Iser in Africa:

A comparative study of some responses of culturally divergent groups to selected plays by Athol Fugard

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1. STATEMENT OF INTENTION

The idea of setting up an empirical strategy for testing response prompted this study, or to put it more simplistically, who or what is the reader really, and how does he respond to this freedom or illusion of freedom to do what he wishes with the text?

Literary theory can become unproductive if it is not challenged continuously by comparative studies to reaffirm its validity, and comparative studies cannot develop without a specific theoretical frame. A fundamental problem of comparative empirical research is the difficulty of finding or devising tests that can be equally fair to both groups or programmes under investigation. I would not have attempted this project had I not gradually been acculturized over a period of many years at a black college. The subjective reader response which makes it difficult to produce objective comparative knowledge, is reconciled in this dialectic with the methodological purity of the theory of literature. As such the complementary character affirms the potential of the research cycle according to which experimentation and forming of a theory can improve each other by continuous interaction.

As reading is an essential part of acquiring knowledge and learning, its significance can never be overestimated. In a sense reading can also be considered as a kind of problem-solving strategy. To me reading has always been a very personal phenomenon, until I was confronted by the theories of the phenomenologists and reception aestheticians. Although these theories have been developed and refined over many years I could find very little evidence of actual reading response having been empirically tested and verified. This prompted the present study. Related fields of study regarding reading, especially comprehension, will be touched on in a separate chapter, as there has to be a certain degree of comprehension before response can take place.

The influence of different cultural backgrounds on reading is also touched on in this chapter.

Gradually I became more intrigued by and aware of the difficulty of testing an abstract and private phenomenon such as automatic response. What intrigued me most was how people in a multi-racial, multi-cultural society with different perspectives generated from different cultural backgrounds and horizons, would respond to literary texts, and whether all readers would necessarily respond according to the prescriptions of reader aestheticians such as Iser, Jauss and Ingarden. Therefore, in this paper the question regarding the student-centred nature of response is concerned with the ways in which cultural differences come to the fore and are to be taken into account. Are the researcher's norms taken as a norm, or are cultural differences considered as a legitimate subject for negotiation and exploration? Should culture-specific aspects of the text be anticipated as being recognised, with student reaction or resistance to this as an obstacle to be overcome?

The notion of merely reading was discarded after my reading a comment made by G. Olivier, a post-doctoral fellow at Yale University, saying that "text (film) and reader (audience) are said to be inseparable, and realism is no longer a question of an exterior reality nor of the relation of reader to text, but one of the ways in which these two interact".

To include all the aspects of response this paper has a tripartite organization:

(a) purely theoretical premises which form the basis for further assumptions and argumentation;

(b) Iser's theory applied to a text (**The BloodKnot**) to serve as a model of reading to assess the actual degree of response;

(c) an actual empirical testing of the theory.

The third part immediately introduced a Pandora's kist of problems, and much space prior to the actual testing is given over to bringing into focus the many problems that the empirical researcher per se was confronted with and more

particularly the problems that presented themselves in the course of this specific research and attempts made to solve the problems.

Because two culturally divergent groups were used for the empirical work, the first problem was to find a suitable text for both culture groups. The ideal text would not favour one group and constrain the other. As English is the second language of both groups finally chosen, it was felt that the degree of difficulty of the language used in the text(s) should not have any significantly retarding influence on the response because of comprehension problems.

The length and genre of the text had to be taken into consideration for practical purposes. As Iser himself used Beckett's **End Game** to illustrate his theories, drama seemed to be the appropriate choice. Drama would also, when acted out in front of an audience, reveal response more tangibly. A word of warning though, before I might be misunderstood: my approach is entirely response-orientated, I am concerned with reader response and not theatre research or the theatrical artefact, although I am aware of the importance of the actual performance.

Just as with reader response, the reader is co-writer of the text, the audience is part of the creative process during a performance. The difference is that any audible response from the audience has a direct influence on the actors and their acting, while in reading the printed text remains unchanged. The artefact created by reader response is transitory and it is virtually impossible to pin it down. For my purpose, it was interesting to note that when an audience responds to an aspect of a particular performance, it does so from a specific cultural background. One difference most easily discernible, is the fact that blacks prefer waving hands and hissing to the actual standardised western response of clapping. However absurd it may sound, violence, induced pain and suffering on stage evoke laughter as response from a black audience while witty remarks and humour leave them cold.

But to continue, I argued that distracting influences would be eliminated or minimized and the circumstances underlying and evocative of response would

be the same in the limited confines of time and space in the theatre. Actual reading response could still be done after each performance. Having established that drama should serve as the response-eliciting text, the question was which one to select.

A complete overview of South African drama, to justify the choice, would not be appropriate and would not fit into the structure of this paper. Yet it seems relevant to indicate briefly why certain dramatists and their works were eliminated and why the eventual choice was made. By a process of elimination, older South African dramas were excluded because they have become period pieces. Many more recent plays had to be eliminated because they could give offence to either one of the institutions involved.

The older drama, following directly after the Anglo-Boer war, reflected rather shallow intrigue, and more often than not the theme focused on prejudicial cultural issues. Revolt against efforts to establish English as the official language, supplied dramatists with historical facts which they could convert into themes for drama. Thus the familiar experiences of the audiences of the day were mirrored in a socio-political way. (Drama can be considered as a barometer indicating the pressure, not of the atmosphere, but of society.) Some dramatists that feature in this cultural, economical, socio-realistic approach are Langenhoven, Cilliers, Grosskopf, Malherbe, Eitemal, Melt Brink, and Stephen Black.

These dramatists were discarded for purposes of this study because the black students know very little if anything of the establishment of Afrikaans and they do not experience the patriotism and the love for the mother tongue that other students might have when re-living the history. Consequently they would be at a disadvantage in terms of Iser's horizon and Carrell's schemata.

Not all the abovementioned dramatists can be branded as being shallow, yet very few of the dramas can be said to have achieved great or lasting fame. One reason for this could be that most of these dramas are period pieces, concerned with

the viability of Afrikaans as a language and the plight of the poor-white Afrikaner, a by-product of depression and concentration camps.

