17). For instance, Hirsch, who can be considered as the last proponent of romantic hermeneutics (Ahmadi, *Truth and*

*Beauty* 403), was a follower of Dilthey and insisted that the meaning of each word or discourse is rooted in the intention of the author. To Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Hirsch, reading was nothing but decoding the text in the hope of achieving a single, clear-cut interpretation that they deemed the meaning of the text. In other words, meaning was latent in the text, and the reader's job was that of excavation, uncovering and bringing it to light. In this approach the classical notions of 'unity and harmony' played a central role, and "aesthetic [response] was linked with reconciliation of the text's ambiguities, and harmonizing its various layers" (Iser, *Do Theory* 59).

In a sharp break away from traditional hermeneutics, what Ricoeur and others call "negative hermeneutics" (*Freud and Philosophy*) is predicated upon the modern conception of language that sees it as a semiotic system with its independent existence and internal logic. Taking this notion of language into consideration, "negative hermeneutics" holds that "the very notion of a universally valid interpretation is untenable" (Suleiman 17). To negative hermeneuticians, such as Gadamer, meaning is not fixated within the text but is always on the flux. Nothing is firmly established and, to quote Nietzsche, "whatever exists is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a becoming master, and all subduing and becoming masters involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous 'meaning' and 'purpose' are necessarily obscured or even obliterated" (*Genealogy of Morals* 77). Negative hermeneutics is predicated on an attempt to account for the unstable nature of meaning, its dynamic essence, and slippery boundaries. It sets out to explain "why the meaning — once found — should change again even though the letters,

the words, and the sentences of the text remained the same” (Iser, *do Theory* 58). Harmony, which was the totalizing theory of classical aesthetics for centuries, is simply rejected in favor of a dynamicity and plurality of meaning that is the ultimate finding of negative hermeneutics. To Barthes, for instance, the text is seen as “a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds” and the work of reading consists not of “respecting” the text, but of breaking it up, maltreating it, preventing it from speaking” (Suleiman 19). As will be elucidated later in this study, this dynamic nature of textual meaning has a lot to do with the role of the reader in the act of reading and with the reader’s consciousness, and these, alongside the premises upon which negative hermeneutics of Ricoeur, Gadamer and others have been constructed, should be seen as the indispensable constituents of any successful theory of reading.

Another significant breakthrough in the beginning years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that calls for a brief mention here was the advent of phenomenology by Edmond Husserl and his pupil Martin Heidegger, which first emerged as a reaction to the “metaphysics and rampant psychologism” (Iser, *Do Theory* 13) of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Following Kant’s theorem about the inaccessibility of the “thing as it is (*Ding an sich*)” to consciousness, Husserl insisted that anything not imminent to consciousness should be “bracketed” in order to grasp the essence of the phenomena. “He started from two presuppositions: 1. We live in a world in which we are confronted with given realities. 2. We relate to what is independent of ourselves through acts of consciousness, which are intentional” (Iser, *Do Theory* 13). His two principles are relevant to recent literary theory in that they both acknowledge the existence of outer independent realities (in the case of literature:



text) while stressing the centrality of consciousness in all investigations of meaning. Soon after, the centrality of consciousness in the formation of meaning turned out to be a semantic theory which led to the decline of authorial text-centered meaning and the rise of a readerly<sup>5</sup> and configurative one. For instance, phenomenologists such as Georges Poulet directed their attention to the consciousness of the reader, and tried to figure out what is actually going on there. Though Poulet's work is advantageous in that it put the reader's consciousness in the center of any act of cognition, principally he yearned to "produce the most complete apprehension of the text's subjectivity" (Tompkins xiv); it can be discerned then that he was still in the domain of romantic hermeneutics, and consequently was to assign the reader "an essentially passive" role. Later literary theoreticians such as Stanley Fish built upon this "centrality of consciousness in all investigations of meaning" to propose that "the place where sense is made or not made is the reader's mind rather than the printed page or the space between the covers of a book" (Fish 36). Jean Paul Sartre approaches this position in *What is Literature?* by stating that the reader must constitute everything.

It is within the ideas of Martin Heidegger's pupil Hans George Gadamer that the idea of "convergence of text and reader" (Iser, *Act* 36) first appears and gains significance. Gadamer is a canonical figure in the development of reader-centered theories of literature in that, following his master's footsteps in what Terry Eagleton calls a "hermeneutic phenomenology", (*Literary Theory* 57) he acknowledges the centrality of language and builds up a linguistic angle to Heidegger's ideas about the

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<sup>5</sup> The distinction between readerly and writerly texts in Barthes should not be mistaken with the readerly meaning that arises out of the interaction of text and reader. To clarify, using Barthes terminology, it can be said that "writerly texts" give rise to "readerly meanings". (See Glossary of Key Terms)

world. Following Saussure and Wittgenstein's path, Gadamer argues that there is no thought prior to language. It is language that both makes possible and limits our understanding (Lang 3). Gadamer's perspective is best summarized in Brice Wachterhauser's famous sentence, "that it is only through language that we have a world." (31). For Gadamer, because Dasein, Heidegger's concept that can roughly be taken as Being, encounters the text in one's own world, the foundation of understanding is always shifting. Dasein is historically situated, which means that, "our rational ability to make such judgments does not rest on some deep, permanent structure, transcendental reason or human nature, but rather it depends on our changing self-understanding" (Wachterhauser, 38). These insights, which should be seen as according with other developments such as Derrida's deconstruction and Lacan's theories regarding the linguistic nature of the unconscious, open the door for a new attentiveness to the reader's contribution to the hermeneutic process.

If language is the means by which our understanding of the world is possible, literary criticism is on par with the investigation of truth, because truth has no existence outside language. Gadamer does not initially intend to come up with an aesthetic theory. As a philosopher, like his master Heidegger, his work is generally focused on the understanding of truth, i.e. epistemology, but soon it turns out that truth has a linguistic structure, and thus epistemology and philosophy of language converge in Gadamer. He is well aware of this colossal breakthrough when in his introduction to *Truth and Method*, he writes that a "critique of aesthetics is a step towards the critique of truth." (xxi) The concept that truth is nought but a linguistic interpretation is now well established among postmodern thinkers; for instance, what Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels called critical truth (Shusterman 95-

101) is nothing but another interpretation subject to the process of sense-making like every other interpretation. In short, in Gadamer's theoretical universe, it seems that there is no drastic difference between the way we experience the world and the way we experience an artwork, and the philosophical 'subject', which is us, is synonymous with 'reader' and the 'world' with 'text', and thus his phenomenological hermeneutics at its core is an attempt to elucidate the intricate relationship between subjects and the world, or comparatively between readers and text.

Gadamer is situated within the domain of negative or modern hermeneutics. For Heidegger meaning is getting to somewhere which already exists, but Gadamer believes that "it is impossible to discover the new world; but one should construct it" (Ahmadi, *Truth and Beauty* 409) and "To understand text does not mean primarily to reason one's way back into the past, but to have a present involvement in what is said" (Gadamer 393). In his view, text, or world, is outside subjects' consciousness; that is, to use Husserl's terminology, it is a given reality, and the only way it can be understood is to bring it to the subject's (reader's) consciousness. This is an act of interpretation which is a dynamic process which enables us to experience the artwork, or in general makes cognition possible. This "experience of reality" (Gadamer xiv) is the only cognition we attain, or that we can attain, of reality; in other words, we can only attain interpretations and not a final clear-cut meaning which can be formulated once and for all.

To Gadamer, artwork is open to interpretation and the notion of a final meaning is dogmatic and baseless because, following the principles of phenomenology, "cognition is equal to bringing the object of cognition to the

cognitive horizon of the reader” (Ahmadi, *Text Structure* 207). This process, which Gadamer calls *Aunwendung*, is by nature pluralistic, and cannot lead to a solid, one-sided, clear-cut meaning in the reader’s consciousness, because it is reliant upon the “cognitive horizon of the reader which is essentially historical” (Gadamer 430), and upon the semantic potentials of the text, which can never be precisely pinpointed. Furthermore, Gadamer reiterates that cognition is incapable of avoiding prejudice (Ahmadi, *Truth and Beauty* 407). The concept of prejudice, which was later developed to become part of Gadamer’s concept of “tradition” is potentially able to play a significant role in the theory of literary readership that will be developed later in this study. Gadamer’s tradition as well as Jauss’s horizon of expectations” (Ahmadi, *Truth and Beauty* 429) are both closely related to elements of intertextuality in the text on one hand, and the inescapable influence of reader’s cultural background in the act of literary readership on the other. It is a consequential factor which determines the scope of the reader’s interaction with the text, or as Gadamer describes it, “the fusion of horizons” (217). This will be investigated later in this study.

Based on what is explicated above, to Gadamer, a reader’s consciousness is the playground in which the act of interpretation is actualized. He also sees the existence of text, the words on the page, the colors on the canvas, or simply the world outside, as “a given reality” which interacts with the reader’s consciousness. In his book *Truth and Method* (1982) Gadamer sets out to describe this interaction, or in his terminology, the creative or dialectic fusion of horizons, which creates new meaning. He writes:

One intends to understand the text itself. But this means that the interpreter's own thoughts too have gone into re-awakening the text's meaning. In this the interpreter's own horizon is decisive, yet not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces, but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk, and that helps to truly make one's own what the text says. (390)

Apparently, to Gadamer, “each interpretation is based on pre-existing elements, on previous interpretations or judgements.” (28) The reader’s consciousness is not a tabula rasa on which the text can play semantic games; instead, the reader brings a whole lot of background influences into play, which Gadamer might call *Überlieferung* or Tradition (xvi). Tradition regards the reader’s background as well as texts’. It has all the prejudgments that the reader brings along as well as the intertextual elements that the text incorporates into its formation. However, to Gadamer cognition is an inevitable fusion of utilizing tradition and keeping a critical view about it. “language for Gadamer is in the horizon of tradition.” (Ahmadi, *Truth and Beauty* 409) and tradition is in a constant flux and thus each and thus, every reading of a given text will end up with a new interaction in the reader’s consciousness. Each reading is a new game of imagination.

Gadamer represents a movement away from author-centered interpretation but in his universe there remains, however, a two-way process between text and interpreter in which the latter's questions are informed by the former. He is not alone in his description of the cognitive process. The French phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur is more or less on the same track. Ricoeur defines interpretation as an activity which uncovers new meaning by means of old or existing meaning (See Ahmadi, *Truth and beauty* 434-435). The very notion of “new meaning” puts Ricoeur in the domain of negative hermeneutics. For him, too, meaning is not latent in the text and the reading is by no means an excavation of truth from the text, but is

an active involvement in the game of imagination which leads to the production of meaning. “Ricoeur's account of the way in which narrative represents the human world of acting (and, in its passive mode, suffering) turns on three stages of interpretation that he calls mimesis1: prefiguration of the field of action, mimesis2: configuration of the field of action, and mimesis3: refiguration of the field of action” (*Time and Narrative* 52) that were briefly referred to in the introduction. Simply put, in his theoretical view, text configures the prefigured field of action, i.e. outside world and life experiences, and readers in the act of reading refigure the configured view of the text. The apparent similarity between his definition of refiguration (by reader) and the Iserian term “concretization” is indicative of the fact that Ricoeur is in the same line with Iser in believing that reading is equal to actualization of the text.

Now that the principles of the phenomenological hermeneutics are set, the question arises how far such a process, namely, the interaction of reader and text, or simply put, phenomenological readership, can be described; is it, in fact, at all possible to pinpoint the process which brings to life what we may call textual meaning? This question reverberates with the old formalist-structuralist discussions about the possibility of a literary science which can account for all the nuances of meaning and alterations of sense-making experiences. In short, I can say, though the possibility of the existence of such a science is highly doubtful, it is not advisable to disregard such a concept altogether. As with the centuries-old attempts to construe an all-conclusive grammar for the English language, although we are far from composing a competent grammar capable of describing all the practical performances of the English language, such endeavors have not been altogether

futile, in that they have provided us with a profound insight into the mechanisms of linguistic performance and how English works in general. In the same manner, an attempt to describe the dynamic and always-on-the-flux interaction of the text and the reader may not come to a rigid positivistic result, but can help us understand better the nature of literary text. On the other hand, the possibility or benefits of an end-point or final and exhaustive description of the language is questionable due to its probably detrimental effects on the natural dynamicity of language. In the same manner, the ultimate description of the intricate process that happens in the consciousness of the reader vis-à-vis a work of art, may seem to be of doubtful possibility or even desirability, given the fact that artists keep procreating new methods, utilizing new mediums and implementing new strategies in order to activate the interpretants' creative imaginations. Still, such precautions should not bar us from trying to come up with a model to describe that process because as stated above, such a description, even partially available, may be useful in paving the way for a deeper understanding of numerous artworks as well as offering us an indispensable insight into the nature of art in general. As will be discussed later in this study, clues for constructing such a descriptive model can be found in the pragmatist aesthetics of Richard Rorty, the phenomenological approach of Wolfgang Iser, and the interpretive communities of Stanley Fish, whose methods have, in Thompkins's words, "turned the mind into an investigation of its own activities." (xvi)

## 2.2 Art as Experience/ Meaning as Event

As reviewed earlier in this research, until the advent of modern art, it was taken for granted that texts had a content, which was considered as a carrier of meaning, and interpretation had to uncover the text's meaning (Iser, *do Theory* 8). However, as the movements in Linguistics and philosophy of language were changing the perception of language from a carrier into an active shaper of meaning, new enterprises in literary theory were shifting attention from author-centered meaning to the text itself, or in Iser's words, "away from representative meanings and onto the functions operating within the work" (*Act* 15). This was the beginning of the path which lead to the emergence of Formalism, Structuralism, and their Anglo-American counterpart, New Criticism, which took the literary text as an 'object' and insisted on what later came to be called the autonomy of the literary text. New Criticism had this autonomy of literary work as its foundational principle and at its core, and assigned its practitioners the significant task of "demonstrating text's unity" by employing the technique of "close reading" (Culler, *Pursuit* 3). In a sense, New Criticism was the logical continuation of classical aesthetics in that a reformulation of the classical concept of harmony was its organizing principle. In Iser's words, to New Critics "the value of the work" was "measured by the harmony of its elements" (*Act* 15). Under the dominance of New Criticism in academic circles, for many decades, notions such as the autonomy of the literary text, its organic unity and its wholeness were taken for granted. Suleiman writes:

Perhaps no single idea has had as tenacious and influential a hold over the critical imagination in our century as that of textual unity or wholeness. Amidst the diversity of metaphors that critics have used to describe the literary text — as an organic whole, as a verbal icon, as a complex system of interlocking and hierarchically related 'strata' — the one



constant has been a belief in the text's existence as an autonomous, identifiable, and unique entity: the text itself. (40)

This view of text as a complete whole was brought under scrutiny along with the emergence of modernist art, and the development of radically new narrative techniques such as stream of consciousness. It was a lost cause to stick to the idea of organic unity in the time of Eliot's poetry, Woolf's fiction and Picasso's painting. As times passed critics came to the conclusion that "the notion of unified text, like that of the unified self is an illusion" (Suleiman 43). Fish later wrote that "the objectivity of text is an illusion, and moreover, a dangerous illusion, because it is so physically convincing (Fish 43). Jonathan Culler gives a whimsical example of Stephane Crane's *Red Badge of Courage* whose first edition lacked more than a few significant passages from the manuscript, that were added in later printings:

The "maimed" text of *Red Badge of Courage* was for a long time the only text available. In the published text many passages from Crane's manuscript, including one entire chapter, was deleted, creating numerous puzzles. If the "Appleton text is illogical and inconsistent," Mailoux asks, "how have *Red Badge* critics been able to make any sense of it, let alone call it an American classic?" (*Pursuit* 66)

The question remains: how could the concept of autonomy or organic unity have been brought to reconciliation with the fact that "the maimed version" of *Red Badge of Courage* was originally received by many critics as full, and not as something missing a part. Other more radical works of art were bringing the concept of organic unity under heavier fire. For instance, Kasimir Malevich offered an all-white canvas in 1915 as a work of art, and perhaps following his footsteps we came across John Cage's 4:33 (1952), a musical piece for piano in three movements, which was nothing more than four minutes and thirty-three seconds of pure silence. Experimental artworks such as Malevich's and Cage's along with the nihilistic

works of Dadaists, Futurists and many others practically ridiculed the idea of the wholeness of objective art with organic unity, and gradually paved the way for a novel understanding of art and artwork. A quick visit to any museum of modern art around a world would have brought the concept of organic unity crashing down, but literary theorists chose to wait for half a century before taking such a step.

Furthermore, the idea that an artwork is nothing but an object which functions as a repository of meaning waiting to be retrieved by the readers is a direct attack on the ancient understanding of art as something valuable. If literature, for instance, carries certain meanings, what value will be left to it if someone discovers that meaning and divulges it to the public. In Iser's view, "like a magician's disclosed trick, it is dubious if it will have any value at all" (*Act xi*). It is therefore, legitimate to consider that in literature there is something more than simple retrieval of meaning at work, which, as will be explained later, is the production of meaning, or sense as a result of interaction between reader or interpreter and text or artwork.

The concepts that art is not an objective entity but an experience and that the meaning of an artwork does not necessarily lie within its objective existence, but may be the result of an experience of interacting with it are not novel at all, and have been around for quite a long while. As noted in the introduction, Plato and Aristotle put the problem of reception at the center of the philosophy of art. The Aristotelian definition of tragedy for, instance, is predicated on the effect that a certain form of storytelling may have upon its audiences. However, the claim that meaning is an event in the consciousness of the users of the language has its root in the radical concept of language as the shaper of meaning that did not come around until the twentieth-century developments in linguistics and philosophy of language,

that were briefly outlined above. In this modern era, the American pragmatist John Dewey was among the pioneering thinkers who tried to shift attention from the material existence of the artwork towards the process of experiencing it. In his seminal work, *Art as Experience* (1934), which has been criticized at times by analytic aestheticians as a “hodgepodge of conflicting methods and undisciplined speculations” (Isenberg 128), he wrote: “...an experience is a product, one might almost say bi-product, of continuous and cumulative interaction of an organic self with the world. There is no other foundation upon which esthetic theory and criticism can build” (Dewey 220). The similarity between his pragmatist aesthetics and the phenomenological hermeneutics of Gadamer and others is evident in that they both acknowledge the existence of an outside entity, text or artwork, and the centrality of the consciousness of the observer in assigning meaning to that entity. These references to the consciousness of the reader, observer, or interpretant were the building blocks of the later reader-response theories.

Even the founding fathers of the formalist-structuralist movement were vaguely aware of the role of the consciousness of the reader in bringing the artwork to life. Viktor Shklovsky wrote in 1916 that “art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important” (*Art* 26) and I. A. Richards later noted that “the remarks we make as critics do not apply to such objects but to states of mind, to experiences” (17). In *Principles of literary Criticism* (1924) Richards expounded that literary analysis should not disregard the experience of reading literary text because such experience has the potential to change the meaning of the text (101-102). Abrams in *Mirror and the Lamp* discussed the pragmatic aspect of literary work, and related it to the pedagogical effect of the literary work and its

capacity to influence the addressee. It can be argued that even formalist concepts such as ambiguity are in nature connected with the process of readership. Ambiguity is always contingent on the interpreter: one can always ask for whom and when is a particular expression ambiguous in this or that way? Jean Paul Sartre has a similar understanding when he writes: “the literary object has no other substance than the reader's subjectivity; Raskolnikov's waiting is my waiting which I lend him. Without this impatience of the reader he would remain only a collection of signs” (44).

Based on such critical conceptualizations, and parallel to the development of post-structuralism in 1970s, a rather revolutionary theory of aesthetics was solidified in the works of literary theorists such as Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish as well as pragmatist philosophers such as Richard Rorty and numerous others. In sharp contrast with Wimsatt and Beardsley's *Affective Fallacy*, this whole movement was an attempt to define art and literature in terms of the response they elicited from their readers, in other words, their functions rather than objective characteristics. This was how the question of “what does it mean?” was progressively replaced by the question of “what does it do?” (Fish 29; Iser, *Act* 49 -51). The project of this movement was “not to describe the work's given and definitive sense, but rather to make sense of the work” (Shusterman 92).

To these thinkers, meaning is an event; it does not lie objectively in the lines of a literary work to “be excavated by an act of interpretation” (*Act* xi), but happens at the time of reading “between the words and in the reader's mind” (Fish 28). The meaning of an utterance is its experience — all of it (Fish 65), and “texts are the loci where sense is produced” (Eco, *Theory* 37). “Meaning to Fish is not something one extracts from a poem, like a nit from its shell, but an experience one has in the

course of reading. Literature, as a consequence, is not regarded as a fixed object of attention but as sequence of events that unfold within the reader's mind" (Tompkins xvii), and thus "literary works may be best seen not as texts with a fixed sense, but as matrices capable of generating a whole range of possible meanings. They do not so much contain meaning as produce it" (Eagleton, *Read Literature* 144). Iser writes: "man should conceive of meaning as something that happens" (*Act* 22) and "literary texts initiate 'performances' of meaning rather than actually formulating meanings themselves" (*Act* 27). The pragmatist approach of Rorty, too, emphasizes the functional nature of the text rather than its objective essence; "Rorty dissolves the objecthood of texts into nodes within transitory webs of relationships, foci of possibilities for use" (Shusterman 101). Psychoanalytical criticism such as Norman Holland's definition of "the literary experience as an event influenced by subjective predisposition" (Johnson 152) is also in line with these developments.

It is worth making a distinction here between meaning and sense. In agreement with Jonathan Culler, the word sense better represents what readers are dealing with at the time of reading. Whereas "meaning suggests a property of the text (a text 'has' meaning), and thus encourages one to distinguish an intrinsic (though perhaps ungraspable) meaning from the interpretations of readers, 'sense' links the qualities of the text to the operations one performs upon it. A text can make sense and someone can make sense of it" (Culler, *Pursuit* 50). The terms, sense and the process of sense-making, have all the attributions that a full-fledged model of literary readership demands. It intrinsically connotes the dynamic nature of meaning as well as the significant role of the reader throughout the process. Iser approaches

the same distinction when he discusses the difference between meaning and significance. To him,

[meaning and significance] are two separate stages of comprehension. Meaning is the referential totality which is implied by the aspects contained in the text and which must be assembled in the course of reading. Significance is the reader's absorption of the meaning into his own existence. Only the two together can guarantee the effectiveness of an experience which entails the reader constituting himself by constituting a reality hitherto unfamiliar to himself (*Act* 151).

These ideas are illuminating in many ways. However, one should not overlook the indispensable role of phenomenological hermeneutics and radical concepts in philosophy of language in giving shape to these reader-centered ideas. Only by following Husserl's insistence on the centrality of consciousness in all acts of cognition were reader response critics able to focus on the reader's role and come to announce that "books do not have fantasies or defenses or meanings — people do" (Holland, "The New Paradigm" 336), and only through the developments in philosophy of language it was made possible to declare that "a text, once it leaves its author's hands, is simply paper and ink until a reader evokes from it a literary work. The poem, then, must be thought of as an event in time. It is not an object or an ideal entity. It happens during a coming-together of a reader and a text" (Rosenblatt qtd in Johnson 153), and a "study of literature is the study of conditions of meaning and thus a study of reading." (Suleiman 49)

### **2.3 Text as a Schematized View of Reality**

To investigate what actually goes on between reader and text in the act of reading one might need to have a closer look at the two sides of this interaction,

namely, the text and the reader. Text is in itself a problematic concept for enquiry. The traditional view of text as a “verbal object as a thing in itself and as a repository of meaning” (Fish 28-29) that was reviewed above was accepted as the norm up until the rise of modern art. In Iser’s words “the outdated principles are so natural that they are still adhered to. Indeed, the reaction to modern art is still that same old question: “what’s it supposed to mean?” (*Act* 8). However, the recent theorizations have made it more problematic to adhere to this rather naïve formulation of art, which took art, or literary text, as a representation of reality, “if not the actual form of truth itself” (*Act* 13). As Iser notes, modern art “resists translation into referential meaning” (*Act* 11).

As reviewed earlier, an array of thinkers throughout the 20th century have proposed numerous arguments to postulate that language is based on an insurmountable distance with material reality, and is in no direct contact with such reality or truth. Wittgenstein has tutored us on the linguistic nature of human cognition; Saussure clarified the arbitrariness of language which is the most sophisticated sign system we know; and Derrida showed how meaning is perpetually differed in language, where each sign points to other signs and never to a totalizing originary truth. These thinkers along with many more have successfully brought down the bimillennial myth that language is the representation of reality and art is the embodiment of truth. We now know that art is mediated through language. To paraphrase, all artworks are written, painted, or performed using a sign system, which at its core is linguistic and thus subject to all mechanisms and limitations of language.

As far as literary theory is concerned, modern linguistics has shown that text is comprised of signs, and though this might come as a shock to some readers, unlike what pre-20<sup>th</sup> century thinkers might have thought, we, as subjects are not in charge of signs. Culler writes that “we often think of the meaning of an expression as what the subject or the speaker has in mind. But as meaning is explained in terms of systems of signs — systems which the subject does not control — the subject is deprived of his role as the source of meaning (*Pursuit* 33). Furthermore, signs are not one’s own property but a public entity, for “meaning is a public affair. There could not be a meaning that I was in possession of, as there could be a plot of land that I only owned. Meaning is not a matter of private property” (Eagleton, *Read Literature* 145). Numerous examples can be provided from cases where authors have been wrong about the meaning of their own written works (See Eagleton, *Read Literature* 134). That is why Wittgenstein had once boldly declared that there can be no such thing as “private language” (*Philosophical Investigations* 88-90). Text, or linguistic signs in general, “like a baby, is detached from its author as soon as it enters the world. All literary works are orphaned at birth” (Eagleton, *Read Literature* 117). This inability of signs to refer to an origin is the key point in understanding how language functions, for “it is the nature of codes to be always already in existence, to have lost origins” (Culler, *Pursuit* 103).

Language’s inability to represent reality problematizes the traditional concept of literary art. This inability manifests itself on several levels. On the semiotic level, signs do not enjoy a direct correlation with reality. The signifier/signified relationship is nothing but arbitrary. Gadamer in his last interview with Lomond says “we cannot offer precise definitions because we are unable to



find a word which can define something precisely” (Ahmadi, *Truth and Beauty* 412); in other words, “there is no single description of the world and no transcendental, non-linguistic god’s-eye perspective of its objects that would be available to us to appeal to, that would even be intelligible to us as language-users. ... objects that we refer to are always linguistically mediated” (Shusterman 91). This is perfectly in line with Wittgenstein’s “language games” when he suggests that “the rules of the game rather than the reality it is meant to describe, govern how language is used (Lewis 10). Eagleton makes a distinction between the physical existence of a book, which is real, and the fluid illusion-like world of the text which has no direct connection or correlation to reality: “Emma does not survive the conclusion of *Emma*. She lives in a text, not a grand country mansion, and a text is a transaction between itself and a reader. A book is a material object which exists even if nobody picks it up, but this is not true of the text.” (Eagleton, *Read Literature* 46).

On the level of narrative, which this study is primarily concerned with, any fiction or non-fiction narrative is unable to picture reality in full, because there are inevitable semantic gaps within the fabric of language, or to say it better, within the sign system. Arnold Bennett once said “you can’t put the whole of a character into a book” (qtd. in *Act* 180) and Eagleton observes the same deficiency: “There is no ‘complete’ account possible of a tiny stain on one’s fingernail, let alone of a human life” (*Read Literature* 111). In relation to this, Dolezel observes that:

The incompleteness of fictional worlds results from the very act of their creation. Fictional worlds are brought into existence by means of fictional texts, and it would take a text of infinite length to construct a complete fictional world. Finite texts, the only texts that humans are capable of producing, necessarily create incomplete worlds. (201)

It can be proposed that this inability to depict reality in full is the inherent characteristic of language in general, and not an exclusive feature of a fictional text. “Realistic writers strive for the highest degree of completeness without ever being able to reach the ideal (Ryan 131-34). Lucien Dällenbach has come independently to a similar conclusion: the reality-like completeness of realistic narratives is no more than an illusion “destined precisely to camouflage [their] blanks”” (qtd. in Doležel, “Fictional Worlds” 202). His summary of this inevitability is enlightening:

The Carnapian test of incompleteness is simple: only some conceivable statements can be said to be true or false with respect to a given fictional world while others are undecidable. It is false to state that Emma Bovary died a natural death; it is true that she committed suicide; but we cannot decide the question whether she did or did not have a birthmark on her left shoulder (Heintz 94). Referring to a cause célèbre of literary criticism, Nicholas Wolterstorff explains what kind of lack we are faced with: “We will never know how many children Lady Macbeth had in the worlds of Macbeth. That is not because to know this would require knowledge beyond the capacity of human beings. It is because there is nothing of the sort to know” (Doležel, “Fictional Worlds” 201).

Using language to tackle this problem in fiction is always doomed to failure. One cannot offer a complete representation of reality by inserting more details, because more details will definitely result in more indeterminacies and the rise of more ambiguities. As a result, no matter how hard an author struggles, there may always exist some questions that cannot be answered based on the information conveyed by the text. We will never know the answer to questions such as the ones posed by Wolterstorff (133) and Heintz (94) about Lady Macbeth and Emma Bovary.

This inherent inability of language to depict reality makes storytelling “an absurd enterprise” (Eagleton, *Read Literature* 114). “It is an attempt to put in sequential form a reality which is not sequential at all. So is language itself. To say

one thing necessarily means excluding another” (*Read Literature* 114). Eagleton describes how “the more the writer specifies, the more information he provides... the more room he creates for divergent interpretations on the readers' part. And the result of this may not be vividness and specificity but haziness and ambiguity” (*Read Literature* 56). He provides *Heart of Darkness* as an example to demonstrate how an attempt to depict reality is always bound to fail: “The story is told in a vividly concretizing style, but there is an aura of mistiness about it which no degree of meticulous detail can dispel” (*Read Literature* 109) Stanzel is in full agreement: “It is even possible that the more details are used to characterize a figure in a lengthy story, the more this will spur on the reader’s interest, since each detail that is presented raises new, undefined issues about that character” (205). Eagleton’s conclusion is weighty: “To tell a tale is to try to shape the void. It is as futile as ploughing the ocean” (*Read Literature* 110) and “to narrate is to falsify. In fact, one might even claim that to write is to falsify.... The only authentic literary work, then, would be one which is conscious of this falsification, and which tries to tell its tale in a way that takes it into account” (*Read Literature* 107).

In Laurence Sterne’s 18<sup>th</sup> century novel *Tristram Shandy* the inability of a literary text to represent a complete view of life is indicated figuratively through Tristram's inability to cover his life story fully. Within the course of the narrative, Tristram discusses with the reader the fact that he is in the fourth volume of his life story and has still only got to the first day of his life. Some quick calculations reveal that at the current rate of one volume a year, the length of his life is growing faster than he is telling it. Rather than progressing, he is actually losing ground: “the more I write, the more I shall have to write” (*Tristram Shandy* 197), he marvels, pointing

out that the same holds true for the reading and the reader. In analyzing the way his life outpaces his narration of it, Tristram is stating in concrete terms an idea that has been a premise of the book all along: the extreme difficulty for even the most flexible and resourceful kind of writing to contain an immeasurably rich, complex, and diverse reality. His account of this is significant:

I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-month; and having got, as you perceive, almost into the middle of my third volume (According to the preceding Editions.)—and no farther than to my first day's life—'tis demonstrative that I have three hundred and sixty-four days more life to write just now, than when I first set out; so that instead of advancing, as a common writer, in my work with what I have been doing at it—on the contrary, I am just thrown so many volumes back—was every day of my life to be as busy a day as this—And why not?—and the transactions and opinions of it to take up as much description—And for what reason should they be cut short? as at this rate I should just live 364 times faster than I should write—It must follow, an' please your worships, that the more I write, the more I shall have to write—and consequently, the more your worships read, the more your worships will have to read.  
(*Tristram Shandy* 197)

Another example of this inherent inability can be seen in Walter Shandy's writing project of Tristra-paedia. “He advanced so very slow with his work,” Tristram tells us, “and I began to get forwards at such a rate,” (264) that the Tristra-paedia project becomes an exercise in futility. Tristram compares it with “drawing a sundial, for no better purpose than to be buried underground” (264). Thus the project offers another example of the built-in obsolescence of writing and the impossibility of the realism project. Like Tristram's own book, the Tristra-paedia fails to keep pace with the passage of time in the real world.

## 2.4 The Democratization of ‘the Reader’ Idea

The second side of the reader/text interaction is the reader, and this entity has been long absent from the arena of literary investigation. It took almost a century for modern literary theory to turn its scrutinizing attention to this indispensable agent of narrative discourse. Walter Slatoff observes in his book *With Respect to Readers: Dimensions of Literary Response* (1970):

One feels a little foolish having to begin by insisting that works of literature exist, in part at least, in order to be read, that we do in fact read them, that is worth thinking about what happens when we do. Put so blatantly, such statements seem too obvious to be worth making, for after all, no one directly denies that readers and reading do actually exist; even those who have most insisted on the autonomy of literary works and irrelevance of readers' responses, themselves do read books and respond to them.... Equally obvious perhaps, is the observation that works of literature are important and worthy of study essentially because they can be read and engender responses in human beings". (23)

Eagleton identifies a gradual transition in literary thought towards analyses of the concept of reader. He notes “a switch to be observed from a semantics to a pragmatics of art, and from thematics to operations of art” (*Read Literature* 8). Suleiman elaborates upon the “shifts in the focus of enquiry from the observed — be it defined as text, psyche, society, or language — to the interaction between observed and observer” (4). Eagleton welcomes this shift because to him “there is no literature without a reader” (*Read Literature* 146). To Stanley Fish, the reader, or to be more precise, the reader’s “active and activating consciousness” (Fish 44) is the center, the crossroad, “a virtual site... where various codes can be located” (Culler, *Pursuit* 38). The reader is not a person, it is “a function: the repository of the codes which account for the intelligibility of the text” (Culler, *Pursuit* 39). These notions in themselves indicate how far literary theory has come from considering literary work as an object transmitting immutable truth.

But what is this reader that all markers point to? The notion of reader is perhaps the most problematic concept of all concepts in Hermeneutics, because it tirelessly escapes all attempts at generalization. The problem lies in the fact that unlike traditional views about the concept of reader, which took the reader as equal to an informed, ideal or super reader, the concept in the actual world is as diversified as the number of individuals who read or may read a text. In a sense, each human being is a reader, with all the background influences that he or she<sup>6</sup> brings into the game of readership, even if he is uneducated or totally illiterate. It can even be safely proposed that the techniques through which he achieves cognition of his living environment are more or less comparable to the techniques a reader implements when reading a text. This is where literary theory and aesthetics approach anthropology, which of course remains outside the scope of this thesis.

To be able to discuss the kind of response a given text produces on its reader, and especially for analytical purposes, a generalized concept of 'reader' is required. In theory, we can talk about a trans-historical reader, somebody with certain presumptive characteristics which can play the role of an anchor for the reader/text formula; a fixed point without which textual analysis of the reader's response would be impossible, but in practice the multiplicity of readers cannot be reduced to a single generalized norm. Culler addresses this problem when he discusses "the axiom that modern research has established: that the individuality of an individual cannot function as a principle of explanation, for it is itself a complex cultural construct, a heterogeneous product rather than a unified cause" (*Pursuit* 53).

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<sup>6</sup> As we are still in dire need for a gender-neuter pronoun in English language, hereafter in this dissertation, I am to follow the common practice of referring to the reader as he. Needless to say, it actually means "he or she".

He further adds this: “‘I,’ writes Barthes, ‘is not an innocent subject that is anterior to the text... The I that approaches the text is itself already a plurality of other texts, of infinite or, more precisely, lost codes’” (*Pursuit* 102). In other words, readers of a given text are all individuals with a maximum degree of specificity which may or may not share a set of similar characteristics, which runs counter to the generalized concept of the reader that theory needs if we want to study the kind of response a given text generates interacting with its readers.

In order to tackle such a difficulty, various theoreticians have introduced a plethora of definitions for the concept of generalized reader. All these conceptualizations follow a more or less similar path, in that they do not describe a particular type of reader which is real, but they try to define a theoretical anchor against which text can be scrutinized, and without which such scrutiny would be impossible. The need for a general concept of reader has been a known fact since formalism, and structuralism. I. A. Richards’s “suitable reader” (149), Jean Paul Sartre’s “universal reader” (67), Stanley Fish’s “optimal reader” (160) or “informed reader” (56, 63), Walter Slatoff’s “ideal reader” (21), Michael Riffaterre’s “super reader” (45-49), Walker Gibson’s “mock reader” (Tompkins 1-6), Umberto Eco’s “possible” or “model reader” (*The Role* 7), Norman Holland’s “transactive reader” (“Unity Identity” 118-133) and even Gerald Prince’s concept of “narratee” and “addressee” are all “heuristic concepts” (*Act* 30) that have been coined in order to “postulate a norm for correct reading” (Culler, *Literary* 108); and all this is to make possible the analysis of text vis-à-vis some rather unknown reader. However, I would have preferred to propose a simple term like “average reader” to serve that purpose, choosing an ambiguous description for a reader about whom we have no

definite information at all, whose linguistic and literary competence is prone to change at any time due to education, or experience, for example, and whose historio-ideological background is anything rather than established or known. This would, of course, be a reformulation of Riffaterre's "statistical average of readers' reactions" (*Act* 31).

The concept of an average reader sounds feasible because in reality there is no such thing as an ideal, optimal, or super reader. "To speak of an ideal reader is to forget that reading has a history", says Culler (*Pursuit* 51), and as Iser notes: "the ideal reader is a purely fictional being. He has no basis in reality" (*Act* 28). Fish's definition of an informed reader was an attempt to tackle this problem. He writes that

The informed reader is someone who 1.) is a competent speaker of the language out of which the text is built up. 2.) is in full possession of "semantic knowledge that a mature .... listener brings to this task of comprehension." This includes the knowledge (that is, the experience, both as a producer and comprehender) of lexical sets, collocation probabilities, idioms, professional and other dialects, etc. 3.) has literary competence. ... the reader of whose responses I speak, then, is this informed reader, neither an abstraction, nor an actual living reader, but a hybrid — a real reader (me) who does everything within his power to make himself informed. (Fish 48)

Though it suffers from the same failed attempt at generalization of something which resists being generalized, this formulation of the necessary requirements for a successful reader is insightful in that it lists some of the necessary skills, or competences required for a successful reading attempt. Fish himself is well aware of the impossibility of offering a generalized definition of the concept and in his later works he refers to the "plurality of informed readers" (49). All in all, his informed reader sounds more like an approximation of an average



reader rather than of an ideal reader, which makes the use of the word “informed” somehow misleading.

Iser does not take the concept of informed or ideal reader as his theoretical starting point. In fact, he identifies another major flaw with the concept which can render it useless:

An ideal reader would have to have an identical code to that of the author; authors, however, generally recodify prevailing codes in their texts, and so the ideal reader would also have to share the intentions underlying this process. And if this were possible, communication would then be quite superfluous, for one only communicates that which is not already shared by sender and receiver. ... The ideal reader, then, must not only fulfill the potential meaning of the text independently of his own historical situation, but he must also do this exhaustively. The result would be total consumption of the text—which would itself be ruinous for literature. (*Act 29*)

His objection follows the traditions of German analytical philosophy by taking the concept to the extreme logical end and then subjecting it to scrutiny. However, his objection is valid, and there can be no such harmony between an author and the reader, and even if such a thing could exist, it would render the entire act of communication through text unnecessary.

In order to address the analytical necessity of having a theoretical concept of reader as an anchor for interpretation, Iser introduces the concept of the implied reader and defines it as follows:

If, then, we are to try and understand the effects caused and the responses elicited by literary works, we must allow for the reader’s presence without in any way predetermining his character or his historical situation. We may call him, for want of a better term, the implied reader. He embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect—predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself. Consequently, the implied reader as a concept has his roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader. ... The concept [of implied reader] prestructures the role to be assumed by each recipient. (*Act 34*) ...no matter

who or what he may be, the real reader is always offered a particular role to play, and it is this role that constitutes the concept of the implied reader.  
(*Act 34*)

In short, Iser's implied reader is neither a textual structure such as Prince's narratee nor a real reader, whose specificity resists generalization. His implied reader, in simple terms, is a standpoint which enables us, as reader critics, to discuss and form in-depth analyses of the kind of responses that a given text may be capable of generating upon some average readers. In Iser's illuminating words the implied reader is "a transcendental mode which makes it possible for the structured effects of literary texts to be described. It denotes the role of the reader, which is definable in terms of textual structures and structured acts" (*Act 38*).

## **2.5 The Dialectic of Readership**

Having established the volatile nature of the text and the reader, we are in need of a theory capable of describing what actually happens between the reader and the text in the act of readership. This theory, which I have taken the liberty to entitle "the interactionalist model of readership", or IMR, must be able to make explicit the implicit the dialectic relationship between the reader and the text which makes the production of textual meaning. It should also elucidate the prerequisites for a successful act of reading, if there is any such thing, and also offer a feasible scale of evaluation, without which literary criticism is likely to fall into interpretive indifference, derivative circularity, or chaos.

However, it should be noted that "there is a difference between hardcore and softcore theory. The former — as practiced in physics, for instance — makes predictions, whereas the latter — as practices in humanities — is an attempt at

mapping” (Iser, *Do theory* 5). In other words, the purpose of IMR is not to predict the meaning of text, limit the arena of interpretation, or assign any fixed meaning on it, but to lay bare the mechanisms upon which the production of meaning, or sense, is possible, and to map the boundaries of this sense-making activity, and to describe how text controls this process. What Jonathan Culler calls a ‘semiotics of literature’, “does not interpret works but tries to discover the conventions which make the meaning possible. Here the goal is to develop a poetics which would stand to literature as linguistics stand to language” (*Pursuit* 37). As stated above, we may be far from composing a fully capable grammar for English language, but the attempts in that direction has proved fruitful in many areas. It is safe to assume that the same logic will be true about an IMR, which is an attempt to describe and clarify the ongoing interaction between the text and the reader. However, it should be emphasized here that due to the volatile nature of both reader and text that was reviewed above, the reader/text interaction is not fixed or static, but is of a dynamic, pluralistic and ever-changing nature. Thus, IMR is basically an attempt to offer a precise description of an imprecise phenomenon, which is literary readership. Contrary to our expectations, we have observed that such precise descriptions of imprecise phenomena have emerged even in hardcore scientific disciplines such as quantum physics, and surprisingly have proved to be highly fruitful. Nonetheless, using Iser’s terminology, I insist that IMR should be placed in the domain of softcore theory and be judged accordingly.

The first building block of IMR, as outlined earlier in this study, is the consensual finding that meaning of text is “not embedded in the text” (Fish 158), or encoded as a fixed prefabricated state in it, “independent of the individuals who are

obliged to attach themselves to it” (Fish 172). “For Fish as much as for Rorty and Iser, interpretation is not an uncovering of meanings and properties already given, but rather their production. It is never reading, but always writing” (Shusterman 107) and “the literary text is a "structured prefigurement" which implies that what is given on the page has to be worked out” (Iser, *Do Theory* 63). In other words, sense is made as a fruit of the reader/text interaction in which the text does not contain meaning but is encoded with the “directions for making them” (Fish 173). The relationship between the text and the reader can be roughly compared to HTML programming language in web design, in which the HTML code does not contain the web page, but is the carrier of the set of instructions for the target machine to create the web page. This strategy of sending a set of instructions to the target machine to create a web page, instead of sending the ready-made page, gives HTML a unique dynamicity which enables it to work on a wide array of smart machines. That’s how one single piece of HTML code can end up producing different web pages on different machines, web browsers, smart phones, tablets, or PCs. In the case of HTML, in a very similar manner to the case of literary readership, the difference in the final product is rooted in the fact that each machine or web browser is programmed to interpret the HTML code rather differently. It is appropriate, then, that computer programmers use the very same term as hermeneutics does, that is, “to interpret”, to refer to what the target machine does when it transforms the HTML instructions into a tangible web page.

According to IMR, text is a potentiality, a set of instructions which may or may not end up in producing meaning, and the ultimate meaning is as dependent on the competence of the interpretant as on the instructions latent in the text. Iser

formulates the same principle as follows: “The iconic signs of literature constitute an organization of signifiers which do not serve to designate a signified object, but instead designate instructions for the production of the signified” (*Act* 65). To use a metaphor from quantum physics, text, like the cat in Schrodinger’s box, is the sum of all quantum probabilities, an indefinite potentiality that does not collapse into a single meaning until the factor of the observer is added to the equation. It is interesting to know that in Schrodinger’s formula the indeterminate nature of the cat in the box, in the absence of an observer, is described in mathematical precision, which can be considered as a clear case of a precise description of an imprecise phenomenon. Schrodinger mathematically proved that only when an observer is added to the formulae does the cat diagram collapse into a line and the cat emerges as determinately dead or alive. This is very similar to the actualization of the textual meaning (in a reader’s consciousness) which occurs only when the text is read.

To recapitulate, the text does not contain the meaning, but a set of instructions to create meaning. In Jean Paul Sartre’s words, “the author guides [the reader], but all he does is guide him. The landmarks he sets up are separated by the void. The reader must unite them; he must go beyond them. In short, reading is directed creation” (45). In Fish’s words, “meanings are not extracted but made and made not by encoded forms but by interpretive strategies that call forms into being. It follows that what utterers do is to give hearers and readers the opportunity to make meanings by inviting them to put into execution a set of strategies” (172). This is why we are able to read “certain texts as literature” (Culler, *Literary* 116), for instance, we may “read a journalistic prose as poetry” (*Literary* 103) and vice versa.

Therefore, it can be claimed that “poetics is essentially a theory of reading” (Culler, *Literary* 115).

Is composing such a poetics possible? A poetics capable of clarifying the nuances of an interaction which happens between two volatile entities, the text and the reader. The short answer is that there is no determinate resolution for that, but utilizing the theoretical concepts that have been developed in modern linguistics, philosophy of language and hermeneutics, the borders and prerequisites of this interaction can be mapped. Culler notes that:

Interpretation ... is a process of contextualizing, but since contexts are never fixed or given, since they are always produced in and by further or prior interpretations, we have, as Susan Horton says, a hermeneutic circle that can never be completely described. What has not been sufficiently noted and what is responsible for those apparently infinite and infinitely variable interpretations for our texts, is that everything else in that hermeneutic circle, and not just the reader, is in motion at the same time. (Culler, *Pursuit* 66)

Even a devout literary theoretician such as Iser whose ideas play a canonical role in the formation of IMR, posits that “art and literature can be assessed not predicted, and one even cannot anticipate the multiple relationships they contain” (Iser, *Do theory* 5). Thus, the aim of IMR is not to reduce the multiplicity of the readership possibilities into a single clear cut one, but just to describe the process and map the inherent pluralism of it. Culler is aware that although defining the interaction in terms of a totalizing discourse to limit the scope of interpretation is fruitless, undesirable and even impossible, but describing that in a manner which brings to light the mechanisms and competences involved in giving life to literature is not totally in vain. He writes: “if literary works make it clear that one cannot set limits to the signifying process and define once and for all the appropriate system of conventions, they also provide exclusive evidence for the existence of a semiotic

system which makes literature possible” (*Pursuit* 37). Therefore, the purpose of IMR is not to limit the scope of interaction, i.e. interpretation, but to describe the prerequisites, mechanisms, and scope of it. Part of art will always remain unknowable, due to the hurdle of the hermeneutic circle, or an impossible or absent literary competence which it requires to get deciphered, or the historical boundaries, or simply linguistic insufficiency. But as Iser puts it, “theory allows us to experience the ultimate unknowability of art. In the final analysis it refuses to be translated to cognition, because it transcends all boundaries, references and expectations. Thus it simultaneously provokes cognitive attempts at understanding, and exceeds the limits of the cognitive frameworks applied” (Iser, *Do Theory* 8).

One significant distinction to be made here is found between the diachronic study of literary reception and the synchronic study of literary response. Similar to the concept of synchronic or diachronic in Saussurean linguistics, the diachronic study of readership stresses the historicity of an art work, and refutes the essentialist view of it. The view gives a central role to the historical and ideological conditions of the formation and the reception of an art work and holds that without considering those conditions producing a valid interpretation is impossible. For instance, feminists like Luce Irigaray or Hélène Cixous insist that the gender of the reader or addressee has a key role to play in interpreting artwork, and György Lukács stresses the class position of the artist and the audience. The reception theory of Hans Robert Jauss is the best example of this view in modern literary theory.

Jauss is concerned with “the relationship of a piece of literature both to its socio-historical context and to selected dispositions of its readers” (Iser, *Do Theory* 60). The readers here are real readers in their socio-historical contexts. “By

delineating the historical conditionality of readers, an aesthetic of reception turns literature into a tool for reconstructing the past”, says Iser (*Do Theory* 57). For instance, Jauss’s theory investigates how the transformations in the socio-political paradigm of the era made Ernest-Aimé Feydeau’s sentimental novel *Fanny* a popular work at the time of its publication, whereas Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* was received with not much enthusiasm, and how the later alteration of the socio-historical paradigm at the turn of the century gave *Madame Bovary* a canonical position and pushed *Fanny* into the shadows of oblivion.

In contrast, the synchronic study of readership maintains that art is trans-historical. Thinkers pertinent to analytical philosophy usually hold such a view. Richard Wollheim, Arthur C. Danto, and most importantly Lucien Goldmann (See Ahmadi, *Text Structure* 312-401) believe that there is basically no difference between our understanding of Da Vinci's Mona Lisa, and that of its audience in the Renaissance. The Phenomenological readership of Iser and interpretive strategies of Fish, which are the foundations of IMR, belong to this category of analysis. Following Iser, I would propose using the terms response and reception to differentiate these two approaches. Whereas “a theory of reception arises from a history of readers’ judgements”, “a theory of response has its roots in the text” (*Act x*). To reiterate, the theory of reception is essentially historical, and deals with real readers while the theory of response is systematic and deals with [hypothetical, contemporary, ideal or] implied ones (Iser, *Do Theory* 57-8).

Practitioners of Reception theory such as Hans Robert Jauss try to recodify the social, political and cultural norms of a given era in order to extrapolate how a certain work was received by real readers of the time. This attempt to approximate



the horizon of expectations of now and a time in the past has two functions: “it enables contemporary readers to perceive what they normally cannot see in the ordinary process of day to day living, and it enables subsequent generations of readers to grasp a reality that was never their own” (Iser, *Do Theory* 63). On the other hand, a theory of response, such the phenomenological reading of Iser and the interactionalist model of this study, focus on the synchronic features of art and, more specifically, on the literary text in order to make explicit the implicit mechanisms, structures, functions and roles that make the cognitive activity of reading and sense-making possible.

Along with the schematized view of art (literature), the volatile nature of the reader (audience, interpreter), and the necessity for a synchronic analysis of literature, due attention must be paid to the communicative nature of art, before moving any further with the composition of IMR. Culler calls literature “a mode of communication” (*Pursuit* 49) and art, or the literary text, attains a communicative function right from the moment of its inception though, as expounded earlier, the essence of this communication, and the message inside it is not under the control of the inclinations and intentions of its creator. The authors might occasionally claim that they do not write in search of an audience, but the communicative role is in the nature of language and thus, unlike what Wimsatt and Beardsley thought, the concept of audience is indispensable for the formation of art. In Umberto Eco’s words, “it is not necessary to quote Jakobson (1958) and his well-known theory of the functions of language to remind ourselves that, even from a structuralist point of view, such categories as sender, addressee, and context are indispensable in the understanding of every act of communication” (*The Role* 4). Iser elaborates upon the

same concept: “It is presumed that literary work is a form of communication, for it impinges upon the world, upon prevailing social structures, and upon existing literature” (*Act ix*). Although it should be remembered that “all forms of dialogue and communication run the continual risk of failure” (*Act 65*), in the case of the literary text failure is not failure if it succeeds in activating the reader’s creative imagination. Because the purpose of a literary text is not to convey a message but to engage the reader in the game of imagination, even if it manages to make that happen by virtue of some misreading, it can still be counted as successful.

A historical study may prove that all textual strategies have been invented to diversify this communicative act, leading to more active sense-making endeavors on the part of the reader. Even texts such as *Finnegan’s Wake*, or movies such as Trier’s *Antichrist* which try everything within their capacities to disrupt the communicative function of the semiotic system, use their communication-blocking techniques to inspire the formation of a drastically different sense of reality, which means they are communicative in principle, and attempting to block communication is simultaneously an attempt to establish a communication of a drastically different kind. The enormous stamina they expend to defy conventional communication is just a clear recognition of the inherently communicative and, to that extent, conventional nature of art. Without the recognition of the conventionally communicative nature of art, such attempts to disrupt expected forms of communication would have been meaningless.

The reader approaches a literary text, which as reviewed above is anything rather than a complete representation of reality, in an act of communication. But as reception theory has successfully elucidated, the reader’s “consciousness is not a

tabula rasa” (Culler, *Pursuit* 122). As Culler puts it, “the new criticism’s dream of a self-contained encounter between innocent reader and autonomous text is a bizarre fiction. To read is always to read in relation to other texts, in relation to the codes that are the products of these texts, and go to make up a culture” (*Pursuit* 12). The reader is inside culture, or what Gadamer calls Tradition, an all dominant force that makes reading possible, and that even Iser’s implied reader cannot escape from. Although reader-response critics offer varied accounts of the nature and impact of the reader partiality, the assumption that the semantic potential of literary texts relies on the intersection of the material of the text with the reader’s preexistent view is the characteristic claim of reader- response theory (Johnson 155). Jauss’s concept of a ‘horizon of expectations’ refers to the same principle. Following the footsteps of the philosopher Karl Popper, Jauss coined the concept of horizon of expectations which is basically a reformulation of Gadamer’s prejudgments (Ahmadi, *Truth and Beauty* 429). Popper observes that “in every moment of our pre-scientific or scientific development we possess something that I usually refer to as a ‘horizon of expectations’ ... in every case the horizon of expectations plays the role of a frame of reference, without which experiences, observations, etc would have no meaning.” (qtd. in Culler, *Pursuit* 54)

Iser sees this “frame of reference” as a prerequisite for readership and introduces the concept of repertoire which is made up of material selected from social systems and literary traditions” (*Act* 86). To him, “the repertoire consists of all the familiar territory within the text. This may be in the form of references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged” (Iser, *Act* 69). Iser’s repertoire is thus inclusive of all the

knowledge or information that “the reader brings to the reading experience” (Johnson 155). Iser’s repertoire is equal to what Prague structuralists called the “extra-textual reality” (*Act* 69). Other scholars, such as Dolezel, Culler and Eco use other terms to refer to the same concept. Culler, for instance, discusses the role of conventions: “A poem is an utterance that has meaning only with respect to a system of conventions which the reader has assimilated. If other conventions were operative its range of potential meanings would be different” (Culler, *Literary* 104); Dolezel introduces the concept of encyclopedia which is the summation of the reader's prior knowledge that the reader refers to at the time of reading, and that has been taken for granted by the text. It is something like a shared communal knowledge which varies with cultures, social groups, historical epochs, and so on and thus necessarily relativizes the recovery of implicit meaning (Dolezel 206, 208); Eco talks of “semantico-pragmatic rules, organized by an encyclopedia-like semantic representation, which establish how and under which conditions the addressee of a given text is entitled to collaborate in order to actualize what the text actually says” (Eco, *Theory* 43).

In short, the concepts of repertoire, encyclopedia, or conventions reiterate the fact that the reader is positioned inside a culture, and does not approach the text with a blank consciousness. The reader in the act of readership responds to both text and the culture in which he is positioned, and the sense of a given work is affected by both these two factors. The problem is that this culture, repertoire or encyclopedia is in constant flux. “The reader's encyclopedia is one of those dynamic knowledge structures that must be able to change as a result of new experiences” (Schank 7). This is among one of the prominent reasons why a final reading or

interpretation of a given text is impossible. Simply put, the reader's encyclopedia, or points of reference are constantly changing, and each reading will render a different sense because of the different "stack of knowledge and experiences which act as a referential background against which the unfamiliar can be conceived and processed" (Iser, *Act* 38). This contributes to the multiplicity of reading experiences and partially explains why there can never be an exhaustive reading of literary masterpieces or, in theory, of any text at all.

This encyclopedia, convention, repertoire, or culture is an interpersonal or collective phenomenon. Like language itself, one cannot have a private culture. Culture predetermines collectivity. That is why "an interpretive strategy is never the result of a purely individual decision, whether by the reader or the writer. It can only be understood as a collective phenomenon, a set of shared conventions within a community of readers" (Suleiman 20). In other words, "a sentence is never not in a context. We are never not in a situation. A statute is never not read in the light of some purpose. A set of interpretive assumptions is always in force. A sentence that seems to need no interpretation is already the product of one" (Fish 284).

This view of text as a cultural phenomenon strictly situated inside a culture, is on the other hand, linked with Julia Kristeva's concept of Intertextuality. Kristeva "defines intertextuality as the sum of knowledge that makes it possible for texts to have meaning" (Culler, *Pursuit* 104); a definition that clearly corresponds to the concept of repertoire expounded above. This definition points to the fact that not only the reader's position within a certain culture is significant in the reading and interpretation of a certain text, the text's very own relationship with other texts, is also a significant factor. In other words, the influence of culture is applicable to both

the reader and the text at the time of reading, an influence that we name “intertextuality” in the case of text. Harold Bloom investigates the same concept when he asks “if one tries to write or to teach or to think, or even to read without the sense of tradition?” (32) and answers “you cannot write or teach or think or even read without imitation, and what you imitate is what another person has done” (32). Culler also discusses “the intertextual nature of any verbal construct” (*Pursuit* 101) and asserts that “a text can only be read in relation to other texts, and it is made possible by the codes which animate the discursive space of a culture” (*Pursuit* 38). His summary of the concept is illuminating: “Intertextuality calls our attention to the importance of prior texts, insisting that the autonomy of texts is a misleading notion and that a work has meaning it does only because certain things have previously been written” (*Pursuit* 103).

The concept of the reader’s individualized stock of contextual knowledge, whether it be called encyclopedia, culture, repertoire, or intertextuality, can be viewed from another angle, which is the problematic concepts of literary competence and successful reading acts. If such a thing as a successful reading act is postulated, then it is apparent that it requires a certain set of skills, or information, or knowledge about language and how literature works. In other words, while no reading can take place without an encyclopedia or repertoire, some readings will be deemed more successful than others, often by the readers themselves, and these must be related to the utilization of an encyclopedia or repertoire that is a better fit for that text. To oversimplify, an educated reader can make a better sense of a text than an uneducated one.

As Eagleton observes: “we can grasp the meaning of opening sentences [of a novel] only because we come to them with a frame of cultural reference which allows us to do so. We also approach them with some conception of what a literary work is, what is meant by beginning, and so on” (*Read Literature* 8). The concept of a zero-degree narratee is helpful here, although it suffers from the same reluctance to be generalized that we already observed in the case of a conceptualized reader. As Prince elaborates, at a rudimentary level, the zero-degree narratee has the following abilities: language, words and grammar, the faculty of reasoning, narrative grammar, he knows that narrative has a temporal dimension, and he possesses a sure memory (9-11). This definition serves only for analytical purposes. As in the case of the concepts of an ideal or average reader, there is no way to reduce the multiplicity of necessary components of literary competence (which changes from individual to individual), to a generalized concept and come to a “uniformity of response among ideal readers” (Culler, *Pursuit* 50). This is another principle that contributes to the multiplicity of readership and plurality of possible textual meaning. Furthermore, in a closer look, we can define ‘narrative’, ‘poetic’, and ‘dramatic’ competences to clarify the certain set of requirements which are necessary for a flawless reception of a certain work, which of course lies beyond the scope of this study.

## **2.6 Levels of Interaction in Readership**

The dialectic of reader/ text as it functions at the time of reading can be investigated in two distinct domains, the pragmatic axis of reading, which refers to the influence of culture, encyclopedia, or repertoire in the formation of the virtual existence of the text, and the “syntagmatic axis of reading” (Iser, *Theory* 66) which

deals with the role of the textual features in the activation of the reader's creative imagination. Whereas the former lies mostly in the domain of reception theory, the latter is related to the formation of the reader-response, and thus asks for a closer exploration in the current study. Generally speaking, the reader, whether implied, intended, ideal, or average, interacts with text on several levels, which can be roughly indicated as the semiotic, discursive, narrative and pragmatic levels, for the sake of discussion. As will be elaborated later, this classification is helpful in studying the various aspects of the interactive relationship that is formed between the reader and the text in the act of readership, and avoid the complications that usually accompany the attempts to describe these interactions. The final response of the reader, which is the emergence of the ultimate aesthetic object or, to use Iser's terminology, the virtual existence of text, is comprised of a combination of all these interactions and any comprehensive theory of readership should take into account these levels of interaction and try to offer adequate descriptions of them. Hereafter, this study will focus on the textual side of the interaction. Even so, one should not overlook the fact that the reader-side is in constant flux for the aforementioned reasons and as a result we can never talk of a single reading of a text, but are encountered with the plurality of changing and possible readings. We may also leave the pragmatic level of interaction outside the scope of this study, since it primarily deals with the relationships of the readers to the text, especially their historio-ideological stance, and as a result it is positioned within the realm of literary reception rather than the domain of literary response that this study has chosen to deal with.



To begin with, the semiotic level of interaction entails the manner in which the reader interacts with single words or, better, signs. Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* defined “sign” as “the evident antecedent of the consequent, and contrarily the consequent of the antecedent, when the like consequences have been observed before; and the more often they have been observed, the less uncertain is the sign” (17-18, pt.1, ch.3). This is a definition that is likely to create more problems than it solves, even though it denotes the principle fact that signs are capable of referring to something beyond themselves. Moving on in the same direction, the Saussurean definition of sign as a dyadic and arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified is more successful in that it deprives the signifiers, i.e. words, from direct contact with reality. As reviewed above, the definition has had consequential influences in philosophical and artistic conceptualizations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, without this definition of sign, Rorty’s insight into the “notion of truth as correspondence is an uncashable and outworn metaphor” (Shusterman 91) could not be possible for literature. However, we need a better definition, especially one which, in Eco’s words, recognizes “the inferential nature” of signs. Charles Sanders Peirce has provided such a definition, one that Eco describes as “exciting” (*Theory* 38). To Peirce, “a sign is something by knowing which we know something more” (*Collected Papers*, 8, 332), a phenomenon which is in itself capable of instigating the activation of creative imagination by the reader. As Eco observes, “this definition is obviously at complete odds with the traditional one of the sign as identity and as bi-conditional correlation” (*Theory* 38) and instead paves the way for an understanding of the sign in terms of its inferential function. Eco writes:

The reader plays an active role in textual interpretation because signs are structured according to an inferential model (p::i q, and not p:q). Text

interpretation is possible because even linguistic signs are not ruled by sheer equivalence (synonymy and definition); they are not based upon the idea of identity but are governed by an inferential schema; they are, therefore, infinitely interpretable. Texts can say more than one supposes, they can always say something new, precisely because signs are the starting point of a process of interpretation which leads to an infinite series of progressive consequences. Signs are open devices, not stiff armors prescribing a bi-conditional identity. (*Theory* 38)

Eco uses the terms inferential and connotative to refer to this characteristic of signs. He writes: “It seems however that between the linguistic couple *semainon/ semainomenon* (signifier/ signified) and the *semeion* [sign] there is a relationship of connotation” (*Theory* 41). This notion of sign as something which can bring about something more than itself has gained more popularity among more recent thinkers. Paul Ricoeur in *Symbolism of Evil* has proposed a definition of sign which is identical to Pierce’s definition: “a sign is a signifying structure in which any beginning significance brings along other significances. The second significances are arbitrary and known only through the first ones” (qtd. in Ahmadi, *Truth and Beauty* 434). Ricoeur’s definition of ‘symbol’ in *Interpretation Theory* that was reviewed earlier in the introduction is also a reification of the same concept. In the same line of argument, Iser defines the concept of ‘ideation’ as “to evoke the presence of something which is not given” (*Act* 137) and writes: “Each linguistic sign conveys more than just itself to the mind of the reader, it must be joined together in a single unit with all its referential context” (*Act* 121). These definitions bring to mind Freud’s concept of words as having magical power, for he says: “words were originally magic and to this day words have retained much of their ancient magical powers” (17).

In brief, what really matters is that signs are inherently incomplete or impaired but are capable of pointing towards outside the world of text, and even

outside the real world in which readers live. Their inferential nature forces the reader to pursue them to beyond themselves. Both Iser's and Eco's understandings of signs indicate how a word, a single signifier, awakens a plethora of associations in the reader's active consciousness and there is always an active role of the reader to be played before a sign, or a signifier on a page, can turn into a phenomenon in the consciousness of the reader. In simple words, the reader brings the sign to life by adding something to it, making it complete, or cohesive: the image of a "book" in the reader's consciousness is much more detailed, individuated, and concrete than the sum of meaning that the word "book" carries on its own. This is why the reader in the act of reading continuously adds details to the words, which tend to be general on their own, and make them particularly individual in their consciousness. This addition of an individuated aspect to the signs, has its roots in the nature of the semiotic system, i.e. language, and happens in the consciousness of the reader, and is far beyond the control of the author of a given text. Eco's example of Mallarme is a clear description of how semiotic interaction between the reader and the text functions: "Mallarme knew that it was sufficient to name a flower to arouse in the mind of any virtual reader, out of the forgetfulness where our voices banish any contour, many absent fragrances" (*Theory* 45). In Chapter Two of this study, it will be discussed how the symbolic use of the word, "wall", in Le Guin' *The Dispossessed* instigates a semiotic interaction with the reader, brings along an entire association of connotations and serves to activate and at the same time, guide the reader's creative imagination.

The analysis of reader/text interaction at a semiotic level is especially significant for analyzing poetry, because poems, unlike fictional narratives,

primarily rely on the semiotic interaction to create their desired effects on readers. Non-narrative lyrical poetry does not attempt to narrate a story or divulge some referential knowledge, and thus, functions by offering a train of signs, symbols or images, that are aimed at forcing the reader to pursue them to beyond what they actually mean. Since this study is primarily concerned with fiction, a closer investigation of the semiotic level of interaction in poetry, is situated beyond its scope, but in brief it can be stated that the inferential nature of signs, or individual words, create a set of reactions in the reader's consciousness that leads to a cognition beyond the semantic denotations of the words. This cognition is the true sense of a poem: "no meaning of experience, but an experience of meaning" (Eagleton, *Read Literature* 192).