Gradually South African drama, and particularly Afrikaans drama, discarded the local realism and hero-villain romanticism, and in the process of maturation there gradually emerged a new kind of drama which attempted to reveal man in his struggle for survival in the grip of moral dilemmas.

The older dramas did not concern themselves with existentialist problems for the simple reason that the country was open and wide, the people simple and rural and the language in the process of being born. The problems described were likewise represented simplistically, concretely and the conflicts less multi-faceted than those experienced by modern city-dwellers, with warring ideologies and dangerous lifestyles.

The subsequent set of playwrights considered, were those who made their appearance in the late 1950's. They were, amongst others, Henriette Grove, Bartho Smith, Dolf van Niekerk, as well as Sheila Roberts, J. Ambrose Brown and Guy Butler, who focused on deeper humanist and cosmic problems.

Drama is considered, by its nature, to mirror the current issues crucial and topical at a specific time. The heyday of the local, realistic easygoing drama is now something of the past, as the problems confronting South Africa and modern man as such have become far more complicated and compelling. As in Europe and the rest of the world, the South African citizen has become neurotic, frustrated, anxious and disillusioned. All these, and many other conflicts, are depicted in modern drama. What makes the South African scene more complicated is the fact that our country is a melting pot of conflict among protagonists, among human rights and human rights, cultures and cultures.

Mutual consideration and understanding and a restructuring of values and systems have suddenly become a priority. All playwrights are exposed to this laden and electrifying source and cannot but express in dramatic terms what they experience.

The theme that dominates the plays written after 1950 is that of race, class and colour. Evidently this is a theme which moves playwrights to attempt an expression in dramatic terms and equally evident it is a theme which in South Africa from the mid-twentieth century is of the greatest social urgency. According to Sartre this type of literature can be classified as littérature engagée, the engagement being political, social or religious. A work is classified as engaged or committed if it exploits a certain topicality, comments on it with the aim of bringing about some kind of change. Fugard is not alone in his underlining of the theme of colour and race, which has as its aim the establishing of identity and human dignity of a race who has been deprived and suppressed. In **Seven Against the Sun** James Ambrose Brown depicts another side of the coin. Stranded helplessly in the thick Kenya bush seven characters strive in vain to escape the ruthless, cruel Banda bands. Brown's **The Day of the Locust**, Alan Paton's **Sponono**, Pieter-Dirk Uys's **God's Forgotten**, Sowden's **Kimberley Train** have likewise been scrutinised and eliminated either because they have by now become period pieces of a particular slant, and as such not suitable, or either some of them have the potential of giving offence to either the institution or one of the culture groups involved.

It would be desirable to pursue a different project using two different culture groups responding to the work of a black playwright in order to obtain a completely rounded view. The vast, ever-growing awareness of black power has given rise to a vital, idiosyncratic theatre among blacks in South Africa. Most of these dramas have as their theme social and political freedom and quality, quite stridently expressed. This theatre of black consciousness must inform, write and inspire the people to say to them you are not "non-white" any longer; accept the fact that you are black and be proud of it. However, in these difficult times it is not advisable to bring literature of this kind to an institution for blacks which might later be the cause of class boycotts or riots, therefore a black dramatist was not selected. Fugard was decided on as a contemporary dramatist, addressing a relevant topic in a more constrained manner than many of the upcoming young artists.

Athol Fugard's work, though addressing contentious issues of the day, in a more subtle and less strident way than many of his contemporaries, to my mind falls in the category of committed literature. As is typical of committed literature,

his work is also tuned in to certain specific perlocutions, or to put it more simply, it wishes to achieve certain effects and is pragmatically inclined.

Committed works go about establishing an intimate relationship with the reader in various ways. The basic intention is to arouse the reader to investigate and question the status quo. The text has specific engagé perlocutions like agreement, critical questioning and empathising as a result. To define the engaged text more clearly it could be contrasted with the closed text of e.g. an adventure story that will "prescribe" responses and specific emotions to the reader, although within the given framework various responses are possible. Certain qualities are of great importance to ascertain a dialogue with the text, e.g. honesty, sincerity and morality. Through mimetic encoding a close link is established with the reader's world of experience. An engaged work often forces the reader to take sides or provide a solution. The qualities of the engaged texts seem to invite empirical research to do reception or reader response to shed more light on what actually happens when reading these texts, in which Fugard tries to depict the inhumanity and tyranny of his own country to the world.

Although Athol Fugard merits an in-depth study, space allows one to dwell only on those areas appropriate to the study. Apart from the qualities and aspects of his work already mentioned, he also writes about matters such as death, isolation and deception, which have a wider, more universal applicability. Abroad he is considered as an appropriate spokesman for the conditions in South Africa. It is interesting to note that his first plays, such as **No Good Friday** and **Nongogo**, did not have much impact on any audience. Fugard must have sensed that some ingredient was missing. He did not as yet have a winning recipe. The lacking ingredient, he realised, was politics. **No Good Friday** comes close to degenerating into a kind of gangster drama. Black is against black and the whites at this stage are not in any overt sense given the blame for the poor conditions and bad relationships. **Nongogo** fails because Fugard as a white man cannot nearly imagine or re-recreate the actual life of a black prostitute. Henceforth Fugard focuses on politics and vividly represents the white minority oppressing the black majority. This theme stille draws great crowds in Europe and especially America because this is what the audiences want to see, believe in and in the case of America it

might to some extent be seen as an exorcism of their own guilt complex. In a later chapter an effort will be made to ascertain how two culturally different South African groups of students respond to Fugard at various levels.

The second problem regarded the selection of students to be used for this project. Seeing that I lecture at the Sebokeng College of Education, the students are available at all times and co-operate and are unprejudiced because of a relationship of trust that has established itself in the course of time. It would seem appropriate to have tested a peer group from a white College of Education, but various organisational problems presented themselves that were virtually impossible to overcome.