The discursive level of interaction entails the process by which the reader interacts with discourse, or each set of words, sentences, and paragraphs in a given text, not the words or sentences alone. The term, "discursive", is simply used here to signify the interaction of the reader and sentences and sentence correlates, and describe the instigation of the reader's interaction as the reader moves on from one sentence, or a group of sentences to the next, and must not be confused with other connotations of the word in other disciplines such as linguistics and discourse analysis. One principle characteristic of reading a literary text is the fact that the text is not offered to the reader in its entirety in a moment. To clarify, facing a literary text is different from facing a painting because unlike painting, one does not receive an immediate impression of the whole creation at once; one is required to read the text word by word, sentence by sentence, and paragraph by paragraph, and thus "the 'object' of the text can only be imagined by way of different consecutive phases of

reading” (*Act* 109). We may call this the principle of temporality of readership, for the ease of reference. Ai Ling offers a convenient summary of what this principle entails:

As reading occurs through time, the experience of literature involves a continuous readjustment of perceptions, ideas and evaluations, with the meaning of the work encountered in the experience of it. Literature becomes a process in which its criticism involves the processing of phrases and sentences in a slow sequence of decisions, revisions, anticipations, reversals and recoveries. (2)

This practical imperative has a powerful effect upon the reader’s response to a given literary work. First of all, this principle is behind the fact that the overall meaning of a sentence is not the accumulation of the meanings of the constituent words, but is, in most cases, something more. In other words, a sentence or a sentence correlate may create a whole lot of meanings that lie outside the meanings of its constituent words, for the simple fact that we do not read and receive a long sentence at once, but read it word by word, and this process of protention and retention is at work even between the words of a sentence. That’s partially why Iser declares: “meaning may always resist mere words” (*Act* 120). This brings to mind Ricoeur’s definition of text as “a discourse fixed by writing” (*Hermeneutics and Human Sciences* 146) in which he states that “text is reliant upon the discourse and cannot be reduced to its constituent components: words, or sentences” (*ibid* 159, 164, 166). In practice, one may refer to Hilary Corke’s idea to exemplify how the meaning of a sentence is always more than the meaning of its constituent words. Corke observes that “a dialogue is not a transcript of what he or she would have said in ‘real life’ but rather of what would have been said plus what would have been implied but not spoken plus what would have been understood though not implied” (322). Fish confirms this principle by stating that “there is no direct relationship

between the meaning of a sentence (paragraph, novel, poem) and what its words mean. Or, to put the matter less provocatively, the information an utterance gives, its message, is a constituent of, but certainly not to be identified with, its meaning” (32). This is partially so because the reader grasps words in one moment, but the overall sense of a sentence, or a sentence correlative is unfolding as the reader moves on from the semantic horizon of one word to the next. In his influential essay, *Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics* Fish has demonstrated how this principle of temporality affects the overall meaning of a sentence.

The principle of temporality also affects the passage from one sentence to another immensely. Whereas Fish is mostly concerned with the reader’s moment to moment reactions to language, or, in Fish’s words, on “the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed one another in time” (42), Iser is more concentrated on the flow of the sentences or groups of sentences that he calls “sentence correlates”. To clarify how text is unfolded in the reader’s consciousness, Iser takes Roman Ingarden’s idea of “interconnected intentional sentence correlates” and postulates that the reader must activate the interplay of the correlates prestructured by the sequence of sentences (*Act* 21). In Ingarden’s view these intentional sentence correlates are the constituent parts of the narrative text that “make statements, claims, or observations, or convey information, and so establish various perspectives in the text” (Iser, *Reading Process* 191). In the form of statements and assertions, they serve to point a way toward what is to come, and this in turn is prestructured by the actual content of the sentences (Iser, *Act* 110). Roman Ingarden describes this passage from one sentence correlate to another as follows:

Once we are immersed in the flow of sentence-thought; we are ready, after completing the thought of one sentence, to think out the “continuation,” also in the form of a sentence- and that is, in the form of a sentence that connects up with the sentence we have just thought through. In this way the process of reading goes effortlessly forward. But if by chance the following sentence has no tangible connections whatever with the sentence we have just thought through, there then comes a blockage in the stream of thought. This hiatus is linked with more or less active surprise, or with indignation. This blockage must be overcome if the reading is to flow once more. (qtd. in Iser, “Reading Process” 193)

“This hiatus that blocks the flow of sentence is, in Ingarden's eyes, the product of chance, and so is regarded as flaw; this is his adherence to the classical idea of art” (Iser, *Reading Process* 194). Yet based on what was outlined earlier in this study we know that a literary work cannot produce a complete world view, and inherently consists of “temporal and spatial” (Stanzel 5) gaps, the result of which are overly abrupt transitions from one sentence to the other. The reader's struggle to create consistency and connection between unrelated sentences is more or less characteristic of a literary work, a process which would proceed rather unconsciously with “traditional texts” but “the modern texts exploit it quite deliberately. They are often so fragmentary that one's attention is almost exclusively occupied with the search for connections between the fragments” (Iser, “Reading Process” 193).

Following Ingarden's theoretical path, Iser also believes what gives the text its dynamism is “the subtle connections [between sentence correlatives] which individually are less concrete than the statements, claims and the observations” (*Reading Process* 191). It is exactly at these transitory points from one intentional sentence correlative to the other that the reader's imagination is activated, allowing him to “interact” (ibid 190-192) with the text or “climb abroad the text” (ibid 191).

“To Iser, the stars in literary texts are fixed; the lines that join them are variable

(Suleiman 23). Iser explains this process as follows:

each individual sentence correlate prefigures a particular horizon, but this is immediately transformed into the background for the next correlate and must therefore necessarily be modified. Since each sentence correlate aims at things to come, the prefigured horizon will offer a view which must contain indeterminacies, and so arouse expectations as to the manner in which these are to be resolved. Each new correlate, then, will answer expectations (either positively or negatively) and, at the same time, will arouse new expectations. .... confirm, modify or frustrate expectations. (*Act* 111)

Sartre once wrote that “readers are always ahead of the sentence they are reading in a merely probable future which partly collapses and partly comes together in proportion as they progress, which withdraws from one page to the next and forms the moving horizon of the literary object” (41). His description comes close to Iser’s phenomenology of reading in that it acknowledges the temporality of the reading experience and the passage from one sentence to the next which is the reason behind the fulfillment or repression of the reader’s expectations at the time of reading. Iser follows the same path of argument and tries to offer a more precise description of it, that was offered above. In Iser’s view, “each sentence correlate contains what one might call a hollow section, which looks forward to the next correlate, and a retrospective section, which answers the expectations of the preceding sentence (now part of the remembered background). Thus every moment of reading is a dialectic of protention and retention, conveying a future horizon yet to be occupied, along with a past (and continually fading) horizon already filled” (*Act* 112).

To explicate, the semantic horizon of expectations each sentence, or sentence correlate opens is not always fulfilled by the next correlate, but ceaselessly



modified, or even frustrated. In so doing, “they automatically have a retroactive effect on what has already been read, which now appears quite different.

Furthermore, what has been read shrinks in the memory to a foreshortened background, but it is being constantly evoked in a new context and so modified by new correlates that instigates a restructuring of past syntheses.” (*Act* 111) This is how, “in the reading process there is a continual interplay between modified expectations and transformed memories” (*Act* 111). This is in line with Fish’s concept of “progressive decertainizing” (23), by which he means how certain texts attempt to suppress the reader’s expectations as they move on, and going forward in the act of reading those texts, “intensifies the reader’s sense of disorientation (24), as they “provoke reader’s curiosity only to frustrate it” (Iser, *Do Theory* 13). Thus, “the reader’s communication with the text” is transformed into “a dynamic process of self-correction, as he formulates signifieds which he must them continually modify. (*Act* 67)

This aspect of readership can be described from another angle using “segments of viewpoints” (*Act* 184) and their connectability. This is in fact a reformulation of the process that leads to the interaction between the reader and the text at a discursive level. The text in the temporal act of readership cannot be “grasped as a whole — only as a series of changing viewpoints, each one restricted in itself and so necessitating further perspectives. As a rule, there are four main perspectives: those of the narrator, the characters, the plot, and the fictitious reader” (*Act*, 35, 68). Each sentence, or sentence correlates offers, or instigates one of these perspectives, which are in constant flux as the reader moves on in the act of readership. The temporality of readership entails that “in the time-flow of reading,

segments of the various perspectives move into focus and take on their actuality by being set off against preceding segments” (197); “As perspectives are continually interweaving and interacting, it is not possible for the reader to embrace all perspectives at once, and so the view he is involved with at any one particular moment is what constitutes for him the ‘theme’” (97). At the time of reading “the theme of one moment becomes the horizon against which the next segment takes on its actuality, and so on” (198).

In brief, “every articulate reading moment entails a switch of perspectives, foreshortened memories, present modifications, and future expectations” (*Act* 116), and “The switching of perspectives constantly splits the text up into a structure of protention and retention, with expectation and memory thereby projecting themselves one upon another (135). This does not happen so much as a conscious decision as it is, in Fish’s words, “an anticipatory adjustment to the projection of the sentence’s future contours” (23), or in Iser’s summary: “in the discursive level, “the sentences set in motion a process which will lead to the formation of the aesthetic object as a correlative in the mind of reader” (*Act* 110). To have a better understanding of how this level of interaction takes place in readership, we first need to have a look at the narrative level of interaction that happens simultaneously and then a few more contemplations should be added.

Along with semiotic and discursive levels of interaction, the text, especially the text of narrative fiction, engages the reader in another level of interaction which *ad arguendo* will be called the “narrative level of interaction”. This is the main focus of this study. This narrative level of interaction is the result of the inherent characteristics of the texture of a given fictional text which invites the reader’s

creative imagination to play an active role in the formation of the aesthetic object, and at times controls, guides, or limits his creative imagination. This feature of fiction is related to the form rather than the content of story, in other words, with the *syuzhet* rather than *fabula*. In the well-known *syuzhet/fabula* distinction of the early Russian formalists such as Vladimir Propp and Viktor Shklovsky, *fabula* was defined as the content of the story, whereas *syuzhet* was the rendition of that content into narrative text. It is not far-fetched to claim that, along with the semiotic and discursive interactions of the text that were outlined above, the activation of the reader's creative imagination is partially the result of the narrative strategies employed in the formation of *syuzhet*. Any student of literature knows that reading a Cliff note summary of a literary masterpiece such as *Great Expectations*, in which the *fabula* of the story is offered in a chronological manner by no means creates the kind of aesthetic experience which is the result of reading the actual work itself, and thus, it is *syuzhet* in which we, as literary scholars, should seek the features which may lead to the activation of the reader's creative imagination and the production of what Iser calls the virtual existence of the text, and that others may refer to as the aesthetic object.

As explained earlier in this study, the textual actualization of a story (*syuzhet*), is inherently unable to represent a full depiction of reality. What it offers is a schematized view which essentially contains points of indeterminacy which are semantic gaps or blanks that lead to the rise of ambiguity in the act of reading. These gaps are operative both in the discursive level, i.e. between sentences of a given text, and in narrative level, i.e. in the narrative components of a given fictional text. Unlike classical aesthetics, in which harmony is considered as the canonical

criteria, and ambiguity is rejected on the charge of hindering harmony, in modern hermeneutics ambiguity and the ensuing indeterminacy is seen not as a deficiency but as the driving force behind the activation of the reader's creative imagination. As Eagleton stated, "ambiguities can be enriching" (*Read Literature* 17). In Iser's view, "by impeding textual coherence, the blanks transform themselves into stimuli for acts of ideation... what they suspend turns into a propellant for the reader's imagination, making him supply what has been withheld" (*Act* 194). This "leaving out" on the part of text and "filling in" on the part of the reader is what Iser elsewhere calls "the productive matrix" (*Theory* 66). Evidently, blanks and indeterminacies play a crucial role in this type of reading experience, for not only would we be unable "to use our imagination [without them]" (*Implied* 283), but it is these very "elements of indeterminacy that enable the text to communicate with the reader" (*Act* 24). To Stanzel, also, gaps are "signs of liberating the reader, making him, if not an equal then at least a partner of the author, and allowing him certain limited rights of codetermination" (205).

On the narrative level, indeterminacy may arise from blanks, tantalizing omissions, excessive digressions, or even "over-precision of representation" (*Act* 207). Blanks are the most significant markers of indeterminacy which invite the reader to play a concretizing role. The terms, blanks, gaps, and indeterminacy are usually used synonymously by Roman Ingarden and his followers. However, for the sake of clarification and organization, we had better make some distinctions between them. To Iser, "there are two basic structures of indeterminacy in the text blanks, and negations" (*Act* 182). Blanks, that "are simply empty spaces in textual structures" (*Act* 206) are absences of fulfilling or determining information, whereas

negations are reversals of direction, and suppressions of the semantic horizon created by previous sentence correlates. Negations can be in the form of new information that is provided by the text, and this new information in some way opposes previously offered information, making new senses, or creating a new semantic horizon for the following sentences.

Stanzel makes a practical distinction between these terms as well. For him gaps are “temporal or spatial gaps in the portrayal of fictional time or space, lacunae for which the narrative discourse provides very few if any explicit or implicit indications to the reader as to how they might be concretized in his imagination” (209). Gaps include “long passages of story time that are elided from the narrative”, and they “usually have indeterminacies at their edges, upon which a partial determinacy is projected from the preceding or reflected back from the following passage” (ibid.). Gaps are distinguished from “indeterminate spaces” which can be “roughly filled in with the help of explicit or implicit signals in the text preceding or following them” (ibid). They help the reader’s efforts “to concretize indeterminate spaces in the discourse” (ibid).

Dorit Cohn’s concept of the “tantalizing omission”, which is basically a “felt absence” (61-65), is one type of blank that can operate in discursive and narrative levels as well. Tantalizing omission, which to Dolezel, “is the most suggestive marker of implicitness” (204) can, in discursive level, simply be an incomplete sentence. “Syntactical ellipsis is the most potent marker of this kind, since “every text . . . is in some way making the addressee expect (and foresee) the fulfillment of every unaccomplished sentence” (Eco, *The Role* 214). On a narrative level, the text may incorporate all different sorts of blanks or omissions in order to engage the

reader in the act of concretization. To summarize, gaps or blanks can be absolute, that is, when no assistance to the reader, or hint is offered by text in the act of concretization, or assisted or hinted. They can be hiatus, or lacunae, in the formal structure of a sentence, sentence correlates, or the story, or they can be felt or tantalizing. All in all, these indeterminacy markers “control the process of meaning assembly” (Iser, *Theory* 65) and although “we are far from knowing all the markers of implicit meaning” (Dolezel 204), developments in the stylistic study of narrative have made it possible to try to analyze the fictional narrative in terms of the response it elicits from its readers.

The role of blanks in the narrative level, which is at the level of the presentation of fabula elements, is to activate the reader’s creative imagination to fill in the semantic gaps. This is sometimes achieved by the direct implementation of gaps in the structure of *syuzhet*, for instance by leaving out some parts of the story entirely, as we see in Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones*, or by incorporating techniques such as excessive digressions in order to impede the flow of the story, which is clearly present in *Tristram Shandy*. Henry Fielding openly comments on the nature of these gaps in *Tom Jones*. For instance, he writes:

The reader will be pleased to remember, that, at the beginning of the second book of this history we gave him a hint of our intention to pass over several large periods of time, in which nothing happened worthy of being recorded in a chronicle of this kind. In so doing, we do not only consult our own dignity and ease, but the good and advantage of the reader: for besides that by these means we prevent him from throwing away his time, in reading without either pleasure or emolument, we give him, at all such seasons, an opportunity of employing that wonderful sagacity, of which he is master, by filling up these vacant spaces of time with his own conjectures; for which purpose we have taken care to qualify him in the preceding pages. (Book 3, ch.1: 116)

Iser calls this “the impeded ideation” and elaborates that “the temporary withholding of information acts as a stimulus”, (*Act 192*) and causes “not only disturbances but also the hindrance of the consistency-building process” (129) and forces the reader to insert subjective material and create the virtual existence of the text. In fact, control over the pace of the unravelling of the story has always been a significant story-telling technique. In the case of stories published in installments, we can clearly see how the effect of this impediment in the flow of the story engages the reader’s creative imagination. Iser explains this as follows:

We may continue to read a serial story if it is installments, but we may put it down if it is in the form of a book. Because the reader is forced by the pauses imposed on him to imagine more than he could have if his reading were continuous, and so, if the text of a serial makes a different impression from the text in book-form, this is principally because it introduces additional blanks, or alternatively accentuates existing blanks by means of a break until the next installment. (*Act 192*)

This is of course not exclusive to stories published in installments, but the logic is operative in almost all storytelling. Another example can be the movie trailers which put together a few scenes from a movie, and usually manage to attract the attention of the spectators, and prompt them to go to and watch the movie in full, or a TV commercial in which the name of the product which is being advertised is missing in order to provoke the audience’s imagination and force them to find it and buy it. In Iser’s words, “both the preview and serial story use the technique of strategic interruption in order to activate the basic structure of ideational process” (*Act 192*).

Indeterminacy may also arise out of what Iser calls “over-precision of representation” (*Act 207*). That is, in his view, over-precision may create blanks in representation as well. He writes: “in modern novel the blanks that arise out of the

over-precision of representation cause the reader to become more and more disoriented” (*Act* 207). This is in line with the concept that was outlined earlier, that language is incapable of representing reality, and the more we use language to describe reality, the more ambiguities are created, and the more unanswerable questions can be asked. This concept can be demonstrated in the failure of realist writers to present fully realist characters in their fiction, however detailed the descriptions. As stated earlier, this sense of verisimilitude is nothing but an illusion, and in fiction it serves to create more points of indeterminacy and to engage the reader’s creative imagination in the process of sense making.

Virginia’s Woolf’s praise of Jane Austen’s style of narration is a brilliant example of how these blanks or absences stimulate the reader’s creative imagination, and how the process of retention and protention forces him to produce novel senses. Woolf writes that:

Jane Austen is . . . thus the mistress of deeper emotion than appears at the surface. She stimulates us to supply what is not there. What she offers is, apparently, a trifle, yet is composed of something that expands in the reader’s mind and endows with the most enduring form of life scenes which are outwardly trivial. Always the stress is laid upon character... The turns and twists of the dialogue keep us on the tenterhooks of suspense. Our attention is half upon the present moment, and half upon the future... Here, indeed, in this unfinished and in the main inferior story, are all the elements of Jane Austen’s greatness. (qtd. in Iser, *Do Theory* 64)

So we now come to present the details presented above within a bigger picture. Every textual and narrative strategy in text, be it in the negative form of an indeterminacy marker, or in the positive form of a “hint” or of “over-precision”, is in the service of engaging the reader in the process of sense making due to the fact that without the act of reading there is no artwork. The “panoply of narrative techniques” used by novelists, like “the dialectical pattern employed by the



sonneteer” (*Act* 87) and Brecht’s “estrangement effect” in drama, have all been devised in order to elicit a particular response in the reader. Woolf’s “stream of consciousness” and Poe’s “unreliable narrator” are means contrived to activate the readers’ creative imaginations and engage them in the process of sense making. As Prince summarizes: “dialogues, metaphors, symbolic situations, allusions to particular systems of thought or certain works of art are some of the ways of manipulating the reader, guiding his judgements and controlling his reactions” (21). The study of the techniques by which the reader is enlisted in the game of imagination in the act of reading is the study of what Jonathan Culler calls “the logic of literature” (*Literary* 112), and for that we need to focus on a sort of narrative stylistics which can account for the interaction between the fictional text and the reader at a narrative level.

## **2.7 The Virtual Existence of Text**

Points of indeterminacy at the discursive and narrative levels in a fictional text invite the reader to engage in the process of sense-making by progressively making analytical decisions and adding subjective material to the fabric of the story. This act of omission by the text, and act of replenishing by the reader or leaving out on the part of the text and filling in on the part of the reader is the mechanism behind the dynamicity and multiplicity of the reading experience. In Stanzel’s words, “the delight of writing novels is what you can leave out on each page, in each sentence” (46-47) which leads to the reader’s necessary insertion of subjective material into the fabric of the story and to the formation of a virtual existence of the

text. Sartre calls the relationship between the reader and the text a “pact”, and goes on to claim that:

“when a work is produced, the creative act is only an incomplete abstract impulse; if the writer existed all on his own, he could write as much as he liked, but his work would never see the light of day as object, and he would have to lay down his pen or despair. The process of writing, however, includes as a dialectic correlative the process of reading, and these two interdependent acts require two differently active people. The combined effort of author and reader bring into being the concrete and imaginary object which is the work of mind. Art exists only for and through other people. (42)

Holland refers to the same thing when he speaks of readers “replenishing a text by infinitely various additions of subjective to objective”, a phrase that implies that textual meaning is a combination of what the reader projects onto a text and what the words actually mean” (Tompkins xix). Iser, following Ingarden, uses the terms “concretization”, or “ideation” to refer to this addition of subjective material into the points of indeterminacy. By concretization he means all the strategies that are used by the reader to realize the text, fill in the gaps and bring the existence of the text to his or her own world. It is this act of concretization that gives life to the text by activation of the reader's imagination and enabling him to interact with the text, “climb aboard it” and “aim at something beyond what it actually says” (Iser, *Reading Process* 191). It is through this act of concretization, which is by nature an interactive act between the text and the reader, that the text reveals “its actual content” (Iser, *Reading Process* 191). In his view, “the work is the point of convergence, since it is located neither in the author's psyche nor in the reader's experience” (*Theory* 15), and the act of concretization gives rise to what he calls “the virtual existence of the text”, or “the aesthetic object”. The virtual existence of the text, which is the real existence of it, does not lie within the text, or in the reader's consciousness, but happens half way between these two interactants. Iser

insists that the virtual existence of the text “cannot be reduced to the reality of the text or to the subjectivity of the reader” (*Act 21*) but is the product of their interaction. He reiterates that “the ‘consistent interpretation’ or ‘gestalt’ is a product of the interaction of the text and the reader, and so cannot be exclusively traced back either to written text or the disposition of the reader” (*Act 119*) and “effects and responses are properties neither of the text nor of the reader; the text represents a potential effect that is realized in the reading process” (*Act ix*). He writes that a literary text thus has

[. . .] two poles, which we might call the artistic, and the aesthetic: the artistic refers to the text created by the author, and the aesthetic to the realization (concretization) accomplished by the reader. From this polarity it follows that the literary text cannot be completely identical with the text or with the realizations of the text, but in fact must lie half way between the two. The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized, and furthermore the realizations is by no means independent of individual disposition of the reader- through this in turn is acted upon by the different patterns of the text (*Reading Process 189*).

Thus, the virtual existence of the text is the coming together of the textual frame offered by the text and the subjective filling ins, done by the reader.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the reader is also a writer in giving life to a certain fictional text.

The accumulation of the reader’s addition to text, is what Stanzel calls “the complimentary story” (203). It is the sum of all analytical additions that the reader inserts into the text in order to make it a complete phenomenon in his consciousness. Apparently, a complimentary story can be added in a variety of ways. As Iser explicates, “the structure of the text allows for different ways of fulfillment. Clearly, then, the process of fulfillment is always a selective one” (*Act 37*). This accounts for

the multiplicity of concretizations that each and every reading may instigate for a certain work of art, even with the same reader.

The sum of the reader's creative selections that is added to the text in the form of a complimentary story creates the virtual existence of the text, which is in Stanzel's words "authentic" (203) in that, unlike the text itself, it is "definable in terms of an infinite number of details" (203). The complimentary story which makes the incomplete nature of text a complete whole is dependent on the historicity and individuality of the reader, or on the pragmatic level of interaction, and is thus prone to change in each reading. This is another reason why each reading of a given text may produce new senses of that same text, which can be equally valid. As Stanzel puts it, "each concretization is a terra nova." (216)

Sartre's summary of this conceptualization of how literature works is enlightening. In *What is Literature?* he holds a similar position to what was explicated above when he writes that:

All literary work is an appeal. To write is to make an appeal to the reader that he leads into objective existence the revelation which I have undertaken by means of language. And if it should be asked to what the writer is appealing, the answer is simple. As the sufficient reason for the appearance of the aesthetic object is never found either in the book (where we find merely solicitations to produce the object) or in the author's mind, and as his subjectivity, which he cannot get away from, cannot give a reason for the act of leading into objectivity, the appearance of the work of art is a new event which cannot be explained by anterior data. And since this directed creation is an absolute beginning, it is therefore brought about by the freedom of the reader, and by what is purest in that freedom. Thus, the writer appeals to the reader's freedom to collaborate in the production of his work. (46)

Thus, reading is transformed into a "creative process that is far above mere perception of what is written. The literary text activates our faculties, enabling us to recreate the world it presents. The product of this creative activity is what we may

call the virtual dimension of the text.... This virtual dimension is not the text itself. It is the coming together of text and imagination” (Iser, *Reading Process* 192). In other words, the fictional work is not a finished product whose meaning is fixed, but a work in progress, something like a Lego play, whose real existence, sense or final product emerges during the act of readership, and unlike the traditional view it is not predetermined merely by its objective qualities.

## **2.8 Boundaries of Interaction**

Now that the dynamic nature of the reader, the provocative nature of the text, and the endlessly pluralistic nature of the interaction between the two is established, a question may arise about the boundaries of the reader’s creative imagination in the act of reading. As expounded above, readers add their subjective material, i.e. their complimentary story, to the inherently deficient fabric of the text to form the virtual existence of text, but do they enjoy absolute freedom in exercising their creative powers? In other words, is the reader at absolute liberty to form any complimentary story that he desires, to assign any meaning or sense, to a certain text, as some postmodern thinkers have proposed, or is he bound to operate within certain limits that the text designates? Can a reader read the *Tragedy of Hamlet* as a farcical comedy or, to use Terry Eagleton’s humorous example, can he “read Bob Black Sheep as an account of the electrification of the early Soviet Union”? (*Read Literature* 138). To answer this question, one must not forget that reading is basically an interpretive act, and the question of the limits of readership is basically a reformulation of the ancient question of the limits of interpretation.

Taking IMR into consideration one needs to know that interpretation or, to be precise, the concretization of a certain fictional text, is affected in the first place by an array of extra-textual factors, such as the reader's ideology, historicity, gender and the like which lie within the pragmatic level of interaction, i.e. reception, and thus beyond the scope of the current study. However, text also enjoys a partial control over the creation and insertion of its complimentary story, i.e. the act of concretization, by actively implementing certain textual strategies. These are the strategies through which the text seeks to instigate the formation of certain responses in the reader's creative imagination; they function through a complex network of offering fabula elements in a way that advances and impedes the unveiling of fabula elements at the same time, and are partially responsible for limiting and de-limiting the reader's creative imagination and shaping the complimentary story. Though their dominion over the process of concretization is not absolute because of the influence of the extra textual factors, they have a fair share of roles to play in the formation of the aesthetic object, or the sense of the work, and thus ask for a closer theoretical look.

Iser summarizes the role of text in the formation of the complementary story as follows:

Practically every discernible structure in fiction has this two-sidedness: it is verbal and affective. The verbal aspect guides the reaction and prevents it from being arbitrary; the affective aspect is the fulfillment of what has been prestructured by the language of the text. Any description of the interaction between the two must therefore incorporate both the structure of effects (the text) and that of response (the reader). (*Act 21*)

What he refers to as "structure of effects" is a reformulation of textual strategies that control, or attempt to control the reader's creative response in the act of readership. This control is always relative not absolute, which means all texts can

be potentially read in a drastically diverse manner to what they try to achieve through their textual strategies. This is usually called resistant reading and remains outside the scope of this study.

The indispensable rule in readership is that any text is capable of instigating the creation of a plethora of complimentary stories and the formation of unlimited number of virtual existences; but this does not mean that any text at all is capable of producing any sense at all, because, as explicated above, the sense, concretization, or the creation of virtual existence of text is the consequence of the interaction of the reader and the text, and this interaction is partially controlled, at times limited and de-limited, by the textual strategies that any fictional narrative text employs in textual and narrative levels. In Eco's words: readers "make a series of interpretive choices" which "are more than one" but "are not infinite" (*The Role* 35-45). "A work can have a variety of meanings but not just any meaning whatsoever" (Culler, *Literary* 110), and when offering new interpretations readers or critics alike "have to be able to back up their claims" (Eagleton, *Read Literature* 139) with textual or extra textual evidence. As Iser notes, "the process of assembling the meaning of the text is not a private one, for although it does mobilize the subjective disposition of the reader, it does not lead to day-dreaming but to the fulfillment of conditions that have already been structured in the text" (*Act* 49-50). Therefore, "to doubt whether an author can be fully in command of his or her meaning is not to suggest that literary works can mean anything you like" (Eagleton, *Read Literature* 138).

This is why Joseph Morgolis's notions of plausibility and implausibility, which have been introduced to "supply relativized 'truth-values' other than true or false" (Shusterman 86) can turn out to be insightful and helpful to this thesis. Using

these concepts, we can say there is no right or wrong, true or false interpretation of a given text, but only plausible and implausible readings: plausible being the ones that have complementary stories close to what is offered by the text, and implausible the ones which are the product of highly innovative concretizations, different from what the text attempts to achieve. So, while any text is infinitely open to new readings, the validity of these readings qua text can be decided by the degree of their plausibility, and this is certainly a criterion that needs to be established for each given text individually based on its content and, most significantly, on the textual strategies implemented in it. Thus, in Culler's words, "for any work there is a range of interpretations which can be defended within the conventions of reading" (*Pursuit* 124-5).

In the Iserian model of readership, also, text is the scaffold on which the reader's creative imagination weaves the fabric of the aesthetic object, i.e., the virtual existence of the text, and "the reader's activity is only a fulfillment of what is already implicit in the structure of the work- though exactly how that structure limits his activity is never made clear" (Tompkins xv). As Ahmadi points out, "to Iser readership is limited by the semantic horizon of the text but he does not exactly explain how (*Text Structure* 427). To Iser, the textual structures play the canonical role in shaping the reader's response. He talks of "textual structure and structured act" (*Act* 36) and writes: "textual structures and structured acts of comprehension are the two poles in the act of communication, whose success will depend on the degree in which the text establishes itself as a correlative in the reader's consciousness" (*Act* 107). Though in formulating textual structures he clearly has textual elements in mind, he does not follow up the practical consequences of his



theory by sufficiently explaining how these textual elements succeed in influencing the formation of complementary story or concretization in the mind of its readers. This question is on a par with the question of the boundaries of interaction, boredom and overstrain, within which the act of reading is actualized, and outside which the reader stops the act and leaves the game of readership. To prove itself as a useful apparatus in modern literary theory, any reader-response model must pledge to demonstrate how textual strategies implemented in the text manipulate the reader's creative imagination in order to keep him within the act of readership. In other words, forcing the reader to read on is the primary purpose of any given text, and how text achieves that must be a matter of enquiry for the theoreticians of the field. One of the main objectives of this current study is to contribute to the advancement of reader-response criticism in that direction.

Generally speaking, text de-limits the reader's imagination by offering chances for the reader to exercise his creative powers, using a whole set of strategies such as giving hints, creating indeterminacy points, stimulating the reader's curiosity and the like. It also limits the range of possible activation of the reader's imagination by implementing certain textual strategies, by offering certain elements of fabula in an intentionally planned sequence and et cetera. (These strategies will be looked at systematically in the following chapters of this study.) Eco in *Limits of Interpretation* tries to identify the limits that text imposes on the reader. Apparently these limits are the result of textual strategies incorporated in the fictional text. Iser also, in an introductory note to the French translation of his book, briefly points out this problem (Ahmadi, *Truth and Beauty* 427); namely, how the text controls the reader's imagination, but does not pursue the matter any further. As stated above

this is an aspect of reader-response theory that needs improvement if it is to play a more active role in modern literary theory.

In *Act of Reading* Iser writes:

The reader's enjoyment begins when he himself becomes productive, i.e., when the text allows him to bring his own faculties into play. There are, of course, limits to the reader's willingness to participate, and these will be exceeded if the text makes things too clear or, on the other hand, too obscure: boredom and overstrain represent the two poles of tolerance, and in either case the reader is likely to opt out of the game. (*Act* 108)

The quotation is enlightening in that it implies the fact that the single most significant purpose of any fictional text is to engage the reader in the process of reading, without which there will be no virtual existence, no aesthetic object and no sense at all. To meet such a purpose, text tries to engage the reader's creative imagination by a variety of techniques such as offering gaps, and indeterminacies, or implementing an unreliable narrator while controlling the process by offering enough provocative clues to attract the reader's imagination and keep it between certain boundaries. If text offers too much or too little, or becomes too evident or too obscure, the reader's creative imagination does not continue to stay in the give and take game with the text, and the reader may simply leave the act of reading. So, the boundaries of interaction within which every single text tries to keep its readers are boredom and overstrain. However, it should be reiterated here that due to the flexible nature of reader that was thoroughly investigated earlier in this study, these boundaries are always on the flux, from one reader to another and from one readership to another. A text that a certain reader may find appealing at a certain time and place may lose its appeal, turn out to be too boring or too obscure at another time and place as well as by another reader.

Stanley Fish approaches the same problem and comes to the same solution when he discusses the degree of predictability and unpredictability as important factors in reading fiction. He refers to Riffaterre's SDs or stylistic devices, which are the same concept that are referred to as textual strategies in this thesis, and writes:

For Riffaterre, stylistic study is the study of SDs or stylistic devices which are defined as those mechanisms in the text which prevent the reader from inferring or predicting any important feature. For predictability may result in superficial reading; unpredictability will compel attention. (Fish 60)

As evident from this quote, to Fish also, the vital prerequisite for the successful act of reading is the delicate balance between the predictability and unpredictability of text. If that balance is disrupted by offering too much or too little information, the reader is prone to quitting the act of reading and leaving the arena of readership. Fish also recognizes the fact that text controls these predictability and unpredictability factors by using stylistic devices, or what I prefer to call the textual strategies.

Stanzel also acknowledges the fact that text's ultimate goal is to control the reader's response and keep him in the act of readership. He is also aware that fictional text accomplishes this by incorporating textual strategies in its structure, and the reader in the act of reading does not enjoy absolute liberty in practicing his creative imagination, but has to play within the boundaries set up by text. Stanzel's "textual demarcations" (206) is a reformulation of the concept 'textual strategies' that I have explicated earlier in this chapter. In a canonical essay entitled "The 'Complementary Story': Outline of a Reader-Oriented Theory of the Novel", Stanzel anticipates

. . . an obvious and weighty objection. If the reader is left to indulge in this tendency to create his own complementary story, then the results of such readings of the novel will soon diverge materially from the authorial intentions expressed in the text. A temporary answer to this objection is that the demarcations set out clearly in the text naturally have as much validity for this type of reader as for any other in setting limits to his fantasy. One of the aims of the considerations that follow is to direct the attention of literary research to the question of a possible restriction of the reader's creative freedom. Yet because a story is inherently incomplete in its concrete details, one can say that the reader, within the boundaries marked by the text, can partake of the privilege of control over fictional reality, something that has before been almost exclusively the privilege of authors. (206)

In the way the reader is seen as an accomplice in the act of giving birth to the story, an active partner to the author, and one who brings the text to life over and over again in each reading by adding subjective material to the text, and making it a complete whole. This is why Tompkins asserts that "reading and writing are two names for the same activity" (x). The chapter has also explained how the reader's creative imagination is manipulated, limited and de-limited by textual strategies in order to keep the reader within the boundaries of interaction, which are boredom and overstrain, outside of which the reader may stop the game and leave the arena of readership. In Chapter Three and Four of this study two works of fiction will be analyzed under the light of IMR to clarify how in practice the text controls the reader's creative imagination in the course of reading, and keeps the reader in the act of imagination, i.e. reading.

## **2.9 Human Propensity to Fictionalize**

Important questions remain unanswered, however: why do readers actively play this game? What is the driving force behind the act of concretization, or reading? What motivates readers to create and insert their complementary stories to the schematized view of the text? Part of the answer to these related questions

apparently lies in the reader's tendency to fantasize. Fantasy, as Freud remarks and Ricoeur (166) points out, is "a fulfillment of wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality" (qtd in Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy* 166) and the propensity to fantasize is a basic driving force behind many human activities. In reading, however, part of this propensity arises from the inherent structural features of the text that was outlined above, namely, the schematized view of the text that invites the reader to play an active role in the time of reading. IMR explains why reading fiction is still tremendously popular in an era when a wide range of other forms of entertainment are available to the public. Iser explained that "reading is only a pleasure when it is active and creative" (*Reading Process* 190), and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan come to the same conclusion, which is that it is this sense of creation and recreation (resulting from the incomplete nature of text) that makes reading an enjoyable and thought-provoking task (123) or, in phenomenological terms, a "consciousness-raising" activity.

If the active participation of the reader in the game of readership is seen as the basis for the enjoyment of the reading of a particular work of fiction, this might explain why, in the tradition of the English novel and short story, making the story obscure or implicit has played just as important a role as making it explicit to readers. Dolezel discusses "implicit and explicit markers in fiction" and refers to "the popularity of the implicit in literature" (204), and he holds that "literary interpretation is primarily, or maybe exclusively, recovery of implicit meaning. (204)" A strong case can be made for the dominance of implicit exposition in contemporary fiction, drawing on the fact that in many cases the authors make it their responsibility to impede the course of narration by implementing a variety of

textual techniques. Later in this thesis, close attention will be paid to those textual strategies which serve in making a fictional text more implicit, obscure or uncertain rather than more explicit, clear or certain. By implementing these implicit markers, text invites the reader to take an active role in the game of readership, and eventually elevates the reader to the level of the author. That is why, in order to enjoy a reading, all readers must be authors, in a sense.

In *Tristram Shandy*, the readers are recognized to have as important a role as the author. “Sterne's concept of the literary work is that it is something like an arena in which the author and the reader participate in the game of imagination (Iser, *Reading Process* 190)”. Sterne's own remark is quite clarifying in this respect:

No author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good-breeding, would presume to think all: the truest respect which you can pay to reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself. For my own part, I am eternally paying him compliments of this kind, and do all that lies in my power to keep his imagination as busy as my own. (*Tristram Shandy* 75)

From the above quotation it is clear that Sterne's understanding of the world of literary text has astonishing affinities with the post-structural concept of the text as a “place for production and proliferation of meaning” (Lodge 188). His ideas also directly correspond to the phenomenological model of readership that is the basis of IMR proposed in this study.

Iser considers the urge for completion, or consistency as the power behind the reader's participation in the game of readership. To Iser, “establishment of consistency is essential to all comprehension” (*Act* 16) and he sees “consistency-building as a basis for involvement in the text as an event.” (*Act* 118) but why do readers seek consistency? Stanzel tries to defy this question by using Ingarden's

rather mystical concept of understanding as something that allows no discontinuity. He writes: “the necessity for the reader of adding to and completing what is selectively represented arises out of the circumstance that, according to Roman Ingarden, ‘like space, time—by its very essence—allows of no discontinuity’ (*Literary* 238), whether in the experience of reality or in the imagination during the act of reading.” (208) and he later insists that the “complementary story has its origin in the reader’s desire to recreate in his mind an entity that is, in all its aspects, as determinate, cohesive, and continuous as possible.” (209) Though illuminating, Stanzel’s ideas fail to clarify why this cohesion is necessary, and why the yearning for completion is felt at the time of reading.

Iser tries to tackle this question by referring to “reader’s faculties of perceiving and processing” (*Act* 107). To him, “reading sets in motion a chain of activities that depend both on the text and on the exercise of certain basic human faculties” (*Act* ix). He writes: “It is called aesthetic response because it is brought about by the text, it brings into play the imaginative and perceptive faculties of the reader” (*Act* x). These faculties are another name for the yearning for individual determinacy, completion, and wholeness that readers feel at the time of reading a fictional text. Eagleton traces the reader’s propensity to fictionalize to the Freudian death drive: “desire for finality, craving for ending are rooted in the Freudian death drive” (*Read Literature* 104). To Eagleton as well as Iser, “the desire for finality” (*Read Literature* 104), or “the hunger for closure” (*ibid* 103) is the true manifestation of the Freudian death drive which is behind the reader’s active addition of subjective material at the time of reading, which is more consciously done in order to create the virtual existence of the text. It can also be argued that

along with yearning for completion, the desire of symmetry or parallelism is another force behind the act of concretization. Iser briefly points this out when he observes that “symmetry relieves one from the pressure of unfamiliar by controlling it within a closed and balanced system” (*Act* 15).

However, it would be very difficult to decide if this yearning for a closure is rooted in some inherent human faculties of perception or if it is the result of a certain literary tradition or convention. The postmodern technique of the open ended story, for example, can be taken as an instance of manipulating basic human faculties to yearn for completion, or it can be seen as an attempt to disrupt a classical reading convention that stresses the role of finality and wholeness in storytelling. Culler, for instance, considers this craving for finality as nothing but a reading convention. When discussing poetry, he writes: “structural conventions require that the final stanza bring the poem to a close, produce an appropriate conclusion” (Culler, *Pursuit* 74).

## **2.10 The Evaluative face of IMR**

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, one of the unannounced objectives of reader-response criticism and negative hermeneutics has been to democratize the reading experience by stressing the multiplicity and plurality of meaning of text. In the domain of positive hermeneutics, the semantic horizons of words were still conceived as being independent from the reading of the reader, and the authorial intention was seen as the main or only criterion for meaning. For instance, Hirsch, who can be regarded as the last influential proponent of positive criticism, thinks that “authorial intention is the only criteria which can stop the



interpretation chaos.” (Shusterman 85); but this “interpretation chaos” is embraced wholeheartedly by reader-response critics such as Stanley Fish, hermeneutic theoreticians such as Gadamer and postmodern thinkers such as Derrida, who consider standardization of the reading experience as nothing but the domination of a certain ideological discourse, i.e. a type of semantic dictatorship.

Though these thinkers come to the concept of the multiplicity of meaning through different paths, their ultimate proposition is virtually the same. Derrida’s deconstruction, Fish’s reader-response, and Gadamer’s negative hermeneutics are all directed at freeing the reader from all the limitations in practicing his creative imagination. For all these theoreticians, text does not have a single, clear-cut meaning, and any such meaning is the product of the dominant discourse rather than the text itself. As Culler states: “one can only determine a correct reading in relation to a standard, and such standards are ultimately imposed by varying sorts of cultural authority” (Culler, *Pursuit* 77). In Eagleton’s paraphrase, “all interpretations are partial and provisional. There is no last word” (Eagleton, *Read Literature* 166). Not even the denotation of a word in a dictionary can be taken as a standard for judgement, because even the dictionary definition of a word can be shown to be the result of a reading affected by the dominant discourse. The obvious consequence of these theories is that there is no such thing as a valid reading of a certain text, but all readings are valid. Though usually it is not explicitly outspoken, this concept is latent at the heart of all the above-mentioned theories. Gadamer, when discussing the history of interpretations, or, what is better called the history of reception, states that “all interpretations are of the same value.” (Ahmadi 408), and Suleiman, in his enlightening introduction, writes:

All master theories which claim to speak the truth are to be distrusted, and it is the task of negative hermeneutics to give voice to that distrust by focusing on those aspects of the text that reveal the vulnerability of any absolute statement about its meaning and by making of the impossibility of a single interpretation the primary subject of criticism. (39)

Stanley Fish goes as far in stressing the dynamic nature of reading, as he negates the possibility of an erroneous reading altogether when he writes that

everything depends on the temporal dimension, and as a consequence the notion of a mistake, at least as something to be avoided, disappears. In a sequence where the reader first structures the field he inhabits and then is asked to restructure it, there is no question of priority among his structurings; no one of them, even if it is the last, has privilege; each is equally legitimate, each the proper object of analysis, because each is equally an event in his experience. (Fish 159)

He openly declares elsewhere that his method “is oriented away from evaluation and toward description” (Fish 22). Needless to say, Derrida’s deconstruction, which enables the reader-critics to break the standard norms of reading and dig up novel meanings from already critically-exhausted texts, follows the same path. For Derrida, also, the notion of a single standard meaning is nothing but an outdated concept.

Negative hermeneutics is deprived of evaluative features; in Stanley Fish’s words, it moves away from “judgement” to mere “description”. By declaring that we have no single meaning, and all readings are valid equally, we have now gone a full circle back to the problem of “interpretive chaos” put forth by Hirsch. The possibility of multiplicity of meaning is in fact a double-sided blade. If text is devoid of any final meaning, be it authorial or textual, the question to be asked is what makes a certain text more valuable than any other. In other words, what is the difference between a story told by my grandmother, and say, a Shakespearean

tragedy. This brings us again to the question of what makes literature in general, and what makes good literature in particular.

This question has lingered since Greek antiquity. It gained a novel impetus in the Formalists' attempts to define literature in terms of deviation from the norm. That attempt however, was not very fruitful because it failed to account for the fact that any deviation from the norm in forms of expression cannot be considered literature. For instance, the verbal hallucinations of a schizophrenic patient cannot be taken as literary in the same sense that we read the stream of consciousness of James Joyce in *Finnegan's Wake*. Terry Eagleton asks the same question in *How to Read Literature*: "what is it that makes a work of literature good, bad or indifferent?"; and he answers: "depth of insight, truth-to-life, formal unity, universal appeal, moral complexity, verbal inventiveness, imaginative vision" (175). He thus investigates all these factors extensively only to come to the conclusion that none can be taken alone as the final answer.

IMR may offer us some insight into this conundrum. According to IMR, the meaning of text does not lie within the text, but the sense arises out of the interaction of the reader and the text in the act of readership, and thus, sense is of a dynamic nature. So, the literariness of a particular text does not lie in its internal characteristics, or objective qualities but in the way it is read. In other words, the reader is capable of reading a certain text as literature, or as history, biography, philosophy and documentary narration with referential meaning, and it is the manner of reading which determines the final sense that is produced out of a given text. Thus, it can be concluded that the literariness of text is related to its capacity of being read as literature. In other words, any text which offers greater opportunity for

the reader to practice his creative imaginative powers is more literary than the others. I believe this can provide us with a framework for literary evaluation.

At its core, this concept is actually a reformulation of the modernists' all famous motto: "to make it new" (Pound) that was an inheritance received from their Romantic predecessors. In this regard, the role of the literary text is not to offer an imitation of reality, but to transform it by activating the reader's creative imagination through the medium of language. What Rorty calls "private perfection" (xiv, 30, 94, 96) is in fact the experiencing of a new aspect of reality through the activation of our creative imagination. In Shusterman's paraphrase, "Rorty repeatedly insists that what should be paramount in our use of language is neither the realistic goal of discovering the truth nor even the Habermasian goal of cooperative problem solving to promote consensus of belief, but rather the goal of private perfection through original creation. The primary aim is "to make things new", "to make something that never had been dreamed of before," to achieve autonomy over oneself and one's world "by inventing a new language" (Shusterman 102); "For Rorty, what we want from literature and its criticism are variety and novelty: new meanings, new vocabularies, "new ways of speaking" (qtd. in Shusterman 101). Eagleton is also in full agreement: "Poetry is concerned not with just the meaning of experience, but with the experience of meaning." (*Read Literature* 192); and Iser refers to the same creative nature of reading when he writes: "in reading we are able to experience things that no longer exist and to understand things that are totally unfamiliar to us" (*Act* 19). The role of literature, then, is not to represent reality, but to present a new experience of reality, "to show

not necessarily how things are, but how things are experienced, what it feels like to be alive” (Lewis 158).

Under IMR, therefore, the evaluation of a text’s literariness should not be based upon its strictly objective qualities but on the extent and diversity of opportunities that these objective qualities offer for the activation of the reader’s creative imagination. In simple terms, it is the “interpretive richness” (Shusterman 85) of text per se that determines its literary value, and because this interpretive richness is subject to change in relation to the dominant discourse of the time, the literary value of a given text is prone to oscillate up and down in the passage of time, as we have already noted in the case of *Fanny* and *Madam Bovary*. To paraphrase, the problem of evaluation is basically a matter of reception; a given text can come to be seen as a literary masterpiece over time, whereas others lose their value, and fade out of sight. In this sense, “a literary classic is not so much a work whose value is changeless as one that is able to generate new meanings over time. It is, so to speak, a slow-burning affair” (Eagleton, *Read Literature* 184). However, this logic of interpretive richness works within the boundaries of interaction, or the demarcations set up by text, and is by no means purely presumptive by the readers. Text’s objective qualities still have roles to play in determining its interpretive richness, and thus, it is highly unlikely that my grandmother’s story will come to be seen a more valuable masterpiece than Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in any foreseeable future.

As a result, a reader-critic’s job is not to search for a final clear-cut meaning for a given text but to analyze the conditions of meaning, and pave the way for the reader to produce better and more complimentary stories, and to read texts in

endlessly-newer ways. In Iser's words, the "critic's object, therefore, should be, not to explain the work, but reveal the conditions that bring about its various possible effects (*Act 18*). If he clarifies the potential of a text, he will no longer fall to the trap of trying to impose one meaning on his reader, as if that were the right, or at least the best, interpretation (*Act 18*). The critic, says T.S. Eliot, "must not coerce, and he must not make judgements of worse or better. He must simply elucidate: the reader will form the correct judgement for himself" (qtd. in *Act 18-9*), and thus the "possibility or necessity of objectively valid interpretation that can overcome the dead and the false" (Suleiman 39) can be rejected altogether.

This has been in fact, what literature as an institution has always been doing: it has always attempted "to make it new", not to record reality as it is, but to offer new insights into the fabric of reality, by "bringing to the world something that hitherto did not exist and at best can be qualified as virtual reality" (*Theory 58*), by not offering the readers the meaning of their experience, but providing them with the opportunity to "experience meaning", by not imitating life, but "transforming" (Eagleton, *Read Literature 181*) the experience of living in a phenomenological sense.

To sum up, this chapter has shown that an artwork, or fictional text is essentially incapable of representing reality in full. As a result of this deficiency it invites the reader to fill in the missing information, work out the connection between the links, and give life to the virtual existence of the text. The reader takes part in this game of the imagination because of his inherent propensity for completion, consistency, wholeness and fantasy. However, text does not leave the reader on his own in his endeavor to create a complete whole out of the essentially

incomplete framework that text offers, but attempts to guide the reader's creative imagination by implementing a variety of textual strategies. These strategies are the most important aspects of literary fiction that any narrative stylistics should take into consideration in order to be able to explain what actually happens between the reader and the text in the act of readership. Without these strategies, there will be no aesthetic experience, as we can observe in the case of summarizing a novel or paraphrasing a poem. Thus, the ultimate goal of Reader-Response theory must be to compose a narrative stylistics capable of describing these textual strategies which govern the give and take relationship between the reader and the text in the act of readership.

In the following chapters of this thesis an attempt will be made to contribute to the composition of a narrative stylistics that can elucidate the complicated nature of the reader/text interaction in the act of reading especially at the narrative level of interaction. Any such stylistics should take into account the major and minor textual and narrative strategies that limit and de-limit the reader's creative imagination in the time of reading. Evidently this study cannot be exhaustive, and the list of possible textual and narrative innovations that can affect the reader's creative imagination, and thus establish an interaction with their corresponding reader in semiotic, discursive, narrative and pragmatic levels is endless and progressively open. However, I hope to shed some light on the stylistics techniques that the texts of *Tristram Shandy* and *The Dispossessed* utilize in order to engage the readers in their game of imagination by focusing on the narrative level of interaction and demonstrating how the manipulation of narratorial modes in these works, and the implementation of techniques such as authorial intrusion, the unreliable narrator,

digression, alternative stories, tantalizing omissions, flashbacks and foreshadowings influence the reader's creative imagination, keeps him in the act of readership, and ultimately sets the scene for the reader's sense making activity.



## CHAPTER 3

### TEXT AS THE ARBITER OF MEANING

We are homo-fabulans (Currie 2). We tell stories, and in doing so, we use a semiotic system, language, to give form to the tumultuous aggregate of our living experiences which are engraved in our consciousness, to create a sort of consistency, or cohesion of what we know, or are capable of knowing. Yet language, unlike what the naïve understanding of it entails, is inherently incapable of carrying the totality of our experience, or the exact meaning of it, to another subject, and thus, the reception of any linguistic creation, be it a story or non-story, involves an act of interpretation. The communicative nature of language involves a sender, message, and receiver, but the message which is passed on it is by no means a matter of a clear-cut meaning being carried from one subject to the next, but the entire process should rather be seen in terms of an active engagement in the proliferation of meaning by both the sender and the receiver, what has been termed sense-making in Chapter Two, which involves a sending (writer) as well as a receiving subject (reader/hearer) whose consciousness is the playground in which this disassembling and reassembling of phenomena is carried out.

In Chapter Two of this study, various complications of such a view on the production and consumption of linguistic art were discussed in (limited) detail, and an outline of a reader-oriented theory of fiction was broadly sketched. The chapter emphasized how the meaning or sense of a given fictional work is not an absolute

entity hidden in the text that needs to be excavated but is a live creation that comes into existence as an active engagement and subjective contribution of the reader in the act of readership. How the reader's consciousness is the locus of this sense-making activity was elucidated, and the implications concerning how text controls this process, or at least attempts to control it using a variety of textual strategies were mentioned. In other words, the reader, in the act of reading, is not left on his own to employ his imaginative powers, but text enforces its limiting and de-limiting powers by setting up "demarcations" (Stanzel 206) that have the function of "setting limits to reader's fantasy" (206). Iser noted the same principle: "The impression that arise from as a result of this [reading] process will vary from individual to individual but only within the limits imposed by the written as opposed to unwritten text" (Iser 117); by unwritten text he means the summation of the reader's subjective addition to the story, or the complementary story, that was discussed in Chapter Two. In brief, the formation of configurative meaning is the result of a virtual convergence of both the text and the reader, not any one of them independently. The text is responsible for instigating the chain of creative reactions in the reader; a task that it achieves only through implementation of various textual strategies that will be scrutinized in the following two chapters of this study.

Though Iser has an undeniable role in establishing a cohesive theory of readership, and his ideas, as reviewed in Chapter Two, play a central role in the constitution of IMR, and pave the way for the later developments in the same direction, he pays almost no attention to the logical consequences of his theory, and its inevitable impact on the formation of a comprehensive theory of fiction.

To clarify, establishing the theoretical basis of the roles of the reader and the text in the act of readership, Iser does not try to answer the question of how text, and to be more precise, the fictional text, affects, controls, or provokes the reader's creative imagination. To gain a clear view of how narrative fiction works, we need not only to understand the nature of interaction between the reader and the text, and comprehend what affects the reader in the act of reading (this is a path that has been taken by many reader-response theorists), but also we should discern in what ways the narrative text controls the reader's response, which is a road not taken so far. This is where hermeneutics and reader-response criticism, and — more precisely — the IMR, must come together with narratology, to analyze the plethora of stylistic nuances that have been aptly conceived and largely used by narrators throughout the history of fiction. In other words, all the narratological concepts and considerations must be reevaluated under the light of IMR in order to illuminate their relationship with the reader, and the effect they bear on the formation of the virtual existence of the fictional text, or the aesthetic object. As stated earlier, the remaining chapters of this study are devoted to an attempt in that direction.

In the following pages, several narratological aspects of selected texts will be explored in relation to their effect on the manipulation of the reader's creative imagination. However, a few considerations should be put forward before moving further. First, and foremost, it should be remembered that the narratological aspects of the text that will be discussed shortly should always be read in the light of the Interactionalist Model of Readership, or, IMR, which was proposed in Chapter Two. Narratology has always been part of the project of

structuralism, and its ultimate purpose was to explain the role of narrative techniques in the formation of an autonomous, objective, and self-sufficient work of art. A key proposition of this thesis is that the various stylistic concepts that narratologists devised to study the narrative can be better comprehended and put to better use, only if we cast aside the outdated notion of art as object, and analyze them under the light of IMR; in other words, they should be scrutinized upon the basis of the effects they seek to create on their respective readers, not on the merit of some internal objective characteristic that they might have, or a sense of harmony they are thought to create with other elements of the text. In other words, this study is interested in these narratorial techniques or, more accurately, textual strategies, with the sole purpose of clarifying their effect upon the readers' creative imagination, and not as having some objective quality, coherence, or autonomy.

Secondly, it should be noted that the range and multiplicity of textual strategies that have been conceived and utilized throughout the history of narrative fiction is infinite and inexhaustible. Every generation comes up with its own epoch-making authors who envision new textual and dramatic strategies to attract and control the imaginations of their respective readers. Though our human condition remains basically the same, and in the words of the preacher, "there is nothing new under the sun," every generation of artists makes bolder attempts to create newer ways of attracting and activating their reader's imagination by means of signs, or to put it simply, "to make it new" (Pound). Thus, this study cannot be exhaustive or comprehensive in terms of the textual strategies it analyzes. Thus, only a select number of textual strategies are going

to be explored in selected texts in order to shed light on aspects of the theory that has been developed here, and in order to demonstrate how fictional texts work or, in this case, how they limit and de-limit their readers' creative imaginations by offering them certain material of the fabula and simultaneously refraining from offering everything.

Finally, the following analyses, as it is customary in academic investigations of literary works, do not aim to offer a new interpretation of the selected texts, or excavate new meanings of them, but hope to shed some light on the logic of fictional literature in relation to their readers, and lay bare the mechanism by which fictional texts operate. So, textual analyses should be read as exemplifications of the theoretical concepts that have been developed here and not the other way around. Also, it should be noted that due to the volatile nature of the relationship between the text, and a dynamic concept of 'reader' which were explored in Chapter Two, this study has no positivistic claim to make in regard to the virtual existences of the works under scrutiny, rather it attempts to offer a more precise description of a phenomenon, namely act of readership and the emergence of the aesthetic object, which is, as explicated earlier, imprecise by nature.

A significant concept to briefly note here is the distinction between fabula and syuzhet which is a key element in the analysis of narrative. Though some narratologists, such as Mieke Bal have proposed a threefold distinction which include fabula, story, and narrative text, I suppose the binary distinction of fabula, as representing the raw content of the story and syuzhet, designating the textual rendition of the story, will suffice as far as IMR is concerned. The

generally accepted definitions are that fabula is comprised of “a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by readers. An event is a transition from one state to another state. Actors are agents that perform actions” (Bal 5). These definitions represent the basic elements that are found in fabula. As they make clear, fabula is the raw material of the story, the summation of actors and actions of the story which are related either chronologically or by means of causality, and it does not have a fixed boundary or semantic scope that can be precisely pinpointed. To give a simple example, fabula is the aggregate of the elements of a story that one decides to include in a short summary of a film, or novel, that is, the actions and actors without the implementation of narrative techniques. In Bal’s words, “events, actors, time, and location together constitute the material of a fabula.... these elements are organized in a certain way” (7) into a narrative text, or syuzhet.

Narrative text, or syuzhet, on the other hand, is the textual rendition of the story. It is “a finite, structured whole composed of language signs. The finite ensemble of signs does not mean that the text itself is finite” (Bal 5). As we have observed in Chapter Two, text functions on multiple layers to bring its reader into an active engagement in the process of sense making. The word finite here meaning that “there is a first and a last word to be identified; a first and a last image of a film, a frame of a painting” (ibid). Unlike fabula, the narrative text is equipped with several apparatuses which lead to the activation of the reader’s creative imagination, which I have chosen to analyze under the title of textual strategies. These strategies include concepts related to the technique of rendition, such as narratorial mode, characterization, selection and

deselection of certain elements, the order of presentation of the fabula elements, and the like, as well as the addition of certain non-narrative content, ancillary to the fabula elements, with the purpose of inciting certain responses in the reader. They are synonymous with Stanzel's textual demarcations, and serve to limit and de-limit the reader's creative imagination by offering him the elements of fabula, and simultaneously impeding the flow of the narrative by refraining to offer some other elements or simply by inserting blanks and indeterminacy point, a mechanism which is aimed at keeping the reader within the boundaries of overstrain and boredom.

In order to observe and explore these nuances and their effect on the limitation and de-limitation of the reader's creative imagination in the act of reading, two novels of absolutely distinct technique and background have been chosen to be investigated here: Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* and Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*. At first glance these two novels seem to share almost nothing. *Tristram Shandy* was written between 1759 and 1767 in England, and roughly follows the tradition of the picaresque novel, which was popular at the time, and despite its eccentricities, it can be considered as a representative of earlier generations of novelistic narrative traditions; in contrast, *The Dispossessed* is a utopian science fiction which was published in 1974 subsequent to the great developments in the forms of narrative fiction, especially in the novel, during the modernist and postmodernist era in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It can be seen as a specimen of some of the modern storytelling techniques. The novels, therefore, might be seen as being as far apart from one

another as possible in their narrative styles and storytelling manner; yet, as will be discussed shortly, they are not as alien to one another as one might think, in terms of their fictional narrativity and their attempts to appeal to their readers' creative imagination, manipulate the readers' response, and activate their imagination are subject to the same rules that have been sketched in the definition of IMR. In brief, the selection of these two distinct works of fiction for analysis aims at demonstrating the fact that all fictional texts, no matter how disparate in style and subject matter, tend to follow a more or less similar logic, which is one of the key propositions of this research. Needless to say, there are also distinct differences in the way they try to appeal to their readers that will be discussed later.

*Tristram Shandy*, Sterne's masterpiece, has been the object of much approval and disapproval since its conception in 1759. Initially, Sterne's contemporaries came to criticize it severely for its unconventional style of narrative, especially its overt and excessive digressions; but much later, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it started to receive an almost viral acclaim for its so-called postmodernist elements. Larry McCuffery in 1986 wrote that Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* was "a thoroughly postmodern work in every respect but the period in which it is written" (xv). Following the same line of argument, Carol Watts counted several postmodernist aspects of the novel when she was commenting upon Sterne's legacy. In her influential paper, "The Modernity of Sterne" she enumerated "[the novel's] use of parody and pastiche, its problematization of representation, its absurdist exposure of the limits of referential theories of language, its complex treatment of identity in time and



history, its stress on the local rather than the universal, and the consequent provisionality of the 'I' subject, and so on (Watts 26).

At the time of its first publication, however, *Tristram Shandy* received much adverse commentary. Though it immediately gained popularity among various reading circles, many criticized its style and treatment of subject matter as eccentric and unacceptable. Even Edmund Burk, who took a liking to the novel, complained that “these digressions so frequently repeated, instead of relieving the reader, become at length tiresome”; but at the same time the “faults of an original work are always pardoned” (247) William Mudford, a well-known essayist and journalist, who was among the pioneering critics of his time, in 1811 described the work in terms of its “incoherency”, “fantastic irregularity” and “deviation from all established rules of composition”, and wittily concluded that “to analyze his volumes may be pronounced impossible: to ascertain, with certainty, their object is perhaps, no less impossible, and to establish a connection between them would defy the highest ingenuity of man” (343). Sterne himself had previously written that “*Tristram Shandy* was made to baffle all criticism- and I will venture to rest the book on this ground- that it is either above the power or beneath the attention of any critic or hyper-critic whatsoever” (*Letters* 86). Samuel Johnson, who can be considered the most influential critic of his time, rejected the novel downright for being odd and unconventional: “Nothing odd will do long. *Tristram Shandy* did not last” (qtd. in Boswell 278). However, contrary to Dr. Johnson’s verdict, the book has since continued to survive through many literary critics, schools, and approaches, a

remarkable feat going to prove that it has managed to attract the creative imagination of many diverse and distinct readers.

The history of responses to a novel which has been frequently called “whimsical and ironic” (Watts 20) is beyond the interest of this study. However, the fresh wave of attention that it received in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century literary arena is worth surveying here. The 20<sup>th</sup>-century critics also were grouped into anti- and pro-Shandean camps. Ian Watt, for instance, in *The Rise of Novel*, considers *Tristram Shandy* “not so much a novel as a parody of a novel” (290) and questions its legitimacy and canonical influence. Perhaps the novel found its most devout proponent in the works of the influential Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky, who “celebrated the revolutionary formal reflexivity of *Tristram Shandy* and its defamiliarizing strategies of narration” (Watts 21). For Shklovsky, Sterne’s novel is understood as a text that “lays bare” (*Theory* 149) the laws of novelistic form. He called it “the most typical novel of world literature” (170). Shklovsky’s description is enlightening in that it posits a proposition that is central to the current study as well, which is that the narrative of *Tristram Shandy*, however unorthodox and peculiar in its treatment of subject matter, follows the same internal logic and mechanism of storytelling that defines the tradition of novel and novelistic fiction in general. In the following pages, this hypothesis will be elaborated upon in more detail. This study aims to explore not the meaning of *Tristram Shandy* or possible interpretations that can be drawn out of it, but the reason behind the fact that it is still widely read after 200 years, the force behind its popularity. The chapter attempts to explicate how an array of textual techniques that were, perhaps, simply meant to create

humorous effect for the 18<sup>th</sup>-century audience has turned out to be a consciousness-raising activity for contemporary readers.

Contrary to *Tristram Shandy*, Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* can be considered as a typical example of the contemporary and modern novelistic tradition in which she was writing. The science-fiction masterpiece is part of a larger collection of Le Guin's fictional series, named *The Hainish Cycle*, which consists of ten novels and a dozen short stories. The book was written in the progressive spirit of the 70s, and tells the story of two neighboring planets, Anares, and Uras, which are ruled by anarchist and capitalist governments, respectively. The novel, which is basically a long treatise on these two ruling systems, received much acclaim upon its publication and managed to win Le Guin almost all the eminent science fiction awards, including the Nebula Award for Best Novel (1974) and the Hugo and Locus Awards (1975); it has been translated into more than twenty languages.

A considerable portion of narrative in *The Dispossessed* is allocated to philosophical recollections and socio-political commentary on the nature of capitalism and anarchism. The book swarms with lengthy passages on the nature of governance, human solidarity, love, relationships, and the like but at the same time it is loyal to the logic and principles of storytelling. The question that arises is how this narrative manages to present this long and potentially boring intellectual enterprise in the form of a pleasant, and enjoyably readable story. It is not far-fetched to assume that the same ideas would not have attracted as many readers if it was written in a form of a philosophical treatise, and thus to speculate that it is the logic of fiction that has made this work into such a

colossal success. All in all, I have chosen *The Dispossessed* not for its content matter, or ideological stance, both of which are prone to criticism from various perspectives, but for the fact that it represents a story well-told in the conventions of modern, contemporary story-telling techniques. It contains an array of storytelling techniques that are abundant in contemporary fiction and for this simple reason it makes a good specimen for the analysis to come.

In this and the following chapter, various textual strategies that are used by the narratives of *Tristram Shandy* and *The Dispossessed* will be explored with regard to their effect on their readers' creative imaginations in order to elucidate how these narratives succeed in keeping their readers within the boundaries of boredom and overstrain.<sup>7</sup> The central proposition here is that both novels, despite their differences in narrative style and their background, attempt to utilize a set of similar strategies when it comes to keeping their readers' imaginations within the limits of a successful readership. They present their readers with fabula elements, i.e. actions and actors of the story, and try to restrain their reader's imaginations to focus on these elements, and simultaneously impede the flow of action in these stories by incorporating a series of textual strategies that will be discussed later. The canonical claim here is that the texts manage to establish a constructive relationship with their readers only through a simultaneous limiting and de-limiting of their readers' creative imagination by careful and balanced incorporation of these techniques.

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<sup>7</sup> This is what I meant by bringing together narratology and hermeneutics to scrutinize how text affects its readers. Because without such involvement there is no sense at all. Roughly speaking, this is a road not taken by reader-response criticism so far.

In this chapter the manipulation of narratorial mode and the implementation of hints, foreshadowing and backshadowing, or flash backs in the text of the two novels will be discussed to elucidate how these textual strategies limit the reader's creative imagination and controls the reader's response in the course of reading, and how these remotely distinct narrative texts follow a similar logic in their appeal to control their readers' creative response. In the next chapter, the de-limiting strategies will receive due attention.