The English Department of the Potchefstroom University in the person of Professor Annette Combrink came to my rescue and proposed that I should use the second year students of the English Department, who proved keen to participate in the programme. For the concluding part of the project these students were in their third year. At first glance these groups may seem incompatible, but as the focus is not on assessing of evaluating students, but on response per se, the fact that one group attends college and the other group university, does not seem to affect the results and final outcome of the project. An effort was made to include the black students from the recently established Sebokeng Vista Campus nearby, but seeing that at that time they had only five final-year English students, the effort did not seem worth while. Thus eventually the groups were students from Potchefstroom University for CHE (Group A) and teacher trainees from Sebokeng College of Education who major in English (Group B).

The third problem had as focal point the method. It was soon evident that the method chosen would influence results and conclusions. As a focal point it would radiate in various directions, influencing the development and outcome of the research. The model of the approach of the researcher implicitly or explicitly relies on the scientific instrumentation to make sense of reality and his involvement with a specific research, e.g. aims, objective, and methodological choices. A written questionnaire could easily degenerate into a comprehension test, while the aim is not to test knowledge, but response.

The continuation of the scientific dialogue with the text would depend solely on the approach and subsequent method. The correct method is a pre-requisite for uninterrupted response and can also be defined as the researcher's frame of reference or his horizon of expectations. This refutes the naive indictive acceptance that the object of research can focus or steer the scientific process. To be more specific, the actual problems will be briefly indicated.

1. The problem of which method(s) to use to instigate response in the most subtle and least prescriptive way. This can be subdivided into three phases viz.
   (a) structured probed responses in writing using the text of **The Island;**
   (b) a verbal report from students in the form of questioning of the **Blood Knot** text;
   (c) think-alouds while actually reading from the text of **No Good Friday.**
2. Problems to identify the possible cause(s) of low response.
3. Problems regarding grading and processing the actual responses eventually completed.
4. Acquiring a model of reading for the specific text(s).
5. Which of the theories to give priority to.

There are various interrelated theories concerning reception aesthetics or reader response. Initially I was tempted to attempt to prove the one better or more applicable to this project than the next. This is not possible as each of the theories has shortcomings or weaknesses. A general theory without a corresponding specific theory which contains empirical-observational statements is empty: it is pure conjecture. Conversely, a quasi-descriptive theory without a general framework is blind, as it lacks systematic nature and a sense of direction.

From another angle one may question whether theory need to be "true". Is the

function or aim or privilege of the theoretician not in actual fact to postulate, and that of the researcher to prove or disprove when applying the theory? Therefore it is not important that a literary theory be true or significant, but rather to decide which theory to use, as being the most applicable to a certain premise. Modern literary theory has made us aware that even a spontaneous and natural approach is based on a wide range of assumptions. For most readers literary theory is something abstract and not enjoyable, and many question change and innovation.

However, for the sake of showing the complexity of the broad, encompassing term **Reception Aesthetics**, I will try to give a very brief summary of the main concerns although this cannot do justice to the actual theories.

In spite of the relatively brief formal existence of Reception Aesthetics so far, various schools or disciplines can clearly be distinguished. From the school of Konstanz we have the Germans Jauss, Iser and Ingarden, while in France Barthes makes a significant contribution which would not have been possible had it not been for the premises of Ian Mukařovský who is regarded by many as the founder of Reception Aesthetics. Unfortunately many literati are unaware that Reception Aesthetics, without understanding the philosophical background, is but an adumbration of the real thing, and therefore premises of philosophers like Brentano and Husserl have been included.

Other, not less important contributions from America include Holland and Bleich from a more psycho-analytical point of view and of course Stanley Fish from a more post-structuralist perspective.

Thus, in the course of the chapter on historical background an attempt is made to show how different reception aestheticians from Europe and America have interpreted the term Reception Aesthetics or Reader Response, and how they used their interpretation in the relevant theories they have developed around it. As introduction to these theories other existing schools such as the New Critics, Russian Formalism, early Structuralism, Marxism and Freudianism, however outwardly dissimilar in approach, are grouped together with their correspondence

disciples, because of their conception of the literary work as a container of meaning. Although there is a greater awareness in the works of Barthes, Todorov and Riffaterre of the **reader**, they still view the text as a closed, self-sufficient system. The works of a few phenomenologists are also touched on.

The following is the chapter in a nutshell:

Barthes and his notion of five voices and the changing character of literary science.

Brentano propagating the idea of intentionality, which bridges the gap between the dichotomy of mind and body. His epistemology implies an ontology.

Husserl arguing that phenomenology should presume nothing. He introduces the idea of a clean slate, through the process of reduction. The first proposition is validated by the concept of apocdicticity. He also develops the notion of the prepredicative experience. To him negations are unfulfilled expectations of the reader.

Ingarden is Husserl's pupil. He is interested in conceptual frameworks and the ontology of the reader. He coined the term **concretise**, and expands the notion of negations and **sentence correlatives.**

Iser develops this term further. He recognises the artistic pole created by the author and the aesthetic pole created by the reader. In the latter the reader's **horizon** is of importance. Iser has room for multiple experiences and interpretations. His concept of **negation** determines the value of the work. According to him negations are deliberately created by the author.

Hirsch develops the concepts of **meaning** and **significance.** The former is stable in the text, the latter not. He terms the reader the **signifier.**

Stanley Fish introduces the concepts of the **informed reader**, and **interpretive communities.**

Because of the complexity of these premises and the fact that there is much variation on the same theme in each of the discussed theories, not one single perspective can be said to predominate.

All the above premises are discussed in greater detail in the chapter dealing with theoretical background. In the chapter on **Related Reading Research** more attention is given to the American school and the related research that has been done on reading per se and various factors that can influence reading.

The most important researcher in this field seems to be Patricia Carrell who has done extensive empirical research. It is interesting that the terminology of the American school is completely different, e.g. Iser's horizon becomes Carrell's schemata, while "induced schemata" reminds one of Fish's informed reader and Cziko's top-down and bottom-up clues remind one of the wandering viewpoint of Iser.

Most of the research done involves reading per se and comprehension. Cultural differences are investigated, as well as the problem of coping with reading and comprehension when English is not the mother tongue.

Cziko investigates language competence, as related to reading strategies of top-down and bottom-up.

Hudson discusses the importance of prior knowledge as a factor in limited language proficiency.