### **3.1 The Manipulation of Narratorial Mode**

Perhaps the most critical decision to make in transforming a fabula into a narrative text is related to the selection of a point of view (Bal 19). Fabula does not enjoy the limitation of a certain perspective, but as soon as it is materialized in the form of a narrative text it has to be conveyed from a certain point of view. In other words, stories are ought to be told using one or more voice(s) of one or more narrator(s). This has an extensive effect in titillating the reader's imagination, the formation of the complementary story, and ultimately the birth of the virtual existence of the text. The remaining manuscripts from certain canonical writers such as Franz Kafka and James Joyce demonstrate how these writers were aware of the magnitude of selecting a narratorial perspective in eliciting the desired response from the readers, and as a result played with several narrative modes before finalizing their decision about their narratives' point of view. For instance, the remnants of an early handwritten draft of

Kafka's story *The Castle* show that it was first written as a first person narrative, and was later changed to third person point of view. (Dowden 47)

Except for some rare experimental works, fictional narratives are generally narrated either in first person, or third person point of view. *Tristram Shandy* is told through a first-person homodiegetic narrator, whereas *The Dispossessed* has a third person omniscient point of view. "In a homodiegetic narrative, the story is told by a (homodiegetic) narrator who is also one of story's acting characters. The prefix 'homo-' points to the fact that the individual who acts as a narrator is also a character on the level of action" (Jahn N.1.10). In other words, in *Tristram Shandy* the narrator is an "experiencing I" (Jahn N.1.11) with all the features that come with it: a limited, opinionated perspective with no extra-textual knowledge or capability greater than that of a mere character. In *The Dispossessed*, however, the story is told through a third person omniscient narrator, with various nuances in the internal focalizations: a neutral ambiguous all-knowing voice that admittedly claims to have indisputable knowledge about all the actors and actions of the story, even with first-hand access to the character's minds and emotions. The careful analysis of these two narrative modes can bring to light how choices concerning narrative voice impact their reader's creative response.

Mieke Bal argues that there are no such things as omniscient narrators but only those who claim to be omniscient (3-6) and, scrutinized closely, all narrators turn out to be only partially omniscient. To him the idea of omniscience is disharmonious with the capabilities of text that are limited by the semiotic system. Language can only represent a fraction of reality at a given

moment, and it is this choice of the fraction to represent which constitutes the perspective, or focalization in a fictional text. If this is true, it explains why authors may go through serious difficulty in choosing and altering narratorial modes, an instance of which was noted above in the case of Kafka's *Castle*. The answer, of course, lies in the enormous impact the choice of point of view has on the formation of the complementary story by the reader, and hence we need to look more closely at these two main narratorial modes, i.e. homodiegetic and heterodiegetic, their differences, and their impact on the formation of the complementary story, and the subsequent concretization, or realization of a novel.

The most significant consequence of using a homodiegetic narrator is the formation of what the introduction to the Wordsworth Classics edition of *Tristram Shandy* calls a "close atmosphere of collusion" (2) between the readers and the narrator. As Bal notes: "A homodiegetic narrator proclaims that it recounts true facts about her- or himself. 'It' pretends to be writing her autobiography, even if the fabula is blatantly implausible, fantastic, absurd, metaphysical" (22). The "willing suspension of disbelief" that has always been a vital prerequisite for reading and enjoying fictional texts, is closely related to this "atmosphere of collusion". A first person experiencing "I" in most cases intensifies this effect. Stanzel argues that:

Wherever a personal narrator is available, be it an authorial or a first-person narrator, the conditions for the reader's space-time concretization of the novel's events are quite different from what they are in a figural or neutral narrative situation. This has important implications for the complementary story. As long as the reader has a personal narrator in sight, he places his trust--providing, of course, that we are not dealing with an "unreliable narrator" as defined by Wayne

Booth--in the reliability and discretion of this narrator when it comes to selecting the most important events and deciding what will be represented and what is to remain undetermined or blank. In a text without a visible personal narrator, the reader does without such assistance, but the attentiveness with which he probes the text for significant points of indeterminacy is heightened. (210-211)

Generally speaking, it can be said that whenever the narrator is present in the form of a palpable character, a sense of intimacy and even of sincerity is created that, in most cases, guides the reader's creative imagination in certain directions, and in effect stops him from going (so to speak) astray. This effect which will, ad arguendo, be called "the principle of intimacy", partially arises from the communicative nature of language. This is supported by the linguistic study of verbal communication in situ known as Pragmatics, and described by cognitive neuroscientist Steven Pinker in *The Language Instinct*, in the following way. He states that human language normally depends on certain underlying conventions, for instance:

The speaker, having made a claim on the precious ear of the listener, implicitly guarantees that the information to be conveyed is relevant: that it is not already known, and that it is sufficiently connected to what the listener is thinking that he or she can make inferences to new conclusions with little extra mental effort. Thus listeners tacitly expect speakers to be informative, truthful, relevant, clear, unambiguous, brief and orderly. (228)

This natural expectation is intensified when we have a homodiegetic narrator in the form of a tangible, relatable character, rather than an ambiguous, neutral and apparently omniscient voice. The closer the reader is made to feel to the narrative voice, the more successful the narrative becomes in guiding the reader's creative imagination.

Pinker's "principle of intimacy" is on par with the textual strategies of the narrative and signifies the degree of closeness that the reader feels towards



the narrative voice, and the atmosphere of trust that exists between the two. This is in line with what Dorrit Cohn calls “the logic of first person narration”: “self-justification, if not self-explication” (*Transparent Minds* 181). Stanzel places this in a reader-response framework: “the basic principle of first person narration is precisely what gives the reader the assurance that nothing essential is being thought by the narrator [in pauses, or hiatus between sentences for example], otherwise he would have mentioned it. For nowhere does there seem to be a reason to hide anything from the reader.” (9) To demonstrate this principle, one may refer to Cohn’s comparison of a paragraph from Kafka’s *The Castle* which is told in the third person, and another version of the same paragraph narrated in the first person. Cohn analyzes the distinctions between two modes of narration and concludes that a sense of absence or “tantalizing omission” (*Transparent Minds* 101, 169) (or Iserian “hiatus”) does arise when the paragraph is told in a third person (figural) perspective, while there is no such sense of tantalizing omission in the first-person version. It should be noted, however, that this effect is achieved only if the narrator does not violate the principle of intimacy by demonstrating the characteristics of an unreliable narrator.

The principle of intimacy also contributes to the formation of what Iser calls “the impression of lifelikeness” (*The Reading Process* 296). Although the reader, at the time of reading, is well aware of the fact that the world that the text presents is not a real one, he cannot, at some level, help but consider it in the imaginative act of reading (in the virtual text) as a real world. As E.H. Gombrich says: “though we may be intellectually aware of the fact that any

given experience must be an illusion, we cannot, strictly speaking, watch ourselves having an illusion (5)". This process of illusion-making is apparently related to the willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader, which in itself is affected by the principle of intimacy invoked by the narrative voice.

The mechanism by which the process of illusion-making operates is reliant upon what Jahn calls "the standard structure of fictional narrative communication" (N1.7). This structure signifies the distinction between the world within the text and the world outside it. Participants and levels of this structure are usually shown in a "Chinese boxes" model in which we have three layers of communication (ibid): author and reader on the level of nonfictional communication, narrator and audience or addressee(s) on the level of fictional mediation, and characters on the level of action. The first level is an "extra-textual level" while levels two and three are "intra-textual" (ibid). In a regular narrative text, the level of nonfictional communication between author and reader (which has been designated as extra-textual by Jahn) remains isolated from the other two levels. In other words, in many traditional narrative texts, there exists no direct sign of the author within the narrative texts. This creative concealment of the author in the world of text is partly responsible for the "illusion of lifelikeness" (Iser, *The Reading Process* 296) that the literary text projects upon its readers. As Iser points out, there is a relation between "the polysemantic nature of the text" and "the illusion making of the reader" (*The Reading Process* 290). Simply put, readers have to be drawn into the world of the text by the activation of their "willing suspension of disbelief" which in turn is affected by "the principle of intimacy", and consequently activate their

illusion-making process in order to be able to engage in the process of readership, and move on with the reading.

In *Tristram Shandy* the reader faces one of the most intimate first-person narrators of the history of the novel; not only is he a homodiegetic experiencing I, who is a major agent of the narrative line, but he uses every possible trick or device (including manipulation of the narration's time scheme) to establish an intimate one-to-one relationship with the reader, right from the starting paragraph. In addition to the assumed sincerity of a homodiegetic narrator that was outlined above, the narrator of *Tristram Shandy* uses an array of techniques to intensify the intimacy between the narrative voice and its readers. Among these are the frequent use of impersonal language (Bal 47-48), the treatment of the reader as a confidante of the narrator, the direct addresses to the reader in the form of an authorial intrusions, all being devices not only to intensify the principle of intimacy of the homodiegetic narrator but also, concomitantly, limit the reader's creative imagination within a desired scope. In this respect one may consider the first paragraph of the novel:

I wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly consider'd how much depended upon what they were then doing;—that not only the production of a rational Being was concerned in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind;—and, for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost;—Had they duly weighed and considered all this, and proceeded accordingly,—I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that in which the reader is likely to see me. (5)

Now if only a small change is made by rewriting the same paragraph in heterodiegetic perspective, and leaving all the other elements of the text intact, the

huge outcomes of the narratorial mode of *Tristram Shandy* will be evident. With the least possible of changes, it would read as follows:

He wished either his father or his mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot him; had they duly consider'd how much depended upon what they were then doing;—that not only the production of a rational Being was concerned in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind;—and, for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost;—Had they duly weighed and considered all this, and proceeded accordingly,—he was verily persuaded he should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that in which the reader is likely to see him.

This rudimentary practice demonstrates how the distance that is created between the narrator and the reader in third-person version creates a sense of ambiguity, that eventually drives the reader to use his/her imagination in a wider and less direct way (the narrative voice takes on the tone of free indirect reporting of thought, a notoriously slippery form of communicating), whereas the homodiegetic narrative voice in the original text functions as a guiding force which stops the reader's creative imagination from wandering along endless and undefined paths of its own. To put it another way, the homodiegetic narrator's own voice and interpretations provide a source of continuity that limits the reader's creative imagination, and decreases the sense of bewilderment, and the points of indeterminacy that have been created by the narrative's chaotic style. It is a counterbalancing factor without which the reader might have been unable to concretize the text in his consciousness, that is, to connect the narrative cues and form a complete picture of fabula.

Beside the implementation of a homodiegetic narrative voice, an array of techniques are incorporated into the text which aim at the elevation of this feeling of

sincerity, closeness, and mutual trust or intimacy. Tristram, the narrator, starts the narrative by sharing his ill fate with the reader, invites the reader into his confidence, and addresses him or her frequently as “Sir”, “Madam”, “Dear Reader”, “Your worship”, “My brethren,” or “Your reverences and worships” with the sole purpose of intensifying the mutual intimacy. To him, narration is just another name for a conversation, and the purpose of both is nothing but to “nurture empathy” (“Introduction”, 2) between the narrative and its readers. As the narrator of this novel says, writing, when properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a different name for conversation” (*Tristram Shandy* 75). He openly invokes intimacy with his readers, in comments such as the following: “as you proceed further with me, the slight acquaintance that is now beginning betwixt us, will grow into familiarity; and... will terminate in friendship” (*Tristram Shandy* 10). This friendship that the narrator apparently desires is not a simple comic pose but an indispensable strategy of the narrative.

Another strategy that the *Tristram Shandy*'s narrator implements in order to control the reader's creative imagination, and stop it from leaving the boundaries of a successful readership, i.e. boredom and overstrain, is the use of direct authorial intrusion by a self-conscious narrator. This novel's self-conscious narrative which is customarily called metafictional manipulates this conventional mechanism in order to devise novel techniques of controlling its readers' creative response. Metafictional narratives, which are narrations incorporating narratives of their own creation (as narratives) are, by definition, “self-conscious about language, literary form, storytelling, and directly or indirectly draw attention to their status as artefacts” (Waugh 2). As Abrams explains:

The self-conscious narrator shatters any illusion that he or she is telling something that has actually happened by revealing to the reader that the narration is a work of fictional art, or by flaunting the discrepancies between its patent fictionality and the reality it seems to represent. This can be done either seriously (Henry Fielding's narrator in *Tom Jones*) or for primarily comic purposes (Tristram in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*). (173)

This shattering of illusion that is caused by the intrusion of the voice of an (implied) author into the world of text might have diverse consequences on the formation of the reader's complimentary story or creating of “configurative meaning” (*The Reading Process* 290). On one hand, the authorial intrusions can be used as a tool to incorporate digressions or alternative stories into the narrative, instances of which will be studied in Chapter Four of this study. However, in most cases the authorial intrusions have the immediate effect of intensifying the principle of intimacy, leading to the consequences that were studied above. They may also be used to incorporate direct foreshadowings, and consequently close down the points of indeterminacy which will lead to the narrowing down of the share of the reader in the process of reading and the forming of a complimentary story by limiting the number of possible alternative stories, softening the paradoxical twists and turns of the story, divulging information about the events that are about to come, and so on. (This will be exemplified in the section regarding foreshadowing and prolepsis.) In Stanzel's words these authorial intrusions can “deprive the reader of a portion of the imaginable versions, but then they also encourage his imaginable independence by plucking the fictional world from the deterministic grasp of historical uniqueness and irreversibility, and thus render it more readily accessible to the creative powers of the narrator and the reader” (207). This is also in line with this study’s proposition that authorial intrusion has a limiting effect on the readers’ creative imagination.

These seemingly insignificant elements in *Tristram Shandy*'s narrative have a decisive role in pushing the narrative forward and maintaining the reading experience in the act of reading. To sum up, the homodiegetic narrator of *Tristram Shandy* is meant to increase the intimacy between its readers and the narrator, contribute to the willing suspension of disbelief, and the formation of a necessary and directed illusion, and used as a reliable voice to guide the reader's creative imagination through the chaotic elements that are rampant throughout the narrative (which will be studied in the following chapter). In Iser's words, it is a "counter-balancing" (*The Reading Process* 292-293) force which runs against the overtly loose style of this novel, that displays so many gaps, indeterminacies, and ambiguities. These have been largely used to provoke the reader, and de-limit his creative imagination. As explained earlier in this study, the ultimate purpose of all fictional narratives is to limit and de-limit their readers' creative imagination in a balanced way, to keep them between the boundaries of boredom and overstrain, and drive them to move on with the game of imagination in readership, so as to create the virtual text. Without these counter-balancing elements: for instance, the presence of homodiegetic narrator in *Tristram Shandy*, or the use of personal language to intensify the effect, the reader's imagination would have been provoked, or de-limited without being sufficiently limited or guided. The result would have been catastrophic: The reader, unable to concretize the syuzhet, would simply put down the book, and leave the creative game of reading.

### 3.2 Internal Focalization

Unlike Sterne's extraordinarily original and intimate narrative voice in his acknowledged "work of Genius" ("Introduction", 3), Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* is narrated by a neutral omniscient heterodiegetic voice. In contrast to *Tristram Shandy*, the readers have no access to a personified palpable experiencing "I" as the narrating voice, but the elements of fabula, the actions and actors of the story are presented from a third person perspective that seems to have no engagement in the action of the story itself. "The principle of intimacy" here is activated by another narrative device, namely, the extensive manipulation of an internal focalization technique.

The concept of internal focalizer is a rather recent addition to narrative theory; it has been introduced mainly because the traditional concept of narrator has been seen to be insufficient to describe the complexities of many narratives. In brief, the concept designates not the voice through which the story is narrated, but the eye through which the actions, actors, and setting of the story is observed. It essentially entails the fact that the narrator and internal focalizer can be different in some narrative texts, and "makes a distinction between those who see and those who speak" in a narrative text (Bal 143). Bal's explanation is clarifying: "whenever events are presented [in a narrative text], they are always presented from within a certain 'vision'. A point of view is chosen, a certain way of seeing things, a certain angle, whether real historical facts are concerned or fictitious events." (142)

The internal focalization in *The Dispossessed* revolves around the character of its protagonist, Shevek. The story is presented mostly through his vision as an adamant anarchist, recollecting and reflecting, time and again, upon the nature of



capitalist society, the discriminations, the vanity, the competition, the futility of it, and so on. However, the narrative voice is strictly heterodiegetic omniscient. Though the story mostly revolves around Shevek, the narrative voice intermittently provides information that Shevek could not have accessed in the story. For instance, right after Shevek's first contact with his neighbor, Desar, in the city of Abbenay, the omniscient narrator reports that "one reason he [Desar] held aloof from people was to hide his dishonesty; he was either appallingly lazy or frankly proprietarian, for Room 45 was full of stuff that he had no right or reason to keep—dishes from commons, books from libraries, a set of woodcarving tools from a craft-supply depot, a microscope from some laboratory, eight different blankets, a closet stuffed with clothes" (202). Evidently, Shevek could have had access to neither Desar's mind, nor his habitat, and such a thorough and precise analysis of Desar's character is undoubtedly out of the question for him. This extra information that is provided to the reader by the omniscient narrator in *The Dispossessed* is in effect parallel to the authorial intrusion that Sterne utilizes in *Tristram Shandy* in order to limit the scope of semantic choices for the reader, and drive his creative imagination into activation along a predetermined course. In numerous other instances, also, the internal focalization changes from Shevek to other characters such as Takver (247), the unnamed Captain of the spaceship (6), and other characters to achieve a similar function of limiting and directing the attention and interest of the reader. Though the narrator is consistently heterodiegetic omniscient, the technique of internal focalization enables the narrative voice to penetrate the minds of different characters, and not only creates a sense of intimacy akin to the intimacy we observed in *Tristram Shandy*, but also substitute for Tristram's direct addressing of the reader with the purpose of directing his response to a certain area. In this sense,

the technique of internal focalization is used as a tool to limit the reader's creative imagination and instructs him to make a certain sense of the work.

This maneuvering of internal focalization serves more than just a simple purpose throughout the narrative. One aspect of its effects which requires special attention here is the fact that internal focalization in *The Dispossessed* enables the narrative voice to reach the inside of the character's minds, present the reader with what they can see, and how they feel. The significance of the technique lies in the fact that it contributes to the creation of the intimacy referred to in the "principle of intimacy". To explicate, though we do not have a homodiegetic personified narrator at hand, the access to the minds and thoughts of the characters, and occasional comments made by the omniscient narrator creates a sense of intimacy which is needed in order to achieve a willing suspension of disbelief and move on with the reading of the narrative. It contributes to the removal of the distance between the fabula elements, the narrative voice and the reader, and as a result engages the reader in the act of reading. The frequent divulgement of Shevek's feelings and emotions, for instance, along with the recollections of his ideas made by the narrative voice, is used in order to limit the reader's active imagination and guide it to the paths predetermined by the story. One example of this access to inner feelings of a character in a novel can be seen in the scene when the narrator describes Shevek's feelings after drinking alcohol for the first time. After giving an inside account of what is going on in Shevek's mind and body, the narrator jumps back and provides the reader with an extra commentary to make sure that the reader does not interpret the situation in any way other than the intended one. This extra

information that is provided has the same exact function as, but very different communicative style from, authorial intrusion in *Tristram Shandy*.

### **3.3 Organizing the Action**

Any narrative text is comprised of narrative and non-narrative elements. Narrative elements include actors, actions, time, and location. The non-narrative material may include any unnecessary information that has been woven into the fabric of narrative for various narratorial purposes. The non-narrative elements will be looked at in close details in Chapter Four of this study. It is the ordering of the narrative material, in other words, the sequence of the constituent elements of fabula in the narrative text, or syuzhet, that needs further scrutiny here. As noted in Chapter One, an undeniable portion of the aesthetic effect of a narrative text is derived from its manner of presentation of fabula. Every student of literature knows that a summary or synopsis of a great novel can never have the same effect as the novel itself, because the summarized synopsis is not capable of manipulating the reader's creative imagination in the way that a novelistic narrative does. It is highly doubtful that we would be as interested in a text about the fortunes and misfortunes of a former convict, and his paternal relation to an adopted child, if it were related in a straightforwardly linear manner, as when we read about Jean Valjean and Cosette in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. Another key proposition to be made in this thesis is that part of the effect that the narrative text creates is related to the way it presents its fabula elements, and the way these elements are interspersed with or arranged by non-narrative elements.

A story is usually defined as a set of actors and actions organized causally in a dramatic plot-like way, or chronologically, usually with opening, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion. Perhaps the logical or obvious manner of retelling a story was once to start from the very beginning, and follow the chronological order. But similar to what we face in the case of a worn-out metaphor, the strictly chronological method of storytelling must have lost its appeal (if ever it had one) to the readers' imaginations and to the story-tellers' designs, millennia ago, and storytellers were driven to experiment with novel methods of storytelling in order to win the attention of their audience. This might be how the Homeric tradition of starting *in medias res*, which prescribed the starting of a story from the middle of the action line, and then filling in the missing past by flashbacks, came to replace the less skillful *ab ovo*, or starting from the egg. In the modern tradition of fiction, however, these two techniques have not been enough to keep the readers' creative imagination engaged, and drive them to the game of imagination in readership. A quick recollection of the plethora of techniques of storytelling used in novelistic fiction may show how far the storytellers have come from the days of *ab ovo*. As Iser observes: "the time-honoured concept of a story as having a beginning, a middle and an end cannot be regarded as the fixed criterion of narration, for *Tristram Shandy* has become a landmark of narrative literature despite its flagrant breach of this convention" (*Tristram Shandy* 1). As indicated earlier in this study, these innovations have all been in service of activating the readers' creative imagination, and engaging them in the act of readership.

*Tristram Shandy* is written in an *ab ovo* ordering that has been exaggerated to an absurd degree; indeed, it takes the phrase *ab ovo* literally and finds it

insufficient as a starting point, deciding to start even further back, with the moments leading up to the fertilization of the *ovo*. It starts, or tries to start, from the very beginning of the fabula and makes valiant attempts to move on, whereas *The Dispossessed* starts *in medias res*. Neither of these narratives present their story in a linear form, meaning that neither starts from some point in the story and leads the fabula chronologically to the end; instead, they use complex sets of hints, foreshadowings, and flashbacks or backshadowings to move to the past and the future of the narrative time, and fill in some gaps, and obliterate some indeterminacies. Techniques such as foreshadowings and backshadowings are just means by which the chronological order of narrative is disrupted to reach some hermeneutic end. They enable the narrative to present information vital to the flow of the narrative in a non-chronological but, perhaps, more telling manner (by which is meant that information may be thus provided when it has significance to action, and not just because of its chronological position). In both novels these elements function as a counter balancing factor to the novels' unconventional narrative styles. For instance, in the case of *Tristram Shandy*, the narrative moves on through an aggregate of gaps, indeterminacies, digressions, alternate stories, and similar obstacles impeding the chronological flow of the story. These elements, which create a great deal of indeterminacy, will also be scrutinized later in this thesis. The foreshadowings and backshadowings create a set of anchors, some fixed points of reference, around which the readers' creative imagination can structure its complementary story. To put it simply, while gaps and indeterminacies are responsible for inviting the readers' creative imaginations to play a more active role, the foreshadowings and backshadowings limit the readers' creative imaginations by providing them with some definite answers, or points of reference. That is to say

that both limiting and de-limiting factors are hard at work in order to keep the reader's creative imagination within the boundaries of overstrain and boredom.

Without these determining elements in narrative, its gaps and indeterminacies could not possibly be concretized.

At the time of its publication *Tristram Shandy* was widely criticized for its lack of unity, or organization. To Goldsmith, for instance, the book "had no other merit upon earth than nine hundred and ninety-five breaks, seventy-two ha ha's, three good things, and a garter," and, "in one page the author [makes] . . . them [the readers] a low bow, and in the next [pulls] . . . them by the nose; he must talk in riddles, and then send them to bed to dream of the solution." (282) Bagehot commented *Tristram Shandy* is "a book without plan or order" (104), whose greatest defect is "the fantastic disorder of the form" (97). It has been considered as a "salmagundi of odds and ends recklessly compounded" (Baker 244) by another critic. Tristram the narrator seems to be in full agreement with these accusations. He repeatedly states that he never revises, that he has no control over his pen, that whatever pops into his head goes into his book.

Yet, recent scholarship has unearthed that "Sterne planned at least large parts of the book with more care than his public attitude would suggest" (Booth, "Did Sterne" 172). The remaining manuscript of Sterne's other novel, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, clearly shows evidence of careful planning, drafting and redrafting. James Aiken, in his edition of *Tristram Shandy*, has proven that the book was planned and written, for the most part, slowly and with care (xlvi, xlix, li). The accusation that the work lacks a plan and moves on with the narrative haphazardly must have originated from the misconception that unity or continuity is

an objective feature within a narrative text, not a virtual existence that is born out of the interaction of the text and the reader. This misconception can be traced down through many critical commentaries on the novel, in both pro-Shandean, and anti-Shandean camps. Coleridge, for instance, considered the continuity of characters as the unifying element in the work: “Hence the digressive spirit is not mere wantonness but in fact the very form and vehicle of [Rabelais's and Sterne's] genius. The connection, such as was needed, is given by the continuity of the characters” (284). More than a century later Wayne Booth in his “Did Sterne Complete Tristram Shandy?” looked for “structural unity” and other critics such as Hartley have introduced a concept that they call “inward cohesion” which runs “in counterpoint to the outward evidence of chaos” (497) in order to somehow account for this structural unity.

These respected investigations lack an indispensable angle, which is the presence of the reader, reader’s consciousness, and his unifying function in the act of readership. Contrary to what they all accepted as their starting point, and in full accordance with the principles of IMR, the cohesion, or consistency of the narrative is not an objective quality that exists in the narrative, but is the product of the reader-text interaction. Based on what was explored in detail earlier in this thesis, it can be said that the text (in itself) cannot be cohesive. Only the coming together of text with the reader’s complementary story, which happens when the text is concretized in the reader’s consciousness, can enjoy such attributions as cohesion, consistency, or integrity. All text can do is to give the reader plot materials, instruct the reader to form such a complete entity, and try to guide him to the right direction, and thus, as IMR explicates, the cohesion that numerous critics have unsuccessfully

looked for in *Tristram Shandy* is to be found in the consciousness of its readers, as a result of the reader-text interaction, not amongst the words on the pages of the book. This explains why late modern and postmodern analyses of the novel are so much more open to its apparently whimsical structures: from the time of Barthes readers and critics have become more appreciative of the “writerly” text, the text that demands the reader’s contribution to a construction of its meaning.

As stated above, to guide the reader towards forming a complementary story, text provides the reader with elements of fabula which will function as the anchors around which the reader’s complementary story is fabricated. This presentation of the fabula elements by the text, in *Tristram Shandy* as well as in a majority of modern novels, is not done chronologically but through a series of foreshadowing and backshadowing techniques that provide the reader with the vital information while stimulating his creative imagination to play an active role. It appears that Sterne is intuitively aware of this mechanism when he writes that he “is obliged continually to be going backwards and forwards to keep all tight together in the reader's fancy” (550). This providing of some information and withholding of other information that may (or may not) be divulged later is the logic of novelistic narrative, and will be investigated more later in this study.

Contrary to what numerous critics have directly or indirectly stated since the publication of *Tristram Shandy*, there is a clear structure and two lines of narrative that move through the novel, the one in which Tristram is born, baptized, and accidentally circumcised, and the one which regards Uncle Toby, his love affair, and his fortunes. All the foreshadowings and backshadowings, digressions, and narrative impediments are in the service of presenting these two narrative lines. As



stated earlier, the purpose of employing these textual strategies is to keep the reader in the game of readership, and drive him to move on with the reading of the novel. Clearly, *Tristram Shandy* has succeeded in keeping its readers in between the boundaries of interaction by providing them enough reference points and simultaneously withholding enough from them to force them into game of imagination. Wayne Booth writes: “Amusing but precarious ... is the reader's pursuit of the devious but almost unexceptionably logical sequence—by association—of ideas in *Tristram Shandy*” (*Rhetoric* 534). In order to have a better picture of how these limiting and de-limiting factors work, in Chapter Four we will also pay attention to de-limiting factors such as gaps and indeterminacy pointers.

It is generally accepted that in many cases the conventional and normal comes to be recognized in the form of the most extreme. This is a kind of reverse stereotyping, where the typical becomes evident only through its most exaggerated manifestations. As explained above, *Tristram Shandy* attempts to shape its reader's response by providing him with bits and pieces of information, like the strokes of a brush on the canvas, and leaves it to the reader to connect the fragments and allow a complete, comprehensive and holistic picture appear out of the seemingly discordant material presented. This is not surprising in the case of *Tristram Shandy*, which has always and unanimously been recognized as an unconventional and anachronic experimental narrative, but the claim that almost all narratives follow a similar logic is less common, and has not been rigorously tested. *The Dispossessed*, for instance, utilizes a similar set of narratorial strategies in order to instruct its readers, limit their creative imagination, and simultaneously de-limit the arena for the employment of their creative imagination and invite them to play an active role in

the process of readership. Only on the surface are the differences between the two novels are overwhelming. At a deeper level, a similar mechanism is hard at work.

*The Dispossessed* has chosen to render its story into a peculiar textual setup. Instead of giving a linear account of the action and actors of the story, it presents it in two interrelated but chronologically independent story lines. The odd chapters in the novel start from the protagonist's adulthood, when he is about to travel from Anares to the neighboring planet, Uras, and continues with his adventures on the generally capitalist, earth-like planet of Uras. These chapters manifest the implementation of an *in medias res* narrative incipit. The even chapters tell the story of the protagonist's birth, upbringing, education, and political inclinations, and it is almost entirely set in Anares, the protagonist's home world. The narrative line of these chapters is an example of an *ab ovo* incipit. The narrative line in the even chapters function as a background to the narrative in the odd chapters, and provides the information that is necessary, indeed vital, for the overall effect of the story, through offering foreshadowings, hints, and the like. The aesthetic effect of the novel is largely related to this narratological choice of alternating chapters, and needs to be explored more carefully here.

The synopsis of the novel, the fabula elements, may be presented as something like this: There are two planets of almost similar size, which revolve around one another in a distant solar system. Uras is an earthlike planet, fertile and rich, on which we have a plethora of capitalist governments, and a dominant capitalist ideology with all its premises and consequences. Anares, in contrast, is a barren planet, poor and with an unwelcoming atmosphere, on which the remaining colonies of a 200-year-old anarchist movement live. These anarchists are the

descendants of a movement led by a philosopher-prophet figure called Odo, who lived, led an anarchist rebellion, and died on Uras almost two centuries previously. The believers of the cause were then banished to Anares, and started their own socialist, anarchist community there. There hasn't been much communication between the two worlds in all those years, but now, at the time of narration, Shevek, a brilliant physicist, is trying to bridge the gap between the two worlds.

There is almost no significant element of the fabula that is absent from this short synopsis of *The Dispossessed*. Yet the novel manages to provide us with the same information in a text of no less than 500 pages. The information, comprising the determinate points of the fabula, is not presented the way it was in the synopsis above, but rather through a network of foreshadowings, backshadowings, hints, indeterminacy markers, and so on. In addition to the fact that two parallel sets of chapters create a large number of instances of these noted techniques in themselves, inside each of the parallel narrative lines there are multiple instances of confusing the chronological order of events, hinting at a future action or development, flashing back to fill in the gaps in the past and so on, and as a result driving the reader into the formation of his own complementary story.

Backshadowing, flashback, analepsis, or retrospection are all terms to refer to a popular tool in the novelistic tradition, where the narrative text violates the sequence of offering fabula elements by referring to an action that happened before the present time of the narrative. Technically speaking, an analepsis can be internal or external, internal being referring to a previous action that has happened in the story but the character or narrative voice chooses to consider again, and external being the referral to an action that has happened even before the beginning of the

story (See Jahn N5.2.1). *The Dispossessed* makes ample use of both of the variations of this technique. For instance, we learn about much of the history of Anares through the conversations between major personages of the novel, or through flashbacks that occur in the course of the narrative: How Anares was explored thousands of years ago, how mining camps were established later, and how it was given to an international society of Odonians are all parts of the story that are presented through flashbacks. (These flashbacks can be called external analepsis following Jahn's definitions. However, the distinction between internal and external analepsis is not important as far as IMR is concerned.)

For instance, when Shevek is arriving in Abbenay, a major city on Anares, the story is interrupted with an account of a past event:

When Shevek was nine his afternoon schoolwork for several months had been caring for the ornamental plants in Wide Plains community—delicate exotics, that had to be fed and sunned like babies. He had assisted an old man in the peaceful and exacting task, had liked him and liked the plants, and the dirt, and the work. When he saw the color of the Plain of Abbenay he remembered the old man, and the smell of fish-oil manure, and the color of the first leaf-buds on small bare branches, that clear vigorous green. (125-126)

Through a series of flashbacks like this, we are presented with the social and political structure of an anarchist society about which very little direct information is ever provided in the novel. These flashbacks not only function as means by which the vital information is presented, but they also play an indispensable role in impeding the flow of the narration and slowing it down at times. This will be closely explored in Chapter Four. Another technique of providing information is through sporadic remarks in the conversations between the personages of the narrative. We learn about Odo, the founder of the school of Odonianism, and his influential work, probably in the form of a book called *Analogy*, through indirect remarks here and

there. There is no direct information about that work, but there are subtle remarks and a few occasional quotations. For instance, “Excess is excrement,” Odo wrote in the *Analogy* and later on the same page she reiterates: “Excrement retained in the body is a poison” (128).

Foreshadowing is the opposite of backshadowing in the sense that it basically entails the transmitting of information about events that are posterior to the base time of narrative. This also, can be in the form of prolepsis, which is a direct presentation of fabula elements that belong to the future of the story, or simply in the form of providing hints about what is to come later. In simple terms, if narrative at any given moment refers to an action or event that is supposed to happen later in the same narrative, it is implementing the foreshadowing technique, and if it provides a future section of the story by manipulating the sequence of the events, it is practicing prolepsis. Again, the distinction does not have a significant role to play in the discussion of their effect on the reader’s imagination. Both of these techniques are used to confuse the linear, chronological presentation of events to the reader and offer fabula elements to the reader in a manner that keeps his imagination within the boundaries of overstrain and boredom. In other words, they usually have a limiting effect upon the reader’s imagination, and reduce the plethora of probabilities that constitute the past and future of the story being narrated.

In both *Tristram Shandy* and *The Dispossessed*, numerous instances of this technique are implemented. Tristram in *Tristram Shandy* repeatedly addresses the reader and informs him of subsequent happenings and when and where they are going to take place and how they are going to be retold in the narrative. Consider this quotation, for example:

You must know, my uncle Toby mistook the bridge—as widely as my father mistook the mortars:—but to understand how my uncle Toby could mistake the bridge—I fear I must give you an exact account of the road which led to it;—or to drop my metaphor (for there is nothing more dishonest in an historian than the use of one)—in order to conceive the probability of this error in my uncle Toby aright, I must give you some account of an adventure of Trim's, though much against my will, I say much against my will, only because the story, in one sense, is certainly out of its place here; for by right it should come in, either amongst the anecdotes of my uncle Toby's amours with widow Wadman, in which corporal Trim was no mean actor—or else in the middle of his and my uncle Toby's campaigns on the bowling-green—for it will do very well in either place;—but then if I reserve it for either of those parts of my story—I ruin the story I'm upon;—and if I tell it here—I anticipate matters, and ruin it there. (150)

The paragraph is a masterpiece of using limiting and de-limiting elements together. It starts with one of those intimacy markers “you must know...”, the consequences of which were studied earlier and continues into a full-scaled digression from the main narrative line. The digressions in the first place have the effect of hiatus that leads to further activation of the reader's imagination. Tristram feels free to comment on the process of writing as if he was a critic rather than the author but then he moves on to give information about what is to come and how. The kind of work plan that he provides to the reader turns out to be some kind of instruction for reading the rest of the story. Meanwhile, the readers are presented (in an amusingly bizarre way) with important clues about the following events in the story, such as the widow Wadman affair, and so on. The text simultaneously stimulates the reader to use his or her creative imagination more and on the other hand uses this work plan as a road map to control and limit his or her responses to what is intended in the book. The technique of foreshadowing that is used here, along with the intimacy markers and tone of the narrator results in the limitation of the reader's free imagination to play upon the material provided by the text.

*The Dispossessed* also utilizes the technique of foreshadowing, though in a less overt manner. Unlike *Tristram Shandy*, instead of directly addressing the reader to inform him of what is going to happen in the future of the story, the narrative of *The Dispossessed* utilizes a variety of techniques to provide its readers with hints of future developments. For instance, the narrative starts with a description of a wall:

THERE was a wall. It did not look important. It was built of uncut rocks roughly mortared. An adult could look right over it, and even a child could climb it. Where it crossed the roadway, instead of having a gate it degenerated into mere geometry, a line, an idea of boundary. But the idea was real. It was important. For seven generations there had been nothing in the world more important than that wall. (1)

The wall is presented to the reader as if it stands for something more than a mere wall, but for “an idea of boundary”. The symbolic use of the word wall here is in accordance with the “inferential nature of signs” that were discussed in chapter one; it starts a whole process of semiotic interaction with the text. To ensure that the reader will not take “the wall” at its face value, the narrative moves on to add more emphasis: “But the idea was real. It was important. For seven generations there had been nothing in the world more important than that wall” (1). From this very first paragraph the narrative stimulates the reader’s creative imagination by presenting a stimulant, in this case the symbolic existence of wall (alongside a material wall), whose significance will emerge in the future of the narrative. Several paragraphs later the narrative incorporates several philosophical contemplations about the nature of such a symbolic wall, to further heighten the emphasis: “It enclosed the universe, leaving Anarres outside, free” (2) and “looked at from the other side, the wall enclosed Anarres: the whole planet was inside it, a great prison camp, cut off from other worlds

and other men, in quarantine” (2). The reader is forced to conclude that the wall is something more than a mere wall, and ask himself why it should have been “the most important thing in the world for seven generations”, and what kind of world has no sign of “No Trespassing” (2) anywhere. He may soon come to the conclusion that the narrative is somehow vaguely related with the concept of boundaries and limitations in human societies, rather than a real physical wall. This creates a sense of suspense, an ambiguous foreshadowing that forces the reader to read on. Just a few sentences later, a clearer signal is transmitted by the narrative: “People often came out from the nearby city of Abbenay in hopes of seeing a spaceship, or simply to see the wall. After all, it was the only boundary wall on their world. Nowhere else could they see a sign that said No Trespassing” (2). Now the reader makes sure that what he has at hand is a story of a world without walls, without limitations beyond its own boundaries.

A few pages later, the narrative hints at the existence of a political agenda in the narrative through a foreshadowing which is embedded inside a flashback: “Five years ago, in the silence of night in Chakar in the mountains, . . . he had said to Takver, “I will go to Abbenay and unbuild walls.”” (10) The gravity of the verb “unbuild” alone signals the existence of something undesirable, oppressive, or even evil. The wall imagery is dominant throughout the first chapter of the narrative. Later, it appears in Shevek’s dreams, as a wall that he yearns to pass (43). This weaving of the narrative around a central image is a form of covert foreshadowing with which *The Dispossessed* forces forward its fabula. In this example, then, this use of foreshadowing in effect guides the reader’s creative imagination towards a certain reading of the rest of the story,



while at the same time it provokes him to read on, by creating a sense of suspense. In Iserian terminology, it opens a semantic horizon, against which the rest of the narrative is read and concretized. The text's invitation to interpret it here arises out of this technique: elements of the fabula are offered to the reader, in bits and pieces, through the metaphorical use of the word wall, rather than by using a straight forward referential language, and through frequent use of flashbacks. Similar to the example from *Tristram Shandy*, the paragraph quoted above, along with the sentences that sporadically come later, are clear examples of limiting and de-limiting the reader's creative imagination at the same time, provoking him by offering some pieces of fabula elements, but not offering him too much.

Using the image of the wall as a technique to foreshadow the future happenings of the fabula is an example of engaging the reader's imagination at a semiotic level. However, *The Dispossessed* uses the technique of foreshadowing in the narrative level as well. For instance, in the school scene in chapter two of the novel, we are introduced to Shevek's genius, originality, and eccentricity, when he formulates a version of Zeno's paradox of Tortoise and Achilles to his classmates, a paradox that he has come to formulate on his own. His genius is not welcomed and he is expelled from the class for insisting on pursuing such matters; This sub-story is implemented artistically to depict the solitude and introversion that he has experienced in his childhood as well as his gift and obsession with numbers, traits which are to define his future actions in the story and also to foreshadow the clash between his individual self and the dominant ideology of the society that he lives in, that is to come later. Through this sub-

story, the text hints at the friction between the self-centered protagonist and the collective society, that will later turn out to be the major theme of the novel. The ultimate clash will be later presented through some more indirect foreshadowings. For instance, after his quarrel with Sabul, the first hints of his losing faith with his ideology is foreshadowed using the voice of the omniscient narrator: “Shevek’s career, like the existence of his society, depended on the continuance of a fundamental, unadmitted profit contract. Not a relationship of mutual aid and solidarity, but an exploitative relationship; not organic, but mechanical. Can true function arise from basic dysfunction?” (153).

This is how the technique of foreshadowing in *The Dispossessed* is frequently used to prepare the reader for what is to come later, both limiting and delimiting the reader’s imagination. Sometimes foreshadowing is used to signal that a development is immanent in the story: “He walked up and down the room, irritable and restless. He wanted to act. He had spent nearly a year now doing nothing, except being a fool. It was time he did something” (361). Here, the reader is told that the overall stagnation in the flow of the narrative is about to end, and another piece of fabula will be presented shortly. This provocative discourse creates a sense of suspense, a rise of contingencies, a de-limitation of the reader’s imagination, a heightened expectation regarding what is to come, that will be explored later in Chapter Three of the study. On the other hand, foreshadowing is implemented in many cases to set the scene for what is to come later, or even divulge information about the actions that are supposed to happen later. For instance, in Chapter 2, young boys discuss the vile people of Urasti society, and Tirin, a young fellow, criticizes the notion of perfection in Anares, stating that even in Anares they are not

perfect (54). This is an indirect foreshadowing of a theme to come later in the story, namely the critique of the anarchist utopia that has been sketched so masterfully. This discussion regarding the imperfection of the Anaresti social system catches the attention of the astute reader, and makes him ponder about the possible defects of a perfect anarchist society, and prepares him for the related developments that will unfold later in the story.

In Chapter 4 of *The Dispossessed*, Shevek's ambivalent feeling regarding the Urasti foliage in the ark is a foreshadowing of his ambivalent inner feelings and internal struggle against Urasti capitalist society in general, a theme that will be addressed later in the story. On one hand he admires "the greenness of those multitudinous leaves" (130), and feels "blessed", and "Awe came into him," (ibid) but on the other hand he immediately doubts their necessity and legitimacy, and asks: "Wasn't all this extravagant foliage mere excess, excrement? Such trees couldn't thrive without a rich soil, constant watering, much care. He disapproved of their lavishness, their thriftlessness" (130). This piece is a figurative foreshadowing of what is to come later in the story. Upon reading this piece, the reader subconsciously concludes that this is not going to be a story in which Shevek will find absolute perfection in neither Anares nor Uras, but will be one in which the vices and virtues of both anarchist and capitalist worlds will be explored. In this case, and similar cases, foreshadowing is used to provide the reader with some inside information regarding fabula elements, to offer indirect clarification, and restrict the wide range of possibilities to a limited scope. This is what I mean by the limitation of the reader's creative imagination.

Another example of this technique can be observed in the following description of Demaer's sister, upon her first meeting with Shevek: "In her, Demaer Oiiie's slightness, pale coloring, and oval black eyes had been transmuted into beauty. Her breasts, shoulders, and arms were round, soft, and very white. Shevek sat beside her at the dinner table" (256). This style of description, the attention to details, the diction used, and the indirect references to sexuality is a foreshadowing of a probable affair between Shevek and the lady that is, in fact, due to happen later in the story. This signal creates expectations that are to be fulfilled, suppressed, or left open-ended in the rest of the story. This kind of foreshadowing paves the way for a later development of story, or in other words, it presents fabula elements to the reader, and thus has a limiting effect on the reader's creative imagination, while at the same time it creates a sense of suspense, a feeling of expectation about certain fabula elements that may or may not be presented later, and consequently both stimulates and guides the reader's imagination by proliferating a sense of indeterminacy and uncertainty about future but specified happenings.

To conclude, readings from the eighteenth century novel *Tristram Shandy* and from the twentieth century novel *The Dispossessed* both demonstrate that "the potential concretization of the story in the reader's complimentary story is significantly determined by the ruling narrative mode" (Stanzel 4). The novels also provide illuminating examples of the implementation of homodiegetic or heterodiegetic narrators, the alteration of internal focalization and finally the careful organization of the chronological material of fabula into a non-chronological order of presentation in the narrative text. A full picture of how narrative text utilizes these strategies cannot be acquired unless we have a closer look at the de-limiting

elements of syuzhet as well, and investigate the two counter-balancing strategies against one another.

## CHAPTER 4

### READING AS PROVOCATION

In Chapter Two, Propp and Shklovsky's distinction between *fabula* and *syuzhet* was introduced; these terms, which are often used in narratological studies, separate *fabula* as the aggregation of actions and the setting of the story, and *syuzhet* as the textual rendition of the story. The definition of *syuzhet* in this distinction, in practice, however, proves to be incomplete and deficient, due to the fact that in the tradition of novelistic narrative, *syuzhet* almost always includes an array of non-narrative elements beside the narrative elements of *fabula*. These non-narrative elements that are inserted in the natural sequence of *fabula* elements, in addition to their other functions, generally impede the flow of the narrative in order to provoke the reader's creative imagination to play a more active role. These impediments come in the form of both negative, and positive elements; negative such as gaps, and hiatus, and positive in the form of the digressions, descriptions and alternative or additional stories. These impediments primarily serve to invite the reader to add his subjective material to the fabric of the story, and also to subtly guide what that subjective material might include or exclude; and they are essential parts in the creation of the virtual existence of the text, to make a consistent, cohesive whole out of the selected, sometimes inconsistent, and always incomplete representation of phenomena in the text. These elements thus, in most cases, both de-limit and stimulate the reader's creative imagination; and, hence, they both focus and widen

the arena in which the imagination may play a more active role. Besides these impediments, other factors such as the implementation of one or more unreliable narrators, and of intra-textual elements in a narrative text, can lead to the activation of the reader's creative imagination. These are the factors that will receive detailed attention in this chapter.

An artistic manipulation of narratorial mode plus the complications of the chronological or causal relationship of actions in a story is not everything the text does in order to manipulate the imagination of its readers. In fact, it has been shown that texts which attempt solely to include narrative material cannot eventuate in the reader's involvement with the production of a complimentary story, and the ultimate production of an aesthetic object. One such attempt can be seen in the instance of the computerized interactive narratives which were introduced in the 1990s and attracted a great deal of public excitement at first but soon turned out to be no match for traditional narrative texts. Mark O. Riedl and Vadim Bulitko, in "Interactive Narrative: An Intelligent Systems Approach" define this new version of narrative as follows:

Interactive narrative is a form of digital interactive experience in which users create or influence a dramatic storyline through their actions. The goal of an interactive narrative system is to immerse the user in a virtual world such that he or she believes that they are an integral part of an unfolding story and that their actions can significantly alter the direction and/or outcome of the story. (1)

In brief, the interactive narrative was predicated on the principle that if the readers are immersed in the storytelling, they will have a more deeply integrated, and therefore more appealing experience. They try to achieve this reader-interaction by giving the reader the ability to alter elements of the fabula by utilizing a complex system of computer-based artificial intelligence. In this system part of the fabula can be presented to the reader, and then the reader is offered a series of choices to make,

and the narrative that follows is based on the choices that the reader makes, for example, if the protagonist survives or not, if he falls in love or not, and so on. A system like this presents many of the attributes of a traditional narrative text that have been developed in the tradition of fiction: interactive narratives have actions, actors, and a system of engaging their readers in the process of interacting with the text.

The question to ask, then, is why these interactive narratives have not gained in popularity since their conception. Based on IMR and the principles of the interaction of the text and the reader that have been discussed in this thesis, it can be proposed that the problem with these narrative forms lies in their inability to activate their readers' imaginations sufficiently, and this must be, at least partially if not more significantly, because of the lack of non-narrative material in their syuzhet. The traditional narrative text includes an array of non-narrative materials as well as other techniques that gives the reader a pluralistic chance to practice his creative powers. This unique ability arises partially out of the elements that impede the narrative flow, and give the reader a chance to practice his unifying powers, that will eventually lead to the creation of the virtual existence of an aesthetic object, in the form of the virtual text. Interactive narratives actually replace the exercise of these unifying powers and restrict the choices of elements to use in creating the virtual text, and provide the reader with a ready-made text that is not 'writerly' at all, in contrast to the superficial appearance of the conscious decisions that the reader makes during the interactions. There is very little creative participation in the reader's experience of interactional narratives, and therefore very little aesthetic or writerly depth to them. From this recent experiment in creating an alternative



reading experience we thus find strong evidence of the exceptional importance of elements in fictional narrative that both stimulate and de-limit the creative choices of the readers' imaginations. Deeper consideration of these narrative elements is therefore required in our attempt to make a thorough analysis of the mechanisms that make a narrative work.

#### **4.1 Gaps and Tantalizing Omissions**

The first, and most conspicuous element of impediment can be observed in the form of gaps in the narrative text. Despite the fact that some theorists such as Roman Ingarden consider these gaps as “the hiatus” or “blockage in the stream of thought” (qtd in Iser, “The Reading Process” 284), Ingarden believes that gaps are the result of lack of sufficient connection between intentional sentence correlates, and he rules that they are “the product of chance,” and must be “be regarded as flaw” (ibid). Modern hermeneutic theory, as described in Chapter Two, considers these gaps as the inherent components of any text, be it narrative or not. In Stanzel's theory, which is the basis for much of this thesis' further developments in the argument, the existence of these very hiatuses, gaps or indeterminacies make it possible for the reader to practice his or her creative imagination, within the demarcations set by the text of course. In narrative texts, as will be exemplified later, these gaps may occur on both the discursive and narrative levels, which is to say they happen at the level of moving from one sentence, one sentence correlate, or one section of narrative to the next. In both levels, the gap in a narrative text is an invitation for the reader to involve himself in the game of readership by providing his subjective material to replenish the virtual text-in-making. In this way, the gaps

enable the readers' minds to operate outside the strictly textual confines, and to concretize the virtual text in an endlessly pluralistic manner.

The text of *Tristram Shandy* exhibits a plethora of these gaps in both discursive and narrative levels. Tristram's self-proclaimed progressive-digressive narrative is perhaps the most well-known in terms of taking these very normal means of narration to extremes. Sterne overtly and conspicuously inserts these gaps into his narrative text and invites the reader to fill them out. He does not refrain from using any of a large array of textual means to create discursive blanks: the text is replete with asterisks, dashes, crosses, squiggles and simple blanks in the middle of sentences, to create discursive blanks the reader encounters a confusing of the order of chapters, and even omission of a full chapter when the narrator explicitly deems it unnecessary (IV. xxv). The dash, for example, is "syntactically an interruption, but as such it permits new links, thereby granting access to new territories" (Iser, *Tristram Shandy*, 62). These gaps "invite the reader to complete the text himself, and also act as interruptions even when the exact number of missing letters is shown, enabling the reader to fill in the blanks" (61) and "imagine whatever has been left out by the strategy of interruption" (64). The result is similar to other techniques of implementing gaps in discursive level, that were studied above.

Literary scholarship has extensively analyzed these devices of interruption since the publication of *Tristram Shandy*, but failed adequately to address the fact that these gaps are not simply the characteristics of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, but are a virtuoso display of elements (taken almost to their extremities) found in all narrative texts, and even in texts in general. *The Dispossessed* cannot be taken as a

radical or experimental narrative, and has generally been considered as a well-structured and well written piece of fictional writing; still, it can easily be observed that the text is swarming with gaps and indeterminacies that require the reader's creative imagination in order to get concretized. A great portion of the semantic gaps this text offers originates from the peculiar narrative structure of the story. As described earlier, *The Dispossessed* divides narrative time between two sets of chapters. One set, the odd-numbered chapters, tells the story of Shevek the adult, and his contemplations upon and confrontations with the ruling system of the two planets; and the other set, of even-numbered chapters, deals with Shevek's youth and upbringing, mingled with bits and pieces of the history of Anares. In effect, at the beginning and end of each chapter (apart from the first and last, where only the end and beginning, respectively, involve such gaps) there is a sizable semantic gap due to the complications of the narrative time and the narratorial mode, because the reader is forced to go back in his mind, or to wait, for a textual distance of no less than one entire chapter, before he can pick up the story where he had left off a chapter ago, or (from the standpoint of the end of a chapter) to wait through the next chapter before finding out what happens next. This narrative strategy gives rise to a sense of gap which is even more intense and at times tantalizing than anything that *Tristram Shandy* can provide its readers with. When a chapter finishes and the reader turns to the alternate line of story to pick up where he has left off from an even earlier chapter, there is a sensible feeling that things have happened in the reader's absence in that storyline, as reading of the other storyline entails a passage of time, a feeling that causes a sense of absence, a sense of loss, a felt semantic gap when one gets back to the other alternating line of story. The reader's creative imagination, then, is hard at work filling in the gaps that each chapter sets at its

beginning and end, a unique feeling that drives the reader back to where he left off and forward to what might happen next after the interruption, in a sophisticated and yet rhythmic game of imagination, and this, with its predictable pattern, makes the reader an even more active participant of readership in *The Dispossessed*.

Within the related yet independent story lines that are presented through each set of odd and even chapters, *The Dispossessed* displays numerous other instances of semantic gaps. These also function to keep the reader's imagination creatively busy. In the even chapters, for instance, we are provided with a planet on which a thriving society of anarchists are settled. The text chooses to provide no information about the history, social structure, or dominant ideology of this peculiar society. We are not informed of how the anarchistic inhabitants settled in this barren planet, or how they developed the mechanisms of decision making or conflict settlement, that the structure of power relations in a capitalist society would take care of; nor does the text reveal if any dissidents (from the anarchists' society) exist on this planet, and so on. Everything the reader comes to know at the end of the book has been presented to the reader through the sporadic titbits of information that are included in the character's conversations, through flashbacks, or the very rare background descriptions provided in the chapters. It is always left to the reader to make connections between the information thus provided and to form a complete holistic picture of this world in the virtual text – for none is presented by the material text alone.

The gaps in *The Dispossessed* take various shapes and kinds. Some are simply the consequence of the limitations of a linguistic narration, in which, as explicated earlier, only a selected portion of the possible story can be presented.

These gaps are simple absences of information. The universe of possible details is infinite – but non-mentioned details that are not perceived by the reader are generally those which relate to meanings that are irrelevant to the particular narrative in hand – what happened in another place or to another person at the same time as the actions of the plot, for instance, will only be noticed as gaps if information about that becomes relevant to the plot of the narrative, and the same is true of the infinite number of descriptive details that are not given within any narrative. Missing information concerning the main characters or the story, though, can become important as narrative gaps that some readers will notice. For instance, we cannot know what thoughts have crossed Shevek’s mind after lying on his bed in his new room in Abbenay, because quite simply, we are not provided with any such information on page 134, or we do not know what happened between Shevek’s childhood and adolescence, because the narrative in the even chapters jumps from Shevek’s early school years to his teenage years, and what happens in between is left for the reader to fill in. Other gaps have a more tantalizing nature. For example, although he enters the story on page 2, up to page 9 the protagonist still does not have a name, and is merely referred to as “the passenger”. Another example concerning character relates to Takver who is first encountered as a name referred to in the even chapters, repeatedly and sporadically, whereas her introduction into the line of the story, and her characterization are to come in the odd chapters at a much later stage of reading, around page 200.

Some of these gaps can fit in Dorit Cohn’s definition of “tantalizing omissions” because they seem to be planned, and executed in sometimes elaborate ways, and with evident and deliberate care. For instance, after Shevek and Takver

came back from the meager village in which Shevek had spent the famine years, they reside in Abbenay and Shevek starts a syndic<sup>8</sup> for himself, and fights Sabul and PDC<sup>9</sup> for five consequent years. Meanwhile he finds out how Sabul has withheld from him the significant information that he (Shevek) won the Seo Oen Prize<sup>10</sup>, and how Sabul has tried to accuse him of stealing his ideas, and how Sabul dismantled a student group who wanted to study a course offered by Shevek. Though all these developments are significant constituents of the fabula and, in fact, make up a considerable portion of fabula, we learn about them much later, through a few sentences of flashbacks in a dialogue:

No, said Takver. It isn't funny. It's disgusting. How could you go talk to him, even? After all the slander he's spread about you, and the lies about *the Principles* being stolen from him, and not telling you that the Urasti gave you that prize, and then just last year, when he got those kids who organized the lecture series broken up and sent away because of your crypto- authoritarian influence over them! you an authoritarian! that was sickening, unforgivable. How can you be civil to a man like that? (478)

In a mere 5-line burst of emotional reported speech, the reader is provided with almost half of the fabula, in a most indeterminate manner; the reader is left to decide for himself how all these happenings had unraveled through the previous years.

Another instance of the tantalizing omission takes place in the beginning of Chapter 10 when the reader expects to be informed about the whereabouts of Shevek, and learn what happened to him after being effectively fired from the

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<sup>8</sup> A syndic in the anarchist society of Anares is an institution that is comprised of people gathering voluntarily together around a common purpose or function.

<sup>9</sup> Production and Distribution Coordination: a managerial syndicate responsible for making large scale decisions about the distribution of resources and labor in the anarchist society of Anares.

<sup>10</sup> This is a fictional prize comparable to Nobel Prize in Physics that had been awarded to Shevek, but was kept as a secret by a vile competing character, called Sabul.

institute. Before learning anything more about this, the reader is forced to read through long indirect passages about a train passing through arid plains, a scene in which Shevek appears to be travelling towards his hometown after getting out of a dirigible; for ten full pages the reader is denied the information that is vital for him if he is to practice his unifying ability and form his complementary story, in other words, make sense of the story. Even after this long delay, the reader receives the vital pieces of the fabula only through an ambiguous and uncertain conversation between Shevek and the engineman:

*Engineman:* I heard about Grand Valley. He now looked at the passenger with the respect due a survivor. ...

We shouldn't have tried to keep those mills running

*Shevek:* Needed the phosphates.

*Engineman:* But they say, when the provisions train was stopped in Portal, they kept the mills going, and people died of hunger on the job. Just went a little out of the way and lay down and died. Was it like that?

The man nodded. He said nothing. (406)

This manner of divulging information to the reader through the indirect and sporadic strokes of a narrative brush has but one purpose at its core, to engage the reader in the game of imagination, and drive him to add his subjective matter to the story, and be part of the interactive and dynamic act of readership.

## 4.2 Digressions and Alternate Stories

Gaps or tantalizing omissions are by no means the only way a narrative text impedes the flow of information about the fabula with the aim of inciting a sense of suspense, activation of the reader's imagination and inviting him to play a more active role in the act of reading. Digression is, at times, an even more effective tool. It has been very popular since the advent of narratives – we have seen that it was considered one of the outstanding aesthetic points in Homer's *Iliad*, for instance – and continues in the novel form; it not only creates a hiatus in the flow of the narrative line and invites the reader to enjoy a different but somehow connected set of thoughts, but it also keeps the reader's imagination busy by offering material apparently unrelated to the main narrative line, while simultaneously opening new semantic horizons to engage the reader's imagination. In other words, here, in the case of digressions, also, a complicated mechanism of limiting and de-limiting the reader's creative role is covertly at work.

*Tristram Shandy* is notorious for its self-proclaimed digressive-progressive style. Its narrative is marked by overwhelming digressions that interrupt the flow of the plot and create some kind of narrative impediment which incite a feeling of suspense, bewilderment and confusion. As Shklovsky notes: "Upon first picking up Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, we are overwhelmed by a sense of chaos. The action constantly breaks off; the author constantly returns to the beginning or leaps forward. The main plot, not immediately accessible, is constantly interrupted by dozens of pages filled with whimsical deliberations on the influence of a person's nose or name on his character or else with discussions of fortifications" (*Theory of Prose* 147). In Chapter 22, Sterne elaborates that although he utilizes digressions, he



simultaneously shapes the progression of his own plot structure. This is an explicit challenging of realistic, sequential and causal linearity:

— This is vile work. —For which reason, from the beginning of this, you see, I have constructed the main work and the adventitious parts of it with such intersections, and have so complicated and involved the digressive and progressive movements, one wheel within another, that the whole machine, in general, has been kept a-going; — and, what's more, it shall be kept a-going these forty years, if it pleases the fountain of health to bless me so long with life and good spirits. (64)

In the same chapter Tristram reiterates that digressions are the essence of his narration:

Digressions, incontestably, are the sun shine; — they are the life, the soul of reading; — take them out of this book for instance, — you might as well take the book along with them; — one cold eternal winter would reign in every page of it; restore them to the writer; — he steps forth like a bridegroom, — bids All hail; brings in variety, and forbids the appetite to fail. (64)

In line with this openly declared strategy, he keeps incorporating numerous digressions throughout the novel which distort the linearity of the narration and parody the novelistic tradition and dominant philosophical thinking of his time. In Ruth Whittaker's words: "it generally seems as if disparate thoughts and ideas are linked together without any logical or causal connections" (6). The excessive digressions incorporated in the narrative of *Tristram Shandy* are, in fact, instances of a delaying strategy that has a very strong and evident effect on the concretization of the story by the reader, and thus needs to be investigated more closely later in this study.

One clear instance of employing this narrative style can be observed when Tristram sets out to give an account of his own birth. The narrative opens, as it were, "in the spirit of autobiography, but soon it is deflected from its course by a

description of the hero's birth.” (Shklovsky 154). First of all, Tristram's story begins *ab ovo* in a deliberate parody of the term itself by taking the term literally and to a ludicrous extreme, starting with the very moment of love-making that led to the fertilization of the egg necessary for his conception. And then, while the critical situation of giving birth to a child (himself) with no proper aid from a professional doctor is under way, Tristram takes on the story by reflecting on the complications of calculating time in a narrative where events are happening simultaneously, alluding to his uncle Toby's military life and a sentimental anecdote about his kindness, gentleness and humanity. Corporal Trim then delivers a sermon on conscience; then Tristram gives a minutely-detailed visual description of the stance Trim assumes for this oration. Following this the reader is given a full account of Dr. Slop's hobby horses, and uncle Toby's groin-wound. Uncle Toby then attempts to redirect the discussion to armies in Flanders; and the narrator continues with Walter Shandy's confusion about picking up his hat with the left hand and the consequences and how Dr. Slop faces difficulty opening his medical bag and how Susannah cuts her arm and so on. These apparently completely irrelevant stories are retold in detail while the actual narrative line which is the protagonist's birth recedes into the background and continues to stimulate the reader's imagination. In another instance Tristram recounts his father and uncle Toby's descent from the stairs, and completes a chapter during the narrating of which they have come down by only a single step. As narrator he asks “Is it not a shame to make two chapters of what passed in going down one pair of stairs? For we are got no farther yet than to the first landing, and there are fifteen more steps down to the bottom; for aught I know, as my father and my uncle Toby are in a talking humour, there may be as many chapters as steps” (253). Just naming instances of digressions in *Tristram Shandy*

would make up a very long list, indeed. For our discussion of the place of devices that impede the flow of narrative and/or create gaps in the main line of narrative, however, what is needed is a clarification of the functions and purposes of all these digressions, and their effects on the possible concretization of the story by the reader.

Adherents of New Criticism, in their fruitless search for unity and autonomy, have tried either to ignore digressions or to ascribe a unifying function to them. William Bowman Piper, for instance, after classifying the *Tristram Shandy* digressions into two types, writes: “It is chiefly through Tristram's two main kinds of digression, explanatory and opinionative, that Tristram makes his peculiar life generally clear and broadly interesting” (549) and further explains that: “with his explanatory digressions, he defines his story's connections and fills in its background so that society can follow its crucial events and understand their Shandy importance. With his opinionative digressions, he derives from these events the widely relevant wit and instruction that will hold society's interest and attention.” (549). Piper's view is a clear demonstration of New Criticism's unwillingness to analyze such stylistic nuances such as digression. The New Criticism does not attempt a detailed discussion of the issue of digressions in *Tristram Shandy*, chiefly because this theory purposefully ignores the significant role of the reader in novelistic fiction, and is thus not open to exploring how these and other textual strategies are directed towards leaving a certain effect on the reader's creative consciousness in the act of reading.

How the progressive-digressive style of *Tristram Shandy* and its elements function can be sufficiently comprehended only if we take into consideration their

effects upon the reader. In the light of IMR, and in line with what has been discussed so far in this dissertation, it can be seen how the deliberately-manipulated digressions in *Tristram Shandy* serve to stop the flow of the narrative, and create a semantic gap, (which may also be seen as a sense of suspense). Some critics have noticed the effect of these digressions upon the reader, even before the availability of a comprehensive theory of readership. Piper himself later observes that “Tristram directs each of these opinionative digressions, by which he hopes to deepen his audience's sense of involvement in his life story” (551).

The material presented in the form of digressions may, moreover, potentially open up a new semantic horizon, which instigates a process of concretization on its own. Thus *Tristram Shandy* regularly displays a process of a digression within a digression, and this (with its parallel concretizing effects upon the developing virtual text) is one reason which accounts for the multiplicity and plurality of the reader's sense-making activity. In short, it is through these digressions that the narrative attains its interpretability. This process of concretization within concretization is a feature of the digressions in *Tristram Shandy* that can specifically be observed in the case of incorporating alternative stories within the narrative.

Again, New Critic adherents do not seem to comprehend the internal pluralistic mechanism which is at work in the incorporation of alternative stories in *Tristram Shandy*. Putney, for instance, sees Uncle Toby's story as an excrescence on an otherwise impeccable *Tristram Shandy*, a judgement which again arises out of New Criticism's disregard of the central role of the reader's consciousness in giving life to a work of fiction. He writes:

The assumption of Tristram's mind provides also the chief structural device of the book. In the fragment we possess, very little of Tristram's life is narrated, but he was once destined to play a larger part than Sterne's fate allowed him to fulfill. Up to chapter xx of Volume VI, the misadventures of Tristram's life provided the skeleton on which the digressions are hung. . . . This [a passage promising an account of the troubles resulting from Tristram's flattened nose] and other passages in the novel make it clear that as he commenced the book Sterne intended to follow Tristram's career into manhood with a series of humiliations and petty disasters. The abandonment of this scheme in the middle of Volume VI for the interpolation of Uncle Toby's wars, his amour with the Widow Wadman, and Tristram's travels has obscured the structural unity (on the principle of the association of ideas) that prevailed for the first five and a half volumes. All but a few brief and unimportant digressions are connected with the accidents that befall Tristram. (qtd. in Booth 538-539)

His criticism here demonstrates New Criticism's impotence in dealing with semantic gaps, digressions, and alternate stories, and serves to point out the indispensable role of the reader and the act of readership in comprehending these textual strategies. Thus, *Tristram Shandy* itself becomes a criticism of its critics, for it makes evident that any theory or critic that is based upon a search for a "structural unity" stands at sharp odds with many of the narrative strategies of novelistic fiction, *Tristram Shandy* above all.

Unlike what many critics would take for granted, the narrative of a well-organized fictional work, such as *The Dispossessed*, is also – and inescapably -- packed with digressions, because, as the primary hypothesis of this study claims, by principle this novel follows the same logic of fictional storytelling. As observed earlier, without the digressions, any narrative text may lose its interpretability, and lose its grasp on the imagination of its readers. In other words, without the digressions in syuzhet, the arena for the reader's creative imagination becomes too narrowed, and the reader eventually falls out of the boundaries of interaction in such cases the falling is due to "boredom" and leaves the act of readership. Thus, unlike generally held assumptions, *The Dispossessed* operates under the same rules as

*Tristram Shandy*, and the differences in terms of how a narrative effects its readers are minor.