Kintsch and Greene investigate the influence of cultural schemata when reading, and **Steffensen and Collier** when listening to stories of the same and different cultures.

Holland's assumption of the reader's individual identity is discussed, as well as Kaplan's investigation revealing the interrelationship of thought patterns and reading. He distinguishes between English (linear), Semitic (parallel), Oriental (turning), and Romance (digressional).

To conclude, the research of Hynds on interpersonal construct repertoires and impressions of literary characters is discussed. According to the findings, complex perceivers emphathize more readily, and have multiple dimensions of character.

To return to the methods used for the actual empirical testing.

1. The first method used in terms of the theoretical background just indicated, involved completing a questionnaire to establish student horizon. This introductory phase made students aware of their otherwise unspoken undefined response while reading, using **The Island.**

   The Island was chosen specifically as it seemed that the dramatist had in mind certain contentious issues like detention without trial, the inhuman pass laws, prison conditions and the inevitable issue of human rights, that would instigate student response. It was taken as a fact that all students knew where Fugard's sympathy and his intentions lie.

   The play within the play was considered as another trigger of interesting and vivid response. In a later chapter this is discussed more fully.

   As the "dialogue" on paper remained stilted although students were invited to respond freely, certain adaptations were necessary. It was postulated that the researcher had unwittingly manipulated the results through the framing of certain questions, and anticipating on behalf of the students certain negations in the text, while they might have experienced other negations, or none at all. In other words, this method was too structured, too prescriptive for a free-ranging dialogue to take place. The researcher's frame of reference or horizon of expectations was seemingly not similar to that of the respondents.

2. The second supportive strategy in the form of post-performance reading of **The Blood Knot**, was less restrictive and students could report verbally or question as they read along (and as the need may be) any lexia in the text.

The idea was to give them more scope for greater spontaneity. The reading contained within it the memory of the staged component, and addressed issues like trying for white, love across the colour line and housing conditions that seemed to invite response.*

3. The concluding phase aimed at giving the text priority. The actual reading while thinking aloud filled in the blanks that could have been created in the first two phases. The text addressed issues like education, baas-boy relationship, black against black and township life, which again would invite response on another level than in the previous text. In this last phase there was no introductory performance of the text, but the text itself, **No Good Friday**, focused prominently.

Thinking aloud differs from other forms of retrospective report because it is more spontaneous and "virgin". There are obvious limitations in using "think-alouds" as a research tool. These processes which are already automatic are not easily verbalized and can consequently not be readily studied.

In an effort to overcome this problem, students are made aware of the fact that their responses (and interpretations of truth) are relative to their historical period and cultural background and never absolute. Although critics (because of their wider horizons, the deeper knowledge of and varied terminology which they can draw from) express themselves more fluently and persuasively, it does not mean that student response is less valid simply because it is less sophisticated.

Think-aloud strategies indicate how readers conceive a task, what textual cues they react and attend to, how they make sense of what they read and what they do not understand. As thinking-aloud is a new concept which could inhibit both groups of respondents and the researcher, initial pilot studies were done to set both parties at ease. For this purpose certain passages from local newspapers were selected and students were given an opportunity to verbalize as they read. The researcher provided support in terms of encouragement. During this orientation, certain problems of the technique could be identified and phased out. Respondents were cautioned against trying to explain or analyse their thoughts. Frequently longer periods of silence were indicative of the respondent censoring or analysing

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* While research was progressing on the text of **The Blood Knot**, legislation was passed lifting marriage laws between whites an blacks. This had as result that the play became to a certain extent a period piece overnight and the major issue was no longer relevant. Yet this to my mind, was not the reason for low response level and emotional uninvolvedness.

his response. This could be eliminated by timely prompting and encouragement. I can envisage an exact assessment with the use of highly sophisticated data-processing and decoding machinery, added onto a brain scan of a reader, but that is for the future.

The main shortcoming of the think-alouds as a strategy for testing is that there is no common criterion, and therefore direct comparisons are precluded. But apart from this objection, I hope it is clear why I eventually relied more on the more open-ended communicative approach of testing than on the controlled structured responses. It should be emphasised that communicative competence per se is not tested. What is to be tested is not prespecified, because if the instructional emphasis is different for different groups, any test that is used to compare the groups is bound to favour one group more than the other. Furthermore, instruction in any direction could result in acculturation, or the bringing of the student into the interpretive radius of the researcher. My preoccupation is with the mental processes per se of the respondent by examining the context of the situation in which texts take on meaning.

Preconceived questions focusing on negation according to the point of view of the researcher may inhibit critical thinking or any other response. By chunking or modularising instructional objectives into discrete units and subunits, the whole complex phenomenon of response is converted into a kind of reductionism in which the sum of the parts does not equal the whole.

As often happens with research, factors which have not been taken into consideration in the hypothesis emerge, and have an important influence on the development and outcome of the research. An influence which was not reckoned with initially, is inhibitedness, which has a direct bearing on response, although it may be argued that this relates more fully to the field of psychology.

A very basic test, revealing a degree of inhibitedness, was done on all students. This consists basically of a set of undefined or mathematical shapes which invite further development by means of adding on to shapes by drawing. Depending on how many alternatives or variations a student can complete in a limited time,

a student shows himself as more or less inhibited. The ability to draw well is of no significance as the whole idea is not to make a finished artistic drawing, but rather to project an idea. This will depend on how well a student can project subjective background onto incomplete shapes, to give them new meaning. This same phenomenon takes place, or should take place during reading and response when the text invites the giving of meaning to vacuums.

To be more specific, if any respondent is, for example, shown a circle on paper and asked to draw as many objects he can see, or that he knows of, which are either round or form part of a structure which is round he should have no problem to produce drawings from as big and remote as the sun, to as small and attainable as the head of a pin. Yet most respondents were at a loss when confronted with the shapes indicated. This is discussed later in a separate chapter.

The assessment process itself created a further problem. One aspect must be kept in mind: the validity of any empirical conclusion can never be absolute, as complete observation is impossible. In this sense it is obvious that the transmission from premise to conclusion, in other words the inference, implies more than observation. The conclusion points to more information than is present in the premise. It could be postulated that the productivity of the empirical conclusion depends on its heuristic potential and that is again relative to the degree in which the empirical conclusion is formulated. On the converse, the more differentiatedly the empirical conclusion is formulated, the more misleading it can be.