The digressions in *The Dispossessed* take several forms. In most cases, the narrative stagnates by long digressive philosophical contemplations upon a diverse set of subjects, such as the difference between men and women (68-69), general temporal theory (70), origin of mankind, and the nature of brotherhood (185-187), the nature of time (291) and how it is related to morality and responsibility... (291-296), the equality of men and women (280), the nature of marriage, and sexual relationships (321), and so on. These digressions, which at times run on for pages and pages, in most cases, are not part of the fabula, and thus do not play a notable role in the progression of the story. To exemplify, consider this extract from when Shevek returns to the institute:

You shall not go down twice to the same river, nor can you go home again. That he knew; indeed, it was the basis of his view of the world. Yet from that acceptance of transience he evolved his vast theory, wherein what is most changeable is shown to be fullest of eternity, and your relationship to the river, and the river's relationship to you and to itself, turns out to be at once more complex and more reassuring than a mere lack of identity. You can go home again, the General Temporal Theory asserts, so long as you understand that home is a place where you have never been. (70)

Or, as another example:

If you can see a thing whole, he said, it seems that it's always beautiful. Planets, lives. ... . But close up, a world's all dirt and rocks. And day to day, life's a hard job, you get tired, you lose the pattern. You need distance, interval. The way to see how beautiful the earth is, is to see it as the moon. The way to see how beautiful life is, is from the vantage point of death." (249)

Passages of this nature do not really help with the flow of the story. In exactly the same manner as with the extreme digressions in *Tristram Shandy*, these also play the role of impediments in the flow of the narrative, that serve the vital

function of activating the reader's creative imagination and keeping him in the act of readership.

The same is precisely true for the incorporation of alternate stories or long descriptive passages within the main narrative. Similar to *Tristram Shandy*, *The Dispossessed* employs these textual strategies to impede the flow of the main narrative, on one hand, and instigate a process of concretization within the concretization process of the main narrative, on the other hand. Instances of incorporating an alternate story in *The Dispossessed* can be seen in the story of imprisoning a fellow child as an experiment (45-50), which serves as a deterrent from the main story line rather than providing any vital information for the flow of the story, or the sub-story of Shevek's joining of a voluntary labor post for three months which starts in 327 and goes on for 15 pages and as it turns out at a closer scrutiny, does not really present any vital information for the flow of the main narrative.

Descriptive passages usually have a similar effect. Apart from sketching out a setting of the story, for instance in the descriptions of the city of Abbenay (126-127), at numerous times they are utilized simply to impede the narration, create a semantic gap, and give the reader a chance to add his complementary story. The flow of the narrative in *The Dispossessed* is frequently brought to a halt by the incorporation of descriptive material mainly to achieve the mentioned effects. In terms of narrative strategies that affect the reading experience, the logic of inserting descriptive material in *The Dispossessed* is not different from the logic of including long unrelated passages, such as sermons, in *Tristram Shandy*. In both cases, they function as a tool to engage the reader's creative imagination in the formation of the

virtual existence of the text. They open up and at the same time subtly de-limit the arena for the reader by creating a sense of suspense, a semantic gap, that needs to be filled in by the reader, and they both result in the reader's more active participation in the sense-making process. In both cases, the existence of these digressive materials is only justifiable with regard to the impact they have on the act of readership. In other words, in the absence of the concept of reader, these digressions cannot be seen as anything but unwelcome intrusions and the hindrance of meaning, an internal deficiency or flaw in the autonomous text.

### **4.3 The Consequences of Unreliable Narrator**

As explicated in the previous chapter, a homodiegetic narrator- agent who establishes an intimate trust-provoking relation with his reader contributes widely to the process of illusion-making, and consequently leaves, in most cases, a very narrow arena for the reader's imagination. When the reader of such a text identifies with the narrative voice, the reading of the text approaches the determinacy of reading a referential text, because the reader inadvertently relies on the narrative voice in order to get all the facts, all the fabula elements, and puts all his trust, or his suspension of disbelief onto that narrator. To paraphrase, the narrator's voice usually functions as a unifying factor which weaves together various elements of fabula, and thus creates a limiting effect on the reader's creative consciousness, a deterministic voice from whose grasp the reader does not stray. This very unifying effect may lead to overstrain or overdetermination, and, as explained earlier, it can effectively cancel out any indeterminacy that the text might offer; an effect whose consequence will be to narrow down the



reader's imagination to a degree that the reader might leave the process of reading out of the created overstrain, because as has been established earlier, in the absence of points of indeterminacy, the readers' creative imagination might have a very narrow arena to play its creative role. However, to balance the limiting effect of a homodiegetic narrator, this very narratorial mode can be exploited in an unorthodox manner, namely by implementing an unreliable narrator, to produce indeterminacy and create a liberating effect on the reader, a case which we may observe in *Tristram Shandy*.

Though *Tristram Shandy* has one of the most intimate and trust-provoking of narrators and is therefore likely to lead to a limitation of the reader's creative imagination, Tristram, the narrator, from the very beginning vows to break down the limiting authority of the narrator in presenting the fabula and forming the aesthetic object. In the first volume, he openly promises to "halve this matter amicably, and leave him [the reader] something to imagine" (75). This, however, is a statement that only has force if the reader is already allowing the narrator a degree of readerly trust that would also result in a reliance upon the narrator to produce a reliable narrative that can be accepted as true within its fictional world. How can the text of *Tristram Shandy* escape the Iserian overstrain or overdetermination that is the consequence of implementing such an intimate narrator? It can be said that part of the answer to this question lies in the elaborate implementation of what Wayne Booth in *Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) termed the "unreliable narrator" (145-159).

The term "unreliable narrator" which was first coined by Wayne Booth has at times been given somehow vague definitions. According to Abrams, "The fallible or unreliable narrator is one whose perception, interpretation, and

evaluation of the matters he or she narrates do not coincide with the implicit opinions and norms manifested by the author, which the author expects the alert reader to share” (235). Abrams, following Booth, gives an example of the narrator of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* and recounts Tzvetan Todorov's ideas that classified that novel “as an instance of fantastic literature, which he (Todorov) defines as deliberately designed by the author to leave the reader in a state of uncertainty whether the events are to be explained by reference to natural or to supernatural causes” (236). This example is helpful as it hints how the technique of “unreliable narrator” can be deliberately used by the author with the purpose of having a special kind of influence on the reader, and only by relating to the effect it has on the readers may one come to see the full implications of using such a technique.

Booth's definition of the unreliable narrator is also helpful in illuminating the significant role it can play in creating points of indeterminacy and thus de-limiting or unbounding the reader's creative imagination, and inviting it to play a more active role. Booth devotes Chapter 6 of his *The Rhetoric of Fiction* to an analysis of the different types of narration theoretically available. He makes a distinction between dramatized and undramatized narrators in order to explain how dramatized narrators can be reliable or unreliable. To define the unreliable narrator, Booth finds that he has to add another angle to the theory of narration: that of “the implied author” (151). Both of these terms are now widely used in criticism and literary analysis. The implied author, according to Booth, is the ruling norm of the text that has been put there by the author. It is called implied author because it represents the presence of a real author of the real world within the world of

the text. Booth describes how the narrator becomes unreliable if there is a distance between the implied author and the narrator (157-160), and he even sets out to classify unreliable narrators based on the degree of their distance from the implied author. He writes: “our terminology for this kind of distance in narrators is almost hopelessly inadequate. For lack of better terms, I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not” (158) and explains how narrators can participate in the action in different ways according to the moral, physical and/or temporal distance separating them from the other characters and/or from the author and the reader. Thus, (homodiegetic) narrator-agents can be further classified as 'reliable' or 'unreliable' -- if their opinions and values coincide or clash with those of the others (149-164).

Under the light of IMR, one may gain a better understanding of the nature and consequences of the implementation of an unreliable narrator in a narrative text. As was discussed in Chapter Three, and briefly noted above, the existence of a homodiegetic narrative-agent, in other words, an experiencing ‘I’, has a limiting effect on the formation of the complementary story, in other words, on the concretization of a story by the reader. The process of sense making by the reader is subject to the process of illusion-making and illusion-breaking that the text creates and controls through its textual strategies, amongst which its narrative voice is one of the most important ones. In simple words, a homodiegetic and reliable narrator has a limiting effect on the reader’s creative imagination, because conventionally the reader chooses to trust the narrator in a text, and accepts whatever is presented to him as elements of fabula unless there

are very strong textual indications that this should not be the case. An unreliable narrator, then, presents a surprising case, an unconventional reader situation, and may give rise to a feeling of uncertainty, and indeterminacy that in most cases has a liberating effect on the reader's imagination by, again, creating gaps, and indeterminacies that call out to the reader's imagination's active participation.

Iser notes the same complications when he writes:

One need only mention the simple trick, so often employed by novelists, whereby the author himself takes part in the narrative, thus establishing perspectives which would not have arisen out of the mere narration of the events described. Wayne Booth once called this the technique of the 'unreliable narrator', to show the extent to which a literary device can counter expectations arising out of the literary text. The figure of the narrator may act in permanent opposition to the impressions we might otherwise form. ... We may find out our narrator, by opposing us, in fact turns us against him and thereby strengthens the illusion he appears to be out to destroy; alternatively, we may be so much in doubt that we begin to question all the processes that lead us to make interpretive decisions. Whatever the cause may be, we will find ourselves subjected to this same inter-play of illusion-forming and illusion-breaking that makes reading essentially a recreative process." (*The Reading Process* 294)

As this quotation shows, to Iser the utilization of the technique of the unreliable narrator may lead to both a widening of the reader's arena and a narrowing of it, a move towards overdetermination and underspecification, depending on the degree of trust that the reader chooses to invest in the narrator. However, it can be argued that the implementation of an unreliable narrator in a narrative has, in most cases, the consequence of activating the reader's imagination and widening the arena for him or her to insert his complimentary story into the configurative meaning of the text. This is because losing trust in the information presented by the homodiegetic narrator creates indeterminacies at every level and in every progression of the storyline, all of which need to be

included in the reader's development of the virtual text, or complementary story, that (if suitably prompted) will form an aesthetic object. Stanzel also notices the same concept: "the kind of complementary story in a novel with a personalized narrator figure also depends on whether this narrator is a 'reliable' or a 'fallible or unreliable narrator,' a distinction made by Booth. The reader's distrust of the story told by an unreliable narrator manifests itself throughout the entire complementary story, which can then become a revealing anti-version of the narrative" (213).

The narrative of *Tristram Shandy* provides us with ample examples to investigate the effects of implementing an unreliable narrator on the formation of the complementary story, and ultimately the aesthetic object. First of all, as Bassity observes, "there is a gap between Tristram-the-author and Sterne-the-author that is felt throughout the work and invites the reader not only to participate with Tristram, but also to assess his character and his narrative" (7) and the mind of the named and implied author, Laurence Sterne, can be clearly distinguished from his narrator-persona, Tristram. Furthermore, there are elements (that will be investigated shortly) that bring the reader to the conclusion that the voice of Tristram in *Tristram Shandy* cannot be fully trusted. This feeling of unreliability, in the bigger picture, contributes to balancing of the limiting effect of an intimate homodiegetic narrator, and hence, has a crucial role in keeping the reader within the boundaries of interaction.

The narrative of *Tristram Shandy* gives rise to a sense of unreliability by incorporating several narrative strategies at various levels. One indispensable technique that is artfully used by the narrative to create the desired effect is the confusion of intradiegetic and extradiegetic or homodiegetic and heterodiegetic

narrative voices in *Tristram Shandy*. Following Gerard Genette's terminology, narrators can be classified into intradiegetic, and extradiegetic based on the degree of distance they have with the action (229-230). A narrator is intradiegetic if he is part of the story world that he retells, and extradiegetic if he is not. In a similar manner, he is homodiegetic if he takes part in the story, and heterodiegetic if he does not. A homodiegetic intradiegetic narrator, such as the one we have in *Tristram Shandy*, "usually proclaims that it recounts true facts about her- or himself. 'It' pretends to be writing 'her' [or his] autobiography, even if the fabula is blatantly implausible, fantastic, absurd, or metaphysical" (Bal 22), and thus assumes to have first-hand access to the truth behind the fabula elements, even to what goes on inside his own mind. This feature of a homodiegetic, intradiegetic narrator is the reason behind the feeling of trust and intimacy that the reader feels towards it, and was investigated above. However, Tristram the narrator poses a peculiar case of narrative voice when it comes to the analysis of his distance with the action that he is reporting.

Tristram, the narrator, is evidently intradiegetic and homodiegetic, in that he is apparently part of the story world, and is seemingly an active participant of the fabula of the story. However, a closer look may indicate that he is not a typical homodiegetic narrator, because, unlike what one may expect in such a narratorial situation, Tristram does not take part in much of the action of the story, nor does he enjoy much of a firsthand access to its action. In fact, he participates in the action only twice throughout the novel: the accidental circumcision by the dropping of the sash-window (Book 5, Chapter 17) and his visit to France (Book 7). In the rest of the story he is more of an external reporter of events, rather than an active participant in them. Except for Book 7,

in which the narrator relates what he sees and experiences in France, in the rest of the story the intradiegetic narrator approaches the quality of an extradiegetic one, by recounting the events through the mediating accounts of other characters of the story, which in turn, are far from being reliable. Furthermore, unlike a conventional homodiegetic narrator, he does not seem to have firsthand access to much of the events of the fabula, and in many cases has to rely on the focalization bestowed on other characters. This, in itself, creates a distinction between the implied author, and the voice of Tristram that gives rise to a sense of unreliability and has vast effects on the concretization of the story by the reader.

For instance, Tristram could not have possibly perceived his own conception, birth, and baptism, and thus, he relays those events only through the accounts given by other characters, which are, in turn, portrayed as being far from reliable. In this particular case, Tristram acknowledges his indebtedness to his uncle Toby for the account of the night he was conceived, but the character of uncle Toby is portrayed as being an unreliable source to count on. Uncle Toby is later shown to suffer endlessly from a series of misunderstandings that are the result of his compulsion to relate everything to his military experiences, a kind of misunderstanding which makes him a poor observer and reporter of events. In Book 3, Walter starts a discussion on the concepts of duration and eternity with Toby, but Toby confuses the word 'train', which refers to the succession of ideas, with 'a train of artillery' and creates a comic situation. In Book 5, when Yorick is about to read the fifth commandment from his catechism book, Toby orders Trim to repeat the commandments, mistaking them for military commandments. So, Trim begins to act like a soldier before

his commander. In Book 9, Widow Wadman enquires about the location of his injury. Toby misunderstands the question and orders Trim to bring the map of Namur so that he can mark the exact spot he was wounded on the battlefield.

Later, Tristram writes:

Now you must understand that not one of these was the true cause of the confusion in my uncle Toby's discourse; [...the true cause] is the unsteady uses of words, which have perplexed the clearest and most exalted understandings. [...] When thou considerest this, thou wilt not wonder at my uncle Toby's perplexities. [...] 'Twas not by ideas, - by Heaven; his life was put in jeopardy by words. (62)

These continued misunderstandings put Uncle Toby's credibility as a source of numerous events of the story in serious doubt and inadvertently hint that his accounts are far from reliable. This, in turn, creates a sense of unreliability, that leads to the rise of indeterminacies in the narrative, that, as stated above, function as a counterbalancing factor to the limiting effect of the first person narratorial mode.

This increasing sense of unreliability in *Tristram Shandy* is not exclusively related to the character of Uncle Toby, but is, in fact, aroused and intensified progressively through the entire narrative. Tristram, himself, is shown to lack the characteristic of being an objective observer, or having a sound faculty of judgement. In many instances in the narrative the reader is directed towards the questioning of the authenticity of Tristram's account of the event, or the truthfulness of his judgements as a result of the paradoxical depiction of characters, or retelling of events. For instance, in Book One, the reader is introduced to Walter Shandy, Tristram's Father. Tristram, at first, calls his father "an excellent natural philosopher," (7) but later reveals him instead as a fatuous, pedantic bumbler. In one place Walter Shandy is described as "one of



the most regular men in everything he did . . . that ever lived” (7-8); in another place we are told that:

[nothing] can ever help the reader to any kind of preconception of how my father would think, speak, or act, upon any untried occasion or occurrence of life. —There was that infinitude of oddities in him, and of chances along with it, by which handle he would take a thing, —it baffled, Sir, all calculations. (269)

At another instance, early in the work, Tristram says, “Sir, as you and I are in a manner perfect strangers to each other, it would not [be] proper to have let you into too many circumstances relating to myself all at once,” (10) and then, twenty-one pages later says, “I need not tell your worship, that all this is spoke in confidence” (23). In Book 5 he boasts that “my life and opinions are likely to make some noise in the world, and . . . be no less read than Pilgrim’s Progress itself,” (8) but just three pages later, he ponders: as “a mortal of so little consequence in the world, it is not much matter what I do” (13).

The narrator further establishes his unreliable qualities by making oxymoronic or near-oxymoronic claims such as: “but I would not shake my credit in telling an improbable truth, however indisputable in itself,” (*Tristram Shandy* 21) and simultaneously making his narrative swarm with the most improbable people and events. He claims to value “the utmost chastity and decorum of expression” (*Tristram Shandy* 191), while the book is in no shortage of issues and details that can be seen as immoral or indecent. In an attempt to heighten this sense of unreliability and the consequent rise of indeterminacies, the narrator does not even refrain from lying to the reader, or providing him with evidently false information. For example, Tristram opens Volume Five of his story with epigraphs from Horace and Erasmus and then immediately

inveighs against plagiarism and literary borrowing. He complains, “Shall we forever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring out of one vessel into another? Are we forever to be twisting and untwisting the same rope?” (*Tristram Shandy* 241). Variations of this kind of direct lies are numerous in the text. In Bassity’s words, the “Shandean text ‘lies’ to us repeatedly. The text repeatedly confirms that the narrator can’t be trusted, that nothing he says can be taken at face value” (Bassity 11).

Another technique by which the narrative creates the effect of an unreliable narrator in *Tristram Shandy* is through what can be roughly called fake foreshadowings. This is at times achieved through the misuse of what Iser calls “a repertoire of familiar literary patterns and recurrent literary themes” (*Act* 70). To explicate, the narrative uses recurrent literary themes and conventions to raise expectations in the reader that a particular kind of information will be immanently transmitted by the narrator, and then suppresses that expectation by leaving the topic and not providing the expected information. For instance, a normal reader would expect that when there is a discussion about some accidents, the speakers who take part in the discussion may discuss their ideas related to that accident and come to a conclusion, right or wrong, about that accident. This is exactly what does not happen in *Tristram Shandy*. At times, Tristram the narrator makes false promises of conveying information about certain matters in future, and never comes back to fulfill them. For instance, in Volume Five, Tristram retells the story of his accidental circumcision and promises to reveal “the great moral” (341) that is imbedded in this story but later he simply does not do what he has promised earlier, claiming that he is too busy: “A great MORAL might be picked handsomely out of this, but I have not

time” (341). At another instance, when the end of the war forces a lull in Toby and Trim's activities, Trim offers to provide some amusement for Toby by telling the story of the King of Bohemia and his seven castles. While the reader's consciousness is stimulated to hear this tale, it never really gets off the ground, and Trim digresses instead into the story of how he fell in love during the war.

These elements and more establish the narrative voice of Tristram Shandy as unreliable, in the view of the reader and thus, by forcing the reader to progressively question the authenticity of the accounts of the events provided, and the soundness of judgements made by the narrative voice, create innumerable points of indeterminacy in the fabric of the story, that, as investigated earlier, has no other effect than inviting the reader to play an active role in the concretization of the story. In other words, the reader is constantly forced to make subjective choices if he is to make sense of the story at all. As stated earlier, these points of indeterminacy which emerge as a result of the implementation of an unreliable narrator widen the arena for the reader's creative imagination, and functions as a counterbalancing factor to the limiting effects of an intimate first person narrator. This balance is partially responsible for the fact that *Tristram Shandy* has been joyfully read since its first appearance in 1759.

Bassity's summary comes very close to what we have concluded here in this chapter:

Shandy, the steadfastly unreliable narrator, foregrounds the troublesome nature of meaning, demonstrating indeterminacy by asserting determinacy where it can't stand up, or pretending to elliptical modesty where contextual clues guarantee an “indecent”

meaning. Shandy revels in equivocation, tautology, double entendre, nebulous references, ambiguity, sophistry, and even condemns plagiarism by resorting to plagiarism, so that at times a reader could almost despair of knowing what he *does* mean. Yet, the novel hardly results in meaninglessness. Ultimately, for all its seemingly determined indeterminacy, Sterne's text comes across clearly: regardless of specific textual meaning, it works at effect, one of stubborn vitality, resisting explicit, rationalist conviction. (2)

Under the light of IMR, we can now have a full picture of how the syuzhet of *Tristram Shandy* operates, and how it has succeeded in keeping the creative imagination of generations of readers within the twin boundaries of boredom and overstrain in other words, overdetermination and underspecification.

In this chapter, it was demonstrated with sufficient exemplifications that gaps, tantalizing omissions, digressions, alternate stories, and the discreet implementation of an unreliable narrator are all tools by which the text makes the addition of readers' subjective material to the fabric of the aesthetic object possible. These techniques along with the limiting factors that were reviewed in Chapter Three are responsible for making *Tristram Shandy* and *The Dispossessed* a reading pleasure that they in fact are. However, it should be reiterated that this spectrum of reading space, between boredom and overstrain, is dynamically decided and is of course subject to change from one reader to another, and one reading to the next. This accounts for the obvious fact that a reader may leave reading a novel unfinished out of boredom, and after a while, may come back to read it with much enjoyment. In such a case it can be argued that the text in the first reading has offered too narrow or too wide an arena for his creative imagination, by overdetermination of facts in the fabula, or underspecification of them, but in the second reading, the text has been

successful in keeping him within the boundaries of interaction.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Texts are comprised of signifiers, of words on pages, and are, in themselves, devoid of any meaning or sense as long as they are not read by readers. Reading is not simply receiving a message through the medium of language, but is bringing to life the signifiers by creatively supplementing the fabric of text by subjective material and thus giving life to a new phenomenon, that has not existed before. Thus, to use Iser's words, "texts could have meanings only when they are read and if they are to be studied, they should be studied through the eyes of the reader" (*Prospecting* 4). This notion of reading apparently assigns the utmost significance to the function of reader in the institution of art and literature, and elevates him from a passive consumer to an active proliferator of meaning, from a receiver to a participant in the production of sense.

This study set out to investigate this relatively recent notion of reader, and readership, and to scrutinize the complex nature of interaction between the reader and the text that is underway in the act of reading. In the introduction of the study, first, an attempt was made to outline the roots of this renewed notion of readership, and clarify how modern literary thought has come to see these concepts in radically different lights. To offer a satisfactory picture of these conceptualizations, the contemporary developments in three distinct disciplines, namely, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and philosophy of language, were closely mapped to show how the

concept of language and consequently, the meaning of the meaning has been transformed in a revolutionary manner as a result of these new conceptualizations, and how new windows to understanding of language, and in a bigger scale, literature, were opened.

In the introduction, the origins of this transformed notion of reading and reader were first identified in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century developments in linguistic and philosophy of language that drastically altered the concept of language from a mere representation of outer realities, in other words, carrier of objective meaning, to a shaper of meaning, or an instrument which makes the understanding of the world possible; a change that disconnected language from the earlier misconception of seeing language as representing reality, and paved the way for scrutinizing it as an object in itself. It was then explicated how the rise of phenomenology put the consciousness of human subjects at the center of any act of cognition, and how it bracketed off the one-to-one relationship between cognitive objects, and the reality, or “the thing as it is”. The rise of phenomenology in philosophy reverberated in a renewed interest in the consciousness of the subjects that are involved in literature, i.e. those of the writer, and the reader; a breakthrough which was, sooner or later, prone to end up in the investigation of the subjective role of the reader in giving life to literary text.

Then it was discussed how positive or traditional hermeneutics was gradually replaced by a negative or postmodern versions, and how the search for an objective meaning hidden in the fabric of text was superseded by the notion of proliferation of meaning or sense-making in the act of readership. This was a radical breakthrough that was heavily predicated upon the developments in the

aforementioned disciplines, and in itself paved the way for the emergence of reader-oriented theories of literature, which progressively tried to offer an adequate description of the notions of author, text, and reader, and the interactions between them. Once the origins of the new concepts of reader and readership were sufficiently elucidated and the foundations of a modern understanding of literary text were identified, an attempt was made to put together a theory of readership which can be used to offer new insights on the functions and mechanisms of literature in general, and fiction in particular.

In Chapter One, various aspects of such a theory, which I have called The Interactionalist Model of Readership (IMR), were put forth and closely analyzed to demonstrate how the text and the reader cooperate in giving life to text in the act of reading. To gain an understanding of how the text works, and how the reader responds, different factors of interaction were meticulously put to scrutiny. First, the discussion examined how art has come to be seen as an experience rather than an object, and meaning as an event in consciousness rather than an objective quality of the text. An array of concepts from pragmatism to formalism, structuralism, and post-structuralism were reviewed and used to clarify the implications of the notion of art as experience. The attention was then paid to the nature of text, especially literary and fictional text, and using concepts from thinkers such as Iser and Fish, it was brought to light how texts are deficient, hollow entities, which are inherently incapable of representing reality in its entirety, but can only provide a schematized view of it. The implications regarding this schematized view of reality offered by the text were investigated using ideas from various thinkers, before moving on to the analysis of the second side of the interaction, namely, the reader.



In a similar manner, the study closely examined the developments of the concept of reader from a mere receiver of textual meaning, to recognizing the reader as an active participant in the proliferation of meaning, and it was demonstrated how offering a positivistic and reductionist definition of the concept of the reader is both impossible and undesirable. Once the pluralistic nature of the concept of reader was firmly established, an attempt was made to describe the dialectic of readership, that is, to account for the process of sense-making in the act of reading. The concepts of repertoire, encyclopedia, or culture were also reviewed and it was explained that culture affects both the reader and the text in the time of reading, and thus has a decisive role in the formation of the aesthetic object, or the virtual existence of the text. It was proposed, then, that the word “sense” is more useful than the term “meaning” in referring to the dynamic proliferation of meaning in readership, and how, as a result of this dynamicity, any description of this reader-text interaction should refrain from positivistic claims and instead, aim at offering a precise description of an inherently imprecise phenomenon. Furthermore, the distinction between a diachronic and synchronic study of response and reception was made, and it was clarified that this study is concentrated on the latter, rather than former, and hence, would include the ahistorical analyses of the nature of literary response, rather than a historical study of the literary reception.

To describe the complex interaction between the text and the reader, and avoid the usual confusing conceptualizations in a field which has relatively stymied the application of a theory of response to literary works in the last three decades or so, this study suggested the classification of the aggregate of reader-text interaction into four distinct levels, namely, semiotic, discursive, narrative, and pragmatic. An

attempt was then made to offer sufficient clarification regarding each of these levels. Using concepts from a diverse number of theorists, the study tried to clarify how each sign, each individual word on a page instigates a process of response in the reader, and forces him to pursue the signifier beyond its face value (This is the semiotic level of interaction). Having established that reading a narrative text is always temporally oriented, how this temporality entails a moving from one sentence, or groups of sentences to the next, and each sentence, or sentence correlate opens a semantic horizon to be fulfilled or suppressed by the following ones were then explained. It was demonstrated that the activation of the reader's creative imagination is rooted in this moving from one sentence to another, and how the reader's imagination is essentially required to make such moves (This is the discursive level of interaction).

Subsequently how various segments of a story, are structured in a narrative text in order to attract and involve the readers' creative imagination in a similar manner were explained. Due to the fact that without the readers' participation in reading there is no meaning, i.e. the text is lifeless, the ultimate purpose of all narrative texts was identified as attracting the reader's creative imagination, involving him in the act of readership, and not allowing him to give up reading by constantly keeping him within the boundaries of boredom and overstrain. It was then noted that the secondary objective of this study was to analyze how novelistic fictional texts succeed in keeping their readers within the aforementioned boundaries, and to push them on, or guide them in the act of readership.

Leaving aside the pragmatic level of interaction, which was shown to be related to the effect of extra-textual elements on the readers of texts, and thus to lie

in the domain of literary reception, rather than response, the study then tried to answer why readers participate in their interactions with texts, in other words, in the act of readership. Using ideas from Freud and Stanley Fish, this human propensity to fictionalize was scrutinized and it was shown how reading can be seen as a wish-fulfillment mechanism, as well as a dynamic and creative activity. It was also suggested that the activation of fantasy and the yearning for closure, or, in Freudian terminology, the death drive, play an important role in pushing the readers forward in the act of readership, and ultimately in giving life to the aesthetic object or sense of the work. In the last subsection of Chapter Two, an attempt was made to provide an evaluative facet to IMR, and to discuss how the interpretive richness of any given text, in other words, its ability to attract and engage the readers' attention and creative imagination at a wider and deeper level, should be taken as a criterion for evaluating literary works, rather than any objective quality or characteristic they might possess. However, one must never forget that such interpretive richness is in itself a dynamic potentiality that is prone to change from reader to reader and from time to time, and thus can never offer a positivistic measurement, but only a general disposition.

The study hopes to have successfully established the centrality and significance of these premises, upon which IMR is predicated. It also hopes to have clarified the complex relationship between the text and the reader by offering a clear description of the process, novel suggestions to scrutinize it and a usable frame of reference for further analyses. Its peripheral attempt to offer an evaluative framework to modern reader-response criticism can also be seen as a step towards making the theory more critic-friendly, and practically more useable in academic

circles. The study also hopes to have paved the way for further explorations of the concepts investigated here in various directions.

In Chapters Three and Four, an attempt was made to follow the theoretical framework of IMR to its logical ends, and in doing so, come up with the practical implications that such a theory of response holds to the understanding of literature. In brief, if the text's meaning happens only when it is read, and the text's only and most important responsibility is to stimulate its readers' creative imagination, and engage them in the act of reading, then it is the literary scholar's task to investigate how literary texts have been successful in fulfilling such a grand responsibility since their conception. In Chapter Two it had been suggested that all narrative texts try to keep their readers within the boundaries of overstrain, and boredom, in other words, overdetermination, and underspecification, and that they do so by incorporating a complex set of narrative techniques that move the story forward by offering some elements of the fabula to the reader, and simultaneously attempting to create points of indeterminacy in the forms of gaps, blanks, digression, or diversions that act as stimuli to activate the readers' creative imagination. In the following chapters, for practical reasons, the study took two novels of diverse background and style, *Tristram Shandy*, and *The Dispossessed* and tried to identify the techniques through which they achieve their aims by keeping their readers, or at least, a great number of their readers within these limits of interaction. The selection of these novels, which belong to different eras and subgenres, has been an attempt to demonstrate that unlike what it may seem on the surface, all fictional texts, especially in the tradition of novelistic fiction, operate under the same logic, and that this logic can be comprehended under the light of IMR. The study claims that the concepts explored

here are relevant to all fictional writings, and the selection of these two novels as specimens for analysis has been done for only practical reasons, mostly to avoid redundancy and repetition.

The two analytic chapters of the study were organized around the textual strategies that offer definite elements of fabula to the reader, and thus, limit his creative imagination to these fixed spots in their consciousness, and the strategies by which the narrative text impedes the process of offering fabula elements, and creates points of indeterminacy or semantic gaps, both of which require the readers' creative imagination to be concretized, and as a result invite the reader to play a more active role in the process of sense making. The first set of techniques have a limiting effect on the arena of readership, because by providing fixed information they create fixed phenomena in the readers' consciousness, whereas the second group of textual strategies are utilized to create semantic gaps, blanks, and points of indeterminacy that stimulate the reader's creative imagination to fill in and produce a complete whole. In Chapter Three, the effects of a homodiegetic narrator, the artful manipulation of internal focalization, and the sequencing of the action of the story were explored in the two novels to show how they are deliberately used by the text to control the readers' creative imagination and push them to the formation of the intended phenomena in their consciousness. In Chapter Four, parallel to Chapter Three, the use of gaps, tantalizing omissions, digressions, alternate stories and an unreliable narrator were studied to show how these texts have deliberately incorporated these elements in order to impede the flow of the narrative, create points of indeterminacy with the sole purpose of forcing their readers to provide subjective material and fill in the inherently deficient fabric of text to give rise to the

ultimate sense of the work, its virtual existence or the aesthetic object. To use a figurative language, the limiting elements offer the bricks, and the de-limiting elements force the reader to provide the cement in order to give rise to a complete whole, which is the sense of the story, or the aesthetic object.

Through the analyses of two drastically different novels, which belong to different subgenres and periods – one generally considered as a picaresque novel of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the other a science fiction novel of the 20<sup>th</sup> century- the study hopes to have accomplished the task of demonstrating how most narratives, if not all, function in a very similar manner. Rather than being exclusively applicable to the texts analyzed here, the study has demonstrated how all narrative texts, even those of distinct origin and genre, operate under the logic of storytelling, by offering and denying information, by limiting and de-limiting the readers' creative consciousness, and forcing themselves to be read time and again. The study also has suggested the crucial factor of the balance between overdetermination and underspecification in keeping the readers in the game of readership. In short, the study hopes to have overcome the debilitating shortcomings of such a brilliant school of literary thought, namely, reader-response criticism, and provided it with a much needed practical frame of reference that may be utilized for further, more fruitful, investigations of the genre of novelistic fiction, and in comparative analyses of various genres and text types.

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## APPENDICES

### A: GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

**Aesthetic Object:** See Virtual existence of the text.

**Analepsis / Retrospection / Flashback:** The presentation of events that have occurred before the current story-NOW. An external flashback presents an event occurring before the beginning of the primary story line (Jahn N.5.2.1).