Assessing dictates a focus on lower order skills, since measuring critical thinking skills or response or creativity is more difficult and less amenable to quantification. Skills and discrete facts are easy to give out in controlled doses. It is certainly easier to estimate whether a student has acquired a skill or prescribed facts than it is to check whether he is responding to an idea. Critics and statisticians are inclined to value "hard" objective, empirical data more highly than spontaneous student responses. The slogan seems to be the harder the better, or as Aoki says (in **The Tesol Quarterly**, p.42): "The harder they are the better. Data ... are seen

as brute facts which are considered objective, carrying the dignity of value-free neutrality, reducing out ... contamination by the subjectivity of the knower". Decisions about the acceptibility of student responses in tests can be arbitrary. The very nature of response is creative and unpredictable.

The conclusion is derived from the premise and as such the conclusion is an explication of the premise; implicitly or explicitly the conclusion is already present in the premise. In this lies the difference between theoretical and empirical research. Theoretical assumptions are closed because their practical applicability is specified, whereas the empirical conclusion remains open-ended - it does not prescribe, it remains receptive.

In the concluding chapter premises of certain reception aestheticians are called on to verify or disprove certain phenomena occurring during response, e.g. Fish's idea of the informed reader, Hirsch's concept of predication and Iser's notion of negations as a factor to assess good literature.

The responses of the separate groups are compared. The importance of creating an awareness of response at various levels of a student's school career is discussed. All institutions are addressed to be open for the inevitable change so that educators as well as students will benefit and be free from constricting prescriptions and instructions.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF READER RESPONSE

Until fairly recently formal literary criticism bypassed the actual "experience" of reading and concentrated almost exclusively on the elucidation of the text as artefact. In traditional biographical and historical criticism the equation of interpretation and explanation was based on a reverence for content and/or an exaggerated emphasis on the cultural, ideological, psychological and historical context. This attitude persists, albeit in modified form, in two of the most seminal critical methods in the twentieth century viz. Marxism and Freudianism. Both regard criticism as the occasion for observation of latent contents, whether of an individual or socio-political kind which can be extracted from the surface of the text (thus often transformed into pretext). The situation is apparently inverted in Russian Formalism, New Criticism and early Structuralism. Here the critic is a scientific investigator who must isolate the formal or structural components of the text and thereby explain its inner organization. New Criticism was initially a reaction against historicism. The New Critics emerged during the evolution of the age of criticism between the thirties and sixties and dominated literary criticism for three decades.

One of the anomalies of the New Criticism is that it was at once social in its outlook yet exclusive in its attitude. Reading of literature was to be undertaken on the basis of a "refined analytical capability".

No matter how outwardly dissimilar these approaches may be, they all agree in their conception of the literary work as a container, a repository of meaning, or a model of structures which the reader cannot experience directly, but must decode. Reading as experience is thus obliterated. Traditional approaches concentrate on what precedes the reader's actual contact with the text. More recent approaches such as Formalism and especially New Criticism avoid the issue altogether by an overt suspicion of any attempt to involve the individual reader.

Although the New Critics made a significant contribution to especially critical practice, there were certain weaknesses. It is evident that Wimsatt and Beardsley fail to see that if reading is an activity in which the complete human being participates, what the work **is** and what the work **does** cannot be separated. Emphasis on the experience of reading will not necessarily end in impressionism if what one regards as response is not the projection of the individual's psychology onto the text but the development of a dynamic interaction with the text that goes beyond the attempt to understand or explicate it intellectually. The reader becomes a collaborator in the production of meaning.

Structuralism has attempted to integrate the response of the reader as a whole human being into the process of producing meaning. Structuralist man takes the real, decomposes it then recomposes it. For Roland Barthes, reading is essentially a conceptual scientific operation in which the scientist's distance between the text to be dissected and the critic must be maintained at all times. The goal of the inquiry is to reconstruct the text in such a way that its functions become clear. Something new occurs which is nothing less than the generally intelligible:

> the simulacrum is intellect added to object, and this addition has as anthropological value, in that it is man himself, his history, his situation, his freedom and the very resistance which nature offers to his mind (Barthes, 1975:150).

Barthes must be credited for his humanistic concerns but this theory does not advance beyond the reader-critic's activity as one of intellectual deciphering and manipulation. Man is the centre of the universe, as the articulation of homologies points out, but it seems that he holds that position only because of his mind. No matter how often they use the word **reader**, structuralists from Barthes and Todorov to Riffatere view the text as a closed self-sufficient system. In his later works Barthes moves away from his original idea to affirm that there is no totality in the text and to value what is disunified and asystematic. This is actually criticism of his own work, and by now Barthes is no longer purely structuralist.

This just goes to prove that literary science is not a fixed, unchanging or

unchangeable entity. Barthes calls the human sciences **unforseeing** sciences. It is clear that the theory postulated by Barthes in **S/Z** relies heavily on Mukařoský's idea of the relationship between artefact and aesthetic object. This implies a relativity of meaning. Whereas the New Critics propagate that the text has only one correct meaning, the post-Structuralists, Deconstructivists and Reception Aesthetics reject this point of view.

The influence of Mukařovský is visible in the works of Barthes. According to Mukařovský art is a semiological fact that can only be fully grasped if it is taken into consideration that it has a sign, structure and value. They cannot be separated and exist only in unity. He considers the text as an artefact, that acquires a right of existence when the reader by the act of reading changes it to an aesthetic object. In much the same way : Mukařovský distinguishes between signifiant (external symbol) and signifié (proposed meaning). Taking Mukařovský a step further, Barthes uses the terms readerly and writerly, or lisible and scriptible to indicate the functions of the reader and the writer.

Barthes uses the concepts of readerly (lisible)and writerly (scriptible) not only in one, but various ways and they are adjusted in consecutive studies. A **readerly** text implies a text that is open to the reader to decode as the author has intended. This is the more conventional approach and the reader simply follows the route as indicated on the literary "map". The **writerly** text demands a co-writer and involvement with the text. For the sake of better understanding of the **S/Z** text, as a summary cannot do justice, five codes or voices in the text can be identified as significant, viz. the voices of Truths, Person, Symbol, Science and Empirics. To conclude: relativity or a relative approach is not the issue, but rather a relational approach; in other words the text is being produced in a certain time slot with certain codes which can be studied or interpreted by the reader according to various models which have been designed.

On these grounds Fish, and other post-Structuralists, attack phenomenology, pointing out that results of all literary methods are determined by their models. Thus Iser's conclusions are determined by his model, as the literary work is being read in a preconceived way.

These theories forsake the idea of the temporality of the reading experience and move towards the spatialization of the work. This is due to their excessive preoccupation with understanding. This attitude is characteristic of the New Critics with the emphasis on the ontology of the text, and also of classic structuralism with its trading of patterns and diagrams, but it is so pervading that it can also be detected in the work of Northrop Frye. He acknowledges the importance of temporality in the direct experience of literature but his goal of systematizing the "total body of verbal creation" leads him away from the temporal power of the text and ultimately towards spatialization.

Another critic who is concerned with the spatialization of reading is Joseph Frank. He is strongly influenced by Cubism and tries to show that modern literature is superior because it has achieved a victory against time through the creation of spatial form. The reader apprehends the work spatially in a moment of time rather than as a sequence. Compare this idea to Frye who asserts that in most works of fiction we are at once aware that the sequence of events which holds our attentions "is being shaped in a unity. We are continually, if often unconsciously, attempting to construct a larger pattern of simultaneous significance out of what we have so far read or seen. We feel confident that the beginning implies an end ... we expect a certain point near the end at which the linear suspense is resolved and the unifying shape of the whole design becomes conceptually visible" (Frye, 1963:25).

Frank is the proponent of the thesis that the reader of most modern works must suspend temporality until a spatial pattern of the work is apprehended as a unity. To most critics however, Frank's theory remains unsatisfactory even after an effort, twenty years after his publication, to explain that he has been misunderstood. Perhaps part of the problem originates from the deficiencies in the critical vocabulary used, and that which is being developed.

Let us consider at this stage some of the major German phenomenological approaches to literary response. The basic contention of Phenomenology is that it is primarily a method for doing philosophy, and not a philosophical system,

therefore it is applicable to diverse disciplines, not the least among them pedagogy and literary criticism. The word "Phenomenology" is a combination of two Greek words: **phainomenon** and **logos** meaning appearance and reason respectively. Thus broadly speaking, phenomenology is a reasoned attempt at finding truth behind appearance.

In the realm of phenomenology, the influence of Brentano on Husserl is considerable. The concepts of intentionality and experience, both which apply to pedagogy, come directly from Brentano. He discussed these concepts in **Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint (1874).** Brentano in turn borrowed the term "intentionality" from medieval scholasticism. For him it was synonymous with all mental or non-existent objects as opposed to all physical or existent objects. Philosophically the concept of intentionality serves the function of bridging the gap between the dichotomy of mind and body. But since all consciousness is consciousness **of**, mind and body need not be regarded as independent entities. Pedagogically the concept of intentionality serves the purpose of shifting the focus from the book to the reader. Since neither can be looked upon without the other ultimately, the process of the interaction becomes pre-eminent.

As already mentioned, Husserl assumed that phenomenology should presume nothing and start with a clean slate. This method rested on the presumption that there will be no presumptions. How could this be established? According to Husserl the solution is to be found in "phenomenological reduction".

This is a process by which a philosopher achieves a clean slate. In its simplest sense phenomenological reduction means bracketing, as in Algebra, where a part of an equation can be bracketed independently. But it can also mean suspending. Every thought can be suspended until it has reached the stage where nothing can be put away. In **The Ideas** Husserl defines the concept as follows:

> ... phenomenological reduction ... against the natural theoretical standpoint, whose correlative is the world, a new standpoint must be available which leaves something over - the whole field of absolute consciousness. Thus instead of living naively in experience (Erfahrung) and subjecting what we experience, transcendent nature, to theoretical inquiries, we perform the "phenomenological reduction". In other words, instead of naively carrying out the acts proper to the nature-constituting consciousness with its transcendent theses of allowing

> ourselves to be led by motions that operate therein to still other transcendent theses, and so forth - we set all these theses "out of action", we take no part in them; we direct the glance of apprehension and theoretical inquiry to pure consciousness in its own absolute Being" (1931:154-155).

The starting point is the stage where one can posit oneself as the first proposition - I am. This first proposition is proved by apodicticity, a term which recurs frequently in Husserl's work. It helps to illustrate phenomenological reduction and also helps to validate without tautology the two subjective entities "of consciousness" and "experience" which had borrowed from Brentano.

The first proposition which is inherently reflexive is validated by the concept of apodicticity. In other words, within the framework of each proposition, every doubt must be accounted for, all evidence to the contrary examined and every differing position must be debated before any proposition can legitimally attain the stature of the first proposition. Thus, as a phenomenologist is getting ready to philosophize, he must suspend all his beliefs and convictions, within the range of his experience. This idea can be applied to the process of reading a piece of literature. Both Eliot and Mathew Arnold have suggested the same method, therefore it is not novel either to criticism or pedagogy. But Husserl goes further to suggest that even the established testable verities, not of the humanities but of the scientific world, should be suspended.

The model of response to a piece of literature was, however, developed by Ingarden and Iser. In 1874 Brentano published the first book to outline the basic principles of intentionality and called it **Psychology from an Empirical Point of View.** According to Brentano, consciousness is always "consciousness of". It is an activity between the subject and the object. Thus in the act of loving there is something loved, in the act of believing there is something to be believed. This sounds trivial but Iser later added that in the act of reading there is something read. Naturally, Brentano's epistemology implies an ontology - if there is a knower, there has to be a known and vice versa. Brentano, however, does not give priority to either the knower or the known. What he does is to extend the argument that all consciousness is a consciousness of, by suggesting that in his epistemology the

interaction of the subject with the object i.e. the experience itself is the most important entity. This focus on experience is later used by Iser to avoid the extremes of both subjectivity and objectivity.