**Concretization:** The term which was first used by Roman Ingarden and later adapted by Wolfgang Iser refers to the act of adding subjective material to the signifiers on a page, which leads to the appearance of the signifier or signifiers as a full phenomenon in the consciousness of the reader. In this sense, both a single word, and a text can be concretized in the reader's consciousness. The terms, actualization, realization, and interpretation are sometimes used to refer to the same concept. The product of the process of concretization is the virtual existence of the text.

**Discursive Level of Interaction:** entails the interaction between the reader and the sentences or the sentence correlates of a text. It is closely related with the temporality of reading experience and tries to describe what happens in the reader's consciousness as the reader moves from one sentence to the next, or from one sentence correlate to the next.

**Hermeneutics:** A branch of knowledge that deals with the boundaries and methods of interpretation. As a methodology it "is concerned with problems that arise when dealing with meaningful human actions and the products of such actions, most



importantly texts. As a methodological discipline, it offers a toolbox for efficiently treating problems of the interpretation of human actions, texts and other meaningful material.” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

**Heterodiegetic Narrator:** narrator who is not present as a character in the story.

The prefix 'hetero-' alludes to the 'different nature' of the narrator as compared to any and all of story's characters (Jahn N1.10). A third person omniscient narrator is one instance of a heterodiegetic narrator.

**Homodiegetic Narrator:** (also, **an experiencing I**) a narrator who is also one of story's acting characters. The prefix 'homo-' points to the fact that the individual who acts as a narrator is also a character on the level of action (Jahn N1.10).

**Internal Focalizer:** The term refers to a character or rarely an object through whose eyes the story scenes are scene. It has been theorized to help the narratologists distinguish the voice that tells the story events, i.e. the narrator, and the eyes that see the story event, i.e. the focalizer. In different fictional writings it can be identical to or independent from the narrator.

**Narrative Level of Interaction:** It entails how different segments of a story are structured in order to create a certain effect on the reader, and how the overall meaning of a given narrative text is the product of this narrative structure. The manipulation of narratorial mode, be it, homodiegetic or heterodiegetic, foreshadowings and flashbacks, digressions and alternate stories, and the like are aspects of the textual strategies through which the text establishes an interaction with its readers at a narrative level.

**Narratorial mode:** The term refers to the aggregate of strategies through which the story is told in syuzhet. The narratorial mode of a novel, for instance, can be homodiegetic, or heterodiegetic, intradiegetic, or extradiegetic, omniscient, or limited, or a combination of all. It can also have single or multiple internal focalizers.

**Prolepsis / Flashforward / Anticipation:** The presentation of a future event before its proper time. An external flashforward involves an event happening after the end of the primary story line. An objective flashforward or certain anticipation presents an event that will actually occur. (Jahn N.5.2.1)

**Readerly Texts:** Barthes makes a distinction between ‘readerly’ and ‘writerly’ texts. To him, ‘Readerly’ texts offer a work of fiction with established codes and stereotypical literary convention, in which the readers accompany the work to witness the stream of events. The relationship between the signifiers and the signifieds are clear. However, ‘writerly’ texts do not offer a simple relationship between the signifiers and the signifieds. They upset the accepted values of the readers. The work demands the cooperation and effort from the reader so that the reader can decode what is implicitly presented and make it intelligible. This effort requires creativity of the reader. (Barthes, *S/Z* 4-5)

**Schematized View:** The term which was first used by Roman Ingarden refers to the fact that art, or to be more precise text, is inherently incapable of providing a full picture of reality, and all they can offer is an essentially deficient, lacking view, that he calls schematized. This feature of the text is behind the fact that it always needs reader’s subjective material in order to form a whole, and get concretized.

**Semiotic Level of Interaction:** entails the interaction between the reader and the individual words of the text. Symbolism, metaphoric, and figurative language can be considered as instances at which this level of interaction is manifestly at work.

**Virtual Existence of the Text:** Following Ingarden, Iser believes that the reader adds his subjective material to the schematized view of the text to give rise to what he calls the virtual existence of the text, or the aesthetic object. In other words, aesthetic object is the addition of the narrative text and the reader's complementary story in the consciousness of the reader. Iser believes that this is the true existence of the text, not the words on the page.

**Willing Suspension of Disbelief:** The term, first coined by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and later widely used by others refers to the fact that the reader must approach a fictional text as if the fictional world it presents is a real one, if he is to enjoy it. As discussed in this study, in many cases, this suspension of disbelief is a prerequisite for the interaction of the reader and the text.

**Writerly Texts:** See Readerly Texts

## B: CURRICULUM VITAE

### Personal Information

- **Marital Status:** Married
- **Nationality:** Iranian
- **Date of Birth:** 10th of September, 1980
- **Place of Birth:** Urumieh, West Azarbayjan Prov. Iran
- **Phone:** +90 545 210 1182
- **Email:** Mehranx1980@gmail.com

### Personal Interests

- Reading
- Watching movies
- Reading again!
- Playing Violin

### Education

- **2018: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**  
English Literature, Middle East Technical University.  
Ankara, Turkey.
- **2011**  
left PhD studies in American Culture and Literature in Hacettepe University unfinished. Ankara, Turkey.
- **2007: Master of Art (MA)**  
English Literature, Islamic Azad University of Tabriz.  
Tabriz, Iran.
- **2003: Bachelor of Art (BA)**  
Received BA degree in English Language and Literature from State University of Shiraz. Shiraz, Iran.
- **1998: High School Diploma**  
Experimental Sciences, CHamran High School, Urumia, Iran.

### Languages

- **Farsi:** Native
- **Azari:** Native
- **English:** Fluent
- **Turkish:** Fluent
- **Arabic:** Limited proficiency
- **French:** Basic

### Computer Skills

- **Microsoft Windows OS:** Fully Proficient
- **Windows-Based Networks:** Skilled User
- **Microsoft Office:** Skilled User
- **Web Design:** Skilled WordPress designer
- **GUI Design:** Limited Skills
- **Programming:** Limited skills

## Teaching Experience

- **2015-present**  
**IELTS & TOEFL Trainer**  
Taught exam prep courses at various language schools in Ankara, Turkey including Perfect English, Active English, and a few more.
- **2014**  
**Instructor of English. Atilim University, Ankara, Turkey**  
Taught general English courses, prep school levels
- **2011-2013**  
**Instructor of English. Yildirim Beyazit University, Ankara, Turkey**  
Taught general English courses, prep school and departmental levels
- **2010**  
**IELTS & TOEFL Trainer**  
Started teaching exam prep courses at various language schools in Ankara, Turkey including Perfect English, Active English, Deulcom International and a few more.
- **2009**  
**Part-time Lecturer. Azad University of Urumia, Urumia, Iran**  
Taught general English courses, and ESP courses at departmental level for two consecutive semesters.
- **2008**  
**Part-time Lecturer. Azad University of Maragheh, Maragheh, Iran**  
Taught general English courses, and ESP courses at departmental level for two consecutive semesters.
- **2006-2010**  
**Part-time Lecturer. PayameNour University. Urumia, Iran**  
Taught English Literature courses, undergraduate level including Survey in ELIT, English Novel, English Poetry, and Literary Theory.
- **1999-2006**  
**English Teacher**  
Along with some administrative positions, taught various general English and Exam prep courses at several educational institutions across Iran in Shiraz, Tehran, Tabriz, and Urumia.

## Managerial Experience

- **2005-2010**  
**Manager in Charge:** FardayeNo Institute of Art, Culture and Education.  
Maragheh, Iran
- **2002-2005**  
**Director of Language Department:** Tehran Institute of Technology, Tabriz Branch. Tabriz, Iran
- **2001**  
**Director of Education:** Ayandesazan Language center, Shiraz Branch

## Honors and Distinctions

- Founded and edited a student magazine in Shiraz University, Called *SERENDIPITY*, which was later awarded as the Country's Third Literary Magazine in *the 4th National Festival of Student Magazines* in Tehran. October, 2001.
- Received 12 letters of appreciation for my active participation in the foundation of various student circles and organizations in Shiraz University. Shiraz, Iran.

## Publications

- Shadi, Mehran. "Literature as the representation of Zeitgeist". *Asre Panjshanbe Ha*. 14 Oct, 2003. pp. 27 – 35. (Originally in Farsi).
- Shadi, Mehran. "An Analytical Study of the Translatability and Untranslatability in the Light of Contemporary Semantics and Semiotics Theories." *Asre Panjshanbe Ha*. 11 Oct, 2002. pp. 68 – 72. (Originally in Farsi).
- written and published numerous articles in students' magazines between 2000 and 2004. (in Farsi)

## Conference Papers

- Shadi, Mehran. "Free Play of Signifiers in Lars Von Trier's *Antichrist*. A Derrideo-Iserian Analysis." 12th International IDEA Conference: Studies in English. Akdeniz University. Antalya, Turkey. April, 2018.
- Shadi, Mehran. "Setting up, Implementing and Managing a Computer Assisted Language Learning System in Iranian Language Schools. A Theoretical Background and a Case Study." Presented in "the First conference on the Issues and Problems of Language Education" in Shabestar University. Shabestar, Iran, May 31, 2009.
- Shadi, Mehran. *Forough Farrokhzad and Silvia Plath: A Comparison*. Presented in the first symposium on Forough Farrokhzad Poetry in Shiraz University. Shiraz, Iran. Sep, 2002.

## C: TURKISH SUMMARY/ TÜRKÇE ÖZET

### Metin ve Okuyucunun Yakınsallığı – Seçme Kurgu Eserlerde Metinsel Stratejiler ve Yapısal Anlamın Oluşumu Üzerine Bir Çalışma

Metinler, sayfalardaki kelimelerden ibarettir ve kendi başlarına, okuyucular tarafından okunmadıkça herhangi bir anlamdan tamamen yoksundurlar. Kişi okuma dili aracılığıyla bir mesaj almakla kalmaz, metnin dokusunu öznel materyalle yaratıcı bir şekilde tamamlayarak ve böylece daha önce var olmayan yeni bir fenomene hayat vererek göstergelere hayat verir. Dolayısıyla, İser'in sözlerini kullanmak için, "Metinler sadece okunduklarında ve üzerinde çalışılacaklarsa anlam kazanabilirler, yani metinler okuyucunun gözüyle çalışılmalıdır." (Prospecting 4). Bu okuma nosyonu, okuyucunun sanat ve edebiyat kurumundaki işlevine büyük bir önem vermektedir ve onu bir pasif tüketiciden, bir alıcıdan bir anlamda, anlam üretimine kadar bir anlamdan aktif bir proliferatöre doğru yükseltmektedir.

Bu noktada okuyucu kavramı üzerinde durmak büyük bir önem arz etmektedir çünkü bir metni anlamlı kılan o metinde yazarın ne anlatmaya çalıştığından çok aslında okuyucunun söz konusu metinden ne anladığıdır. Bu bağlamda çalışmamızda okuyucunun bu nispeten yakın zamandaki nosyonunu araştırmak ve okuyucuyla okuma eyleminde devam eden metin arasındaki etkileşimin karmaşık doğasını incelemek için yola çıkılmıştır. Çalışmanın başlangıcında, ilk olarak, bu yenilenmiş okurluk kavramının köklerini ortaya

koymak ve modern edebi düşüncenin bu kavramları radikal olarak farklı ışıklarda görmeye nasıl başladığını açıklamak için bir girişimde bulunuldu. Ayrıca çalışmamız kapsamında okuyucu ve yazar ilişkisi hakkında bazı önemli noktalara değinilirken, bir metin okuyucunun gözünde nasıl başka bir forma dönüşürken aslında bir zamanlar yazarın kendi iç dünyasında nasıl bambaşka bir halde doğmuş olabileceği üzerinde de duruldu. Çalışmamızı kapsayan en önemli noktalardan biri de son yıllarda edebiyat çalışmalarında okuyucunun metni okurken sahip olduğu rolle birlikte edebi okur-yazarlığın metinle ayrılmaz mekanizmalarını açığa kavuşturma yönünde birtakım görüşleri dile getirmek üzere yapılan çalışmalardan bahsetmektir. Metin okuyucu tarafından okunmaya başlandığında, yazarla okuyucu arasında bir geçiş sağlanır. Bu kapsamda aslında en çok önemsenmesi gereken de yazarın ifade ederken kullandığı dilin gücüdür. Yazarla okur arasındaki bu geçiş bazen yumuşak bazense oldukça serttir. Bu bir dönüşümdür ve bu dönüşüme yol açan temel nedenler yakından incelenmelidir.

Kavramsallaştırmanın tatmin edici bir resmini sunmak için, üç farklı disiplindeki çağdaş gelişmeler, yani fenomenoloji, hermeneutik ve dil felsefesi, dil kavramının nasıl olduğunu ve sonuçta anlamın nasıl dönüştürüldüğünü göstermek için yakından eşleştirilmiştir. Bu yeni kavramsallaştırmanın bir sonucu olarak devrimci bir tavır ve dilin anlaşılması için yeni pencerelerin ve daha büyük ölçekte edebiyatın nasıl açıldığı konusuna değinilmiştir.

Girişte, bu dönüştürülmüş okuma ve okuyucunun kökenleri ilk olarak, dil kavramını, dış gerçekliklerin sadece bir temsilinden, başka bir ifadeyle, dil kavramını büyük ölçüde değiştiren dilbilim ve felsefe alanındaki gelişmelerde tanımlanmıştır. Nesnel anlam, anlamın bir şekillenişine ya da dünyayı anlamayı



mümkün kılan bir araç; Dilin, gerçekliği temsil eden dili görme konusundaki daha önceki yanlış algılayışından kopan bir değişim ve bunu kendi içinde bir nesne olarak incelemenin yolunu açtı. Daha sonra, fenomenolojinin yükselişinin, herhangi bir bilişsel hareketin merkezinde insan özne bilincini nasıl ortaya koyduğu ve bilişsel nesnelere ile gerçeklik arasındaki “birebir ilişkiden nasıl ayrıldığı” ya da “ne olduğu” gibi bir açıklama yapıldığı belirtildi. Felsefede fenomenolojinin yükselişi, edebiyatta, yani yazarın ve okuyucunun içinde yer alan konuların bilincinde yenilenmiş bir ilgide yankı buldu; Er ya da geç bir okuyucu, edebiyat metnine hayat veren okuyucunun öznel rolünün araştırılmasına son vermeye eğilimli oldu. Öte yandan okurlar değil de yazarlar ve şairler dilin konusu edildiğinde üslubun sanatkarın mizacını, kültürünü ve şahsiyetini de yansıttığı bir gerçektir. Bu bağlamda da çalışmamız kapsamında birkaç örneklendirme yapılmıştır. Dolayısıyla yazarla ilgili bazı konular da dikkate alınmalıdır ancak yine de unutulmamalıdır ki metin bütünlüğü içinde her zaman gerçekliği yansıtmayabilir. Bu yüzden çalışmamızda, metnin doğası gereği birtakım boşluklar ve belirsizlikler oluşturmaya müsait olduğu ve yalnızca sunmayı amaçladığı adeta kabaca çizilmiş bir resimden de oluşabileceğine dikkat çekilmiştir. Söz konusu durum açıklanırken de felsefi ve edebi birtakım örnekler sunularak metin ve okur arasındaki etkileşim açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu kapsamda göstergebilimsel, söylemsel, anlatsal ve pragmatik düzeylerde incelemeler yapılmıştır.

Daha sonra, olumlu ya da geleneksel hermeneutiğin yavaş yavaş, postmodern ya da olumsuz bir versiyonla nasıl değiştirildiği ve metnin dokusunda gizlenen nesnel bir anlam arayışının, anlam ya da anlam üretme eyleminin anlamını ve kapsamı ya da anlam üretme nosyonu tarafından nasıl yerine getirildiği tartışıldı.

Bu, yukarıda bahsedilen disiplinlerdeki gelişmelere ağır bir şekilde dayanan radikal bir atılımdı ve kendi başına, yazar, metin nosyonlarının yeterli bir açıklamasını sunmaya çalışan, okur-odaklı edebiyat kuramlarının ortaya çıkışının yolunu açtı ve okuyucu ve aralarındaki etkileşimler değerlendirildi. Okuyucu ve okuyucunun yeni kavramlarının kökenleri yeterince açıklığa kavuşturulduktan ve modern bir edebi metin anlayışının temelleri belirlendikten sonra, işlevler hakkında yeni bilgiler sunmak için kullanılabilir bir okur teorisini bir araya getirmek için bir girişimde bulunuldu. Genel olarak edebiyat mekanizmaları ve özellikle kurgu hakkında birtakım fikirler beyan edildi.

Birinci Bölümde, Okuryazarlık Okuryazarlığı Modeli (IMR) adını verdiğim böyle bir teorinin çeşitli yönleri, metnin ve okuyucunun okuma eylemindeki metinlere hayat vermede nasıl işbirliği yaptığını göstermek için ortaya konmuş ve yakından analiz edilmiştir. Metnin nasıl çalıştığını ve okuyucunun nasıl tepki verdiğini anlamak için farklı etkileşim faktörleri titizlikle incelenmiştir. Birincisi, tartışma, sanatın bir nesneden ziyade bir tecrübe olarak görüldüğünü ve metnin objektif bir niteliğinden ziyade bilincin bir olayı tam olarak nasıl anladığı üzerinde durulmaya çalışılmıştır. Pragmatikizmden yapısalcılığa, yapısalcılığa ve post-yapısalcılığa kadar bir dizi kavram gözden geçirilmiş ve sanat kavramının deneyimler olarak anlamlarını açıklığa kavuşturmak için kullanılmıştır. Ardından metnin doğasına, özellikle de edebi ve kurgusal metne dikkat edildi ve Iser ve Fish gibi düşünürlerin kavramları kullanılarak, metinleri eksik olan, içi boş varlıklar, gerçekte gerçekliği temsil edemeyen tamamen içi boş düşünceler olduğu çıkarıldı. Fark edildi ki onların kuramları ve fikirleriyle ancak ve sadece şematik ve içi boş bir görünüm sağlanabilir. Metin tarafından sunulan bu şematik görüş görüşüne ilişkin

çıkarımlar, farklı düşünürlerin fikirlerini kullanarak, etkileşimin ikinci yönünün, yani okuyucunun analizine geçmeden önce araştırılmıştır.

Benzer bir şekilde, çalışma, okuyucu kavramının yalnızca metinsel bir anlam alıcısından gelen gelişmeleri, okuyucuyu anlamın çoğalmasında aktif bir katılımcı olarak tanımayı ve pozitivist ve indirgemeci bir tanımın nasıl sunulduğunu göstermişti. Okuyucu kavramı hem imkânsız hem de istenmemektedir. Okuyucunun kavramının çoğulcu doğası sağlam bir şekilde kurulduktan sonra, okuyucunun diyalektiğini tanımlamak, yani okuma eyleminde anlam çıkarma sürecini açıklamak için bir girişimde bulunuldu. Repertuar, ansiklopedi ya da kültür kavramları da gözden geçirilmiş ve kültürün hem okuyucuyu hem de metni okuma sırasında etkilediği ve böylece estetik nesnenin oluşmasında ya da sanal varlığının belirlenmesinde belirleyici bir role sahip olduğu açıklanmıştır. Öyleyse, “duyu” kelimesinin, okurdaki anlamın dinamik olarak çoğalmasıyla ilgili olarak “anlam” teriminden daha yararlı olduğu ve bu dinamikliğin bir sonucu olarak, bu okuyucu-metin etkileşiminin herhangi bir açıklamasının nasıl bir yol olduğu önerilmiştir. Pozitivist iddialardan kaçınmalı ve bunun yerine, doğası gereği kesin olmayan bir fenomenin kesin bir tanımını sunmayı amaçlamalıdır. Dahası, diakronik ve senkronik yanıt ve aldatma çalışması arasındaki ayırım yapıldı ve bu çalışmanın ikincisine değil, ilkinde yoğunlaştığı ve dolayısıyla edebi cevabın doğası ile ilgili ahistorik analizleri içereceği açıklığa kavuşturuldu. edebiyat resepsiyonunun tarihi bir çalışmasından daha.

Metin ve okuyucu arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimi tanımlamak ve son otuz yılda edebi eserlere bir tepki teorisinin uygulanmasını nispeten kısıtlayan bir alandaki normal kafa karıştırıcı kavramlaştırmaları önlemek için, bu çalışma,

okuyucu-metin etkileşimini, dört farklı düzeye, yani, semiyotik, söylemsel, anlatıya ve pragmatik olana dönüştürmektedir. Bu seviyelerin her biri için ayrı ayrı yeterli açıklık sağlayabilmek adına için bir girişim yapıldı. Çeşitli teorisyenlerden gelen kavramları kullanarak, çalışma, her bir işaretin, her bir sayfanın her bir kelimenin, okuyucudaki bir tepki sürecini nasıl kışkırttığını ve onu yüz değerinin ötesinde göstericiyi sürdürmeye zorladığını açıklığa kavuşturmaya çalıştı (Bu semiyotik düzeydir). Bir anlatı metnini okumanın daima zamansal olarak yönlendirildiğini, bu zamansallığın bir cümlelerin veya cümle gruplarının bir sonraki aşamaya nasıl taşınmasını gerektirdiğini ve her bir cümle veya cümle bağıntısının aşağıdakiler tarafından yerine getirilmesi ya da bastırılması için semantik bir ufuk açılmasını sağladığını tespit ettim. Aslında burada tam olarak metnin ne anlatmak istediğinin tamamen okuyucuyla alakalı olduğundan bahsediyorum. Yani şunu demeye çalışıyorum, metinde ne yazdığı aslında yazarın okuyucuya vermek istediği mesajdan çok, okuyucunun o anki psikolojik durumu, hayal gücü kısacası algı biçimiyle alakalı bir durumdan ibarettir. Bir okuyucu aynı metinden defalarca farklı anlamlar çıkarabilir. Aslında bu belki de hepimizin yaşadığında fark ettiği ancak henüz kuramsallaşmamış bir konudur. Örneğin bir okuyucu bir şiiri okuduğunda her zaman aynı duyguyu hissetmeyebilir ya da başka bir sefer okuduğunda metinden farklı bir mesaj alabilir. Hatta belki de aynı metni bazen anlayıp bazen anlamayabilir. İşte bu yüzden tam olarak metnin yazarla değil, aslında tamamen okuyucuyla ilişkili bir kavram olduğunu savunuyorum. Çoğunlukla bir edebi ya da felsefi metni anlayabilmek için yazarın ya da şairin içinde bulunduğu toplumu, ruhsal hatta belki de fiziksel durumu bilmemiz ve dahası bunu irdelememiz gerektiği öğretildi. Edebiyat dersleri çoğunlukla bu şekilde başlardı. İşte ben tam olarak bu noktada devreye yazarın ya da şairin, filozofun değil; okuyucunun girmesi

gerektiğinden bahsediyorum. Okuyucunun yaratıcı hayal gücünün aktivasyonunun, bir cümle için hareket ettirilmesinde köklendiği ve okuyucunun hayal gücünün esasen bu tür hareketler yapmak için nasıl gerekli olduğu gösterildi (Bu, söylemsel etkileşim düzeyi).

Daha sonra, bir hikâyenin çeşitli bölümlerinin, okuyucuların yaratıcı hayal gücünü benzer bir şekilde çekmek ve dahil etmek için anlatı metninde nasıl yapılandırıldığı açıklanmıştır. Okuyucunun okumaya katılımı olmadan bir anlam olmadığı, yani metnin cansız olduğu gerçeğinden dolayı, tüm anlatı metinlerinin nihai amacı, okuyucunun yaratıcı hayal gücünü cezbetmek, onu okuryazarlık eylemine dahil etmek ve izin vermemek olarak tanımlanmıştır. Onu sürekli olarak sıkıntı sınırları içinde tutmak ve aşırı zorlayarak okumaktan vazgeçirir. Okuyucuyu bu şekilde sıkı tutmak, onu dar kalıplar altına sokmak anlamına gelmektedir. Bu noktada da yaza sürekli bir dayatma içindedir. Kendi fikrini okuyucuya empoze etme ve ispatlama çabasıdır. Bu durum da okuyucunun kısırlaşmasına sebep olabilir. Daha sonra, bu çalışmanın ikincil amacının, roman kurgusal metinlerin okurlarını yukarıda bahsedilen sınırlar içinde nasıl tutmayı başardıklarını, onları zorlamak ya da okuryazarlık eyleminde onlara rehberlik etmelerini incelemek olduğu belirtilmiştir.

Metin okuma okuyucularında metin dışı unsurların etkisiyle ilişkili olduğu ve dolayısıyla cevap yerine edebi kabul alanında yer aldığı görülen, pragmatik etkileşim düzeyini bir kenara bırakarak, bu çalışmada daha sonra “neden” cevap vermeye çalışıldı. Okuyucular, metinlerle olan etkileşimlerine, diğer bir deyişle, okuyucu hareketine katılırlar. Aslında zaten hedeflenen de budur çünkü okuyucu olmadan metin tek başına anlamsız bir kelimeler bütününden ibarettir. Freud ve

Stanley Fish'in fikirlerini kullanarak, bu insanın kurgusal eğilimi incelendi ve okuma, bir dilek-yerine getirme mekanizması ve dinamik ve yaratıcı bir etkinlik olarak nasıl görülebildiği gösterildi. Fantazi aktivasyonunun ve kapanış özleminin ya da Freudyen terminolojide ölüm tahribatının okuyucuların okuyucuyu harekete geçirmesinde ve sonuçta estetik nesneye hayat vermede önemli bir rol oynadığı ya da işin anlamı. İkinci Bölümün son alt bölümünde, IMR'ye bir değerlendirme yapısının sunulması ve herhangi bir metnin yorumsal zenginliklerinin, diğer bir deyişle okuyucuların dikkatini ve yaratıcı hayal gücünün nasıl çekilip ilgisini çekebileceğini tartışmak için bir girişimde bulunulmuştur. Çünkü yazar ve okuyucu buluşmasındaki bizce en iyi sonuca okuyucunun hayal gücü hiçe sayılmadan, yazarın anlatmak istediklerini aktarmasıyla ulaşılabilir. Daha geniş ve daha derin bir seviye, sahip olabileceği herhangi bir nesnel kalite veya özellikten ziyade edebi eserleri değerlendirmek için bir ölçüt olarak ele alınmalıdır. Bununla birlikte, böyle yorumsal zenginliklerin, okuyucudan okura ve zaman zaman değişime eğilimli olan dinamik bir potansiyel olduğu ve bu nedenle asla pozitivistik bir ölçüm sunmayacağı, ancak sadece genel bir eğilim olduğu unutulmamalıdır. Daha önce de bahsettiğimiz gibi okuma eylemi yani yazarla okurun buluşma durumu tamamen bireysel bir süreçtir ve okurdan okura bu süreç farklılık gösterebilir. Bu durumu yalnızca okurdan okura değişir diye özetlemek de çok doğru bir sonuç elde etmemizi sağlamayacaktır çünkü aslında süreç tek bir okurda bile, metinle her buluşmada farklılık gösterebilir.

Bu çalışma, IMR'nin öngördüğü bu önermelerin merkezi ve önemini başarılı bir şekilde kurmayı ummaktadır. Ayrıca, sürecin açık bir tanımını, incelenecek yeni önerileri ve daha ileri analizler için kullanılabilir bir referans çerçevesi sunarak

metin ve okuyucu arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi netleştirmeyi ummaktadır. Modern okuyucu-tepki eleştirisine bir değerlendirme çerçevesi sunma konusundaki periferik girişimi, teoriyi daha eleştirel ve pratik olarak akademik çevrelerde daha kullanışlı hale getirmek için bir adım olarak görülebilir. Çalışma aynı zamanda burada çeşitli yönlerden araştırılan kavramların daha fazla araştırılmasının yolunu açmayı umuyor.

Üçüncü ve dördüncü bölümlerde, IMR'nin teorik çerçevesini mantıksal amaçlarına ulaştırmak için bir girişimde bulunuldu ve böyle yaparak, böyle bir tepki teorisinin, edebiyat anlayışına taşıdığı pratik çıkarımlarla ortaya çıktı. Kısacası, eğer metnin anlamı sadece okunduğunda gerçekleşiyorsa ve metnin tek ve en önemli sorumluluğu okuyucularının yaratıcı hayal gücünü teşvik etmek ve onları okuma eylemine sokmaksa, o zaman edebi akademinin görevini nasıl etkilediğini anlamaktır. Edebi metinler, kavramlarından bu yana büyük bir sorumluluğu yerine getirmede başarılı olmuştur. İkinci bölümde, tüm anlatı metinlerinin okurlarını aşırı zorlama, sıkıntı, başka bir deyişle aşırı belirleme ve azınlık sınırları içinde tutmaya çalıştıkları ve bunu harekete geçiren karmaşık bir anlatı teknikleri dizisi ekleyerek bunu gerçekleştirdikleri öne sürülmüştür. Fabula'nın bazı unsurlarını okuyucuya sunarak ve aynı zamanda okuyucuların yaratıcı hayal gücünü harekete geçiren uyarılar olarak hareket eden boşluklar, boşluklar, digresyonlar ya da saptırma biçimlerinde belirsizlik noktaları yaratmaya çalışması gibi. Aşağıdaki bölümlerde, pratik nedenlerden ötürü, bu çalışma farklı arka plan ve üslup, Tristram Shandy ve The Depposessed olmak üzere iki romanı ele aldı ve okurlarını ya da en azından büyük bir sayıyı koruyarak amaçlarına ulaşma yollarını belirlemeye çalıştı. Okuyucuların bu etkileşim sınırları içinde farklı dönemlere ve alt evrelere ait olan bu romanların seçilmesi, yüzeyde görüldüğünden farklı olarak, tüm kurmaca

metinlerin, özellikle de roman kurgusunun geleneğinde, aynı mantık altında faaliyet gösterdiklerini gösterme çabası olmuştur. Bu mantık IMR'nin ışığı altında anlaşılabilir. Çalışma, burada ele alınan kavramların tüm kurgusal yazılar ile ilgili olduğunu ve bu iki romanın analiz için örnek olarak seçilmesinin yalnızca pratik nedenlerden ötürü çoğunlukla fazlalık ve tekrarı önlemek için yapıldığını iddia etmektedir.

Çalışmanın iki analitik bölümü, okuyucuya fabula'nın belirli unsurlarını sunan metinsel stratejiler etrafında düzenlenmiş ve böylece yaratıcı hayal gücünü bilinçlerinde bu sabit noktalara ve anlatı metninin sürecini engelleme stratejilerini sınırlandırmıştır. Fabula unsurları sunan ve her ikisi de okuyucuların yaratıcı hayal gücünün somutlaşmasını gerektiren ve sonuç olarak okuyucuyu duyu sürecinde daha aktif bir rol oynamaya davet eden belirsizlikler veya anlamsal boşluklar yaratır. İlk teknikler okuyucunun arenasında sınırlayıcı bir etkiye sahiptir, çünkü sabit bilgi sağlayarak okuyucunun bilincinde sabit fenomenler yaratırken, ikinci metinsel stratejiler anlamsal boşluklar, boşluklar ve belirsizlik noktaları oluşturmak için kullanılır. Bu, okuyucunun yaratıcı hayal gücünü doldurmaya ve eksiksiz bir bütün oluşturmaya teşvik eder. Üçüncüsü, hoodiegetic bir anlatıcının etkileri, içsel odaklaşmanın ustaca manipülasyonu ve öykünün eyleminin dizilimi, iki romanda okuyucunun yaratıcı hayal gücünü kontrol etmek için metnin kasıtlı olarak nasıl kullanıldığını göstermek için araştırılmıştır. ve onları bilincindeki amaçlanan olayların oluşumuna itmeler. Dördüncü Bölümde, Üçüncü Bölüm'e paralel olarak, bu metinlerin anlatının akışını engellemek için bu unsurların kasıtlı olarak nasıl dahil edildiğini göstermek için boşlukların kullanılması, çarpıklıkların çıkarılması, digresyonlar, alternatif öyküler ve güvenilmez bir anlatı incelenmiştir. belirsizliği,



okurlarını öznel malzeme sağlamak ve işin nihai duygusuna, sanal varoluşuna ya da estetik nesneye yol açacak şekilde kalıtsal olarak yetersiz kumaş dokusunu doldurmak için zorlamaktır. Figüratif bir dil kullanmak için, sınırlayıcı elemanlar tuğlaları sunar ve sınırlayıcı unsurlar okuyucuyu, hikâyenin veya estetik nesnenin hissi olan bir bütünün ortaya çıkmasını sağlamak için çimento sağlamaya zorlar.

18. yüzyılın piknostik romanı ve 20. yüzyılın bir bilim kurgu romanı olarak düşünülen farklı alt türlere ve dönemlere ait olan, birbirinden farklı iki romanın analizleriyle, çalışma gösterme görevini yerine getirmeyi umuyor. Çoğu anlatı, hepsi olmasa da çok benzer bir şekilde işler. Burada analiz edilen metinlere münhasıran uygulanabilir olmak yerine, çalışma, farklı kökeni ve türleri olan tüm anlatı metinlerinin, okuyucuyu sınırlandırarak ve sınırlayan bilgileri sunarak ve reddederek, hikâye anlatım mantığı altında nasıl işlediğini göstermiştir. Yaratıcı bilinç ve kendilerini tekrar okumaya zorlama. Çalışma aynı zamanda okurları okuyuculuk oyununda tutmak için aşırı belirleme ve alt-belirleme arasındaki dengenin önemli bir faktör olduğunu ileri sürmüştür. Kısacası, bu çalışma, bu kadar parlak bir edebi düşünce okulu, yani okuyucu-tepki eleştirisinin zayıflatıcı eksikliklerinin üstesinden gelmeyi umuyor ve bunu daha verimli, daha incelikli araştırmalar için kullanılabilecek çok ihtiyaç duyulan pratik bir referans çerçevesi ile sağladı. Roman kurgusunun türü ve çeşitli türlerin ve metin türlerinin karşılaştırmalı analizleri.

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TEXT AND READER: A STUDY OF TEXTUAL STRATEGIES AND THE  
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