Husserl, a pupil of Brentano, developed the concepts of consciousness and experience further and in a less well-known publication, **Experience and Judgement**, presented the concept of prepredication. He traces the roots of this concept right back to Aristotle. Husserl develops the idea of prepredication into what he calls the prepredicative experience.

Without becoming too involved with Husserl, it is yet necessary to assert that the prepredicative experience is the sum total of all the pre-intentions and pre-suppositions in the reader's mind at the time of his response to a work of art. The totality of the prepredication will determine the mode of the reader's access to a book, the way his expectations are built or fulfilled or thwarted; the amount of material he rejects or assimilates, and eventually of course, the overall experience of his reading itself.

Husserl's contentions are important for two reasons, viz. because they help in understanding the wider application of phenomenology, and also because they help in understanding the deeper philosophical roots of the reading process. As Husserl was a philosopher the broader areas of human experiences were his primary concerns. To his pupil Roman Ingarden, an aesthetician, phenomenologic aesthetics was a major issue, and he did pioneer work in this field. For Ingarden a work of literary art is not pieces of paper bound together in the shape of something called a book. A work of art is formed when these pieces of paper unfold themselves **gradually** in the mind of the reader. Ingarden uses the term "concretized"for this process. The ontology of the reader, the conceptual and methodological frameworks that the reader uses to have access to pieces of paper and the experience he thereby attains, are all important factors for Ingarden. Thus Ingarden is interested in the process of internalization that readers use to experience a work of art. The danger lies therein that one might easily confuse Ingarden's interest either with cognitive psychology or with subjectivism. Ingarden works with conceptual frameworks and is not really interested in the deeper structures of human cognition.

Similarly, although he recognises the polarities of the reader and the book, he is primarily interested in the mode of access of a reader. The work of art lies between, and has its own ontology. This latter aspect was later developed further by Iser. In other words, cognitive psychology deals with deep structures of meaning or categories and their relationships, while stylistics and objective literary and objective literary and art criticism deal with the surface of a work of art. Phenomenological studies try to explain the perceptual-interpretive transaction that goes on as a work is read or perceived. Ingarden's theory could become a dissertation in itself, yet I have to conclude by pointing to the importance of two publications viz. **The Literary Work of Art** and its sequel **The Cognition of a Literary Work of Art** which contain the foundations for Iser's model.

Wolfgang Iser's primary interest is the participation of the reader. In his publication **The Implied Reader** (Der Implicite Leser) he argues that the reader responding to the text is as important as the text itself. He agrees with Ingarden that the text unfolds itself in the reader by a process called concretization. The text is not merely a group of sentences and the reader does not simply read one mechanical string of words after another. Instead, one sentence interacts with the other and makes what Ingarden calls "intentional sentence correlatives". According to Iser correlatives are formed when one sentence interacts with the other. These correlatives interact with each other, forming a world in the reader's mind. This world is always in the process of being built, each component part interacting with the other in a dynamic sequence until a totality has been achieved. This totality in the reader's mind is the world as seen by the reader in a work of art. So what Husserl posits about the work in general is reframed and focused on the level of the sentence in Iser's work. Sentences, by the way, are not copies of reality. They create their own reality, when the correlatives that the sentences have created interact to form a world in the reader's mind. The discrepancy in Iser is one of the problems of modern theory of literature. How can the literary text be described as scientific object when all models are determined subjectively, thus necessarily reducing the text? It is not difficult to deconstruct Iser on these terms.

Iser recognises two poles in a literary work, viz. the artistic and the aesthetic. The artistic pole represents that which has been created by the author, and the aesthetic that which has been realized by the reader. A work of art is neither identical to the pages nor with the reader's mind, but lies halfway in between. Thus he distinguishes between the text and the work, in that the text is the book itself, the paper and print, the work is what has been realized in the reader's mind. This realisation is of course subject to many internal and external factors working on the reader. The reader's experience, both artistic and aesthetic, those that occur while his world is being formed and those that result after his world has been formed, are not only different but also new. These experiences give the reader a new meaning, perhaps a new perspective or a new paradigm of reality. It is a reality that this particular reader would not have experienced in any other way, and it cannot be duplicated. The same reader can also experience a variation of the same reality when rereading the same work. Needless to say, when different readers read the same work their experiences would obviously differ from each other. Thus Iser has room for both multiple experiences and multiple interpretations. The latter are not subjectively but objectively verifiable. In fact their value can be determined, e.g.:

1. If the experience itself has generated a stock response, if the experience is banal, trite or trivial; or if the experience is simply duplicable, then the artefact has no literary value. If, however, the experience has not generated stock responses, if in the totality of the reader's accomplishment a new meaning has been formed, then the work has literary value.

2. Iser's concept of negation also determines the value of a work. In **The Act of Reading** Iser argues extensively that great pieces of literature do not try to tell everything. In fact there are wide gaps or blanks in seemingly successive thoughts and ideas. These blanks are intentionally placed by the author. In the process of reading the reader fills these blanks some of them will meet with his expectations and fall into a pattern, others not. The ones that do not fall into any pattern or meet the reader's expectations tend to disorientate him. The dynamism of the reading process compels the reader to move backward and forward, constantly establishing connections

and making predictions. Iser calls this activity the wandering viewpoint, and shows that it has to do with the special relationship between the reader and the text.

The information that the reader brings to the text helps him to decipher the meaning. A fluent reader assumes a whole meaning before he knows what it is and predicts what is to come. His response to each sentence correlative is conditioned by the overall response to the entire text.

To apply this to Fugard - a reader walks to the library and takes out a book by Fugard rather than one by Pieter-Dirk Uys. His choice of the former over the latter has already partially determined his response. He is not looking for satire or frivolity but rather for serious politics and the inevitable bearing on human relationships. His choice shows something of his predilection for human rights. The reader may have read about Fugard or more specifically plays like **Sizwe Banzi** or **The Island.** But now he is confronted with **People are Living There.** Although the reader's predilections and beliefs could help him to shape his holistic response to this particular book, today there are certain surprises. In this book Fugard depicts the low class, deprived poor white and not the black man. Here are thresholds that the reader might not have expected. Fugard is unexpectedly admitting that the pitiable condition of most blacks extends into certain areas of the white community with no remedy in sight. So this book might not produce the same sense of anger or sympathy that Fugard's works usually evoke. The world created in the reader's mind is new and different and not duplicable. It is new not because it is a new interpretation of an existing one, but because it is the only experience of its kind that this particular reader has had with this particular text. His interpretation is important because by itself it is a product of a new phenomenological experience.

The quality of the interpretation, however, is a different matter. For Wolfgang Iser both the reader and the text matter in determining the high or the low quality of the particular interpretation. If the reader does not have the tools to fill in the gaps, the blanks - the negations of Husserl and Ingarden - then the text, even

if it is of high quality, would not be able to generate a fulfilling response, or perhaps, any response at all. Think what would happen if first year students were to be given **The Waste Land** to read. Most students will not have the tools to fill in the gaps.

On the other hand, if the text is of low quality, it will only generate a trivial stock response, if any at all, which though in itself may be new for the reader, would be duplicable in the sense that the reader can have the same response from other sources, none of them being any better. Such works are obviously of no great literary value and the experience they generate may be phenomenological because there is room for some reader-text-interaction - but it is certainly not literary.

Iser argues that reading is made a fruitful and fulfilling experience in that the author intentionally leaves strategic gaps in the work for the reader to fill in. Thus the reader, by participating in the intertextual construction of meaning, attains a viable literary experience. This process is transactional and continuous. The reader does not always meet every expectation. He can be disappointed, satisfied, thwarted or carried away but, most importantly, he will be challenged by the text.

This approach to literature indicates a need for a certain kind of fiction i.e. a need for a text as a way to reflect on ways of experience, as a means to confront and discover the self.

In **Endgame** the subconscious and symbolical planes are intertwined. The characters live without past against the thread of symbolic order while the subconscious wish for the self is realised in play. The reader (theatregoer) sees that the characters are playing out their own projection. Concepts like time are negated. **Endgame** serves as a paradigm to describe literary texts as structures of revelation in terms of the response of the reader. The function of this type of fiction is to make the reader experience his own decentralisation in terms of his own response. This is a typical writerly text.

Iser uses Beckett and Joyce to demonstrate his theory. The characters in **Endgame** have lost their past, they exist outside time. The reader (or theatregoer) applies his own concepts of time and notices that the characters have a peaceful, natural timeless existence; they live in their historicity. To be able to understand oneself, there is a need for historicity. Hamm tells a fictive story that provides him with a past and continues to link it up with his own reality.

Thus he decodes normal concepts of time as fictions, as creations of the subconscious, as symbolic. He demonstrates the fictional character of the symbolic order in which man lives and thinks. The reader can only understand this if he realises his own needs. The text evokes the subconscious need in the reader for a system of time, and reveals it to him: his interpretations are projections.

The characters also play an endgame, which evokes in the reader the subconscious wish to be able to manipulate the end. This might be situated in the realisation that the end cannot be controlled and death is imminent. When the reader identifies with control, the text confronts him, and reveals his interpretation and identification as projection. If the projection is revealed as projection, fear of the uncontrollable end is experienced.

Iser's preoccupation with negations is attested by the fact that he seems to prefer Beckett and Joyce over other authors. They rate highly on his scale, whereas popular literature can never achieve high status because on the whole negations are a minimum in this genre. From this we should not deduce that Iser uses negation as the sole yardstick to measure the quality of a work, although he might consider it as the most important. To illustrate this argument an extreme case can be imagined, where there is no play and in which case the audience would have witnessed an ideal play as theoretically the audience will have to provide all the information. But neither Ingarden nor Iser argues for such an extreme. They are primarily interested in reader participation, and realise the importance of reader-orientated criticism for pedadogy. However, active reader participation cannot take place in the case of literature until the reader has the fund of prepredicative experience to fill in the negations.

Phenomenological criticism is more recent than reader-orientated criticism in the English speaking world and has not made any direct contribution to the interpretive realm of criticism. But phenomenology helps in the understanding of what exists rather than in creating new understandings. In other words, phenomenological criticism does not add to interpretations. It is rather an explanation of how one comes to know literature and of what goes into an interpretation. One would not phenomenologically criticise **The Island.** Phenomenology is primarily a method for doing philosophy and not a philosophical system, but it is applicable to diverse disciplines, not the least among them pedagogy and literary criticism. Phenomenology should presume nothing, it should start with a clean slate.

The phenomenon of multiple interpretations is dealt with by E.D. Hirsch in a slightly different way. His basic premises are not inconsistent with the approach of Ingarden and Iser. Like these two phenomenologists Hirsch also acknowledges his debt to Husserl. Focusing on the idea of inner and outer horizons in the act of knowing, that Husserl discusses in **Experience and Judgement,** Hirsch develops the concepts of meaning and of significance. The former, according to Hirsch, is stable in the text, while the latter is not. The "meaning" is the stable, relatively unchangeable semantic entity generated by a particular linguistic or syntactical structure of a text. It is textual and always limited to the author's intention.

Significance, on the other hand, refers to a wider area and to a wider horizon. It goes beyond the text and it is unlimited. According to the reader whom he calls the signifier, or according to the context, the significance can change radically. In other words, different contexts, different paradigms and/or different signifiers can yield different significance without altering the meaning.

This concept of Hirsch does not imply that he is capitulating to subjectivism. He is merely positing a theory according to which multiple interpretations are possible without jeopardising the basic meaning of the text. He repeatedly points out that this distinction between meaning and significance is both crucial and fundamental to his view.

If reading is understood as the interaction between the text and a reader whose posture is not that of a detached scientist, but of an involved human being, the process dynamizes both reader and text. Thus the apprehension of the work at the end of the reading process should not be considered as an absolute limit but must on the contrary be acknowledged as provisional.

Whatever reconstruction has taken place has been predictated on the dialogue between a changing reader and an inexhaustible text. Rather than exhausting the text, reading uncovers its potentialities. The work remains inexorably open.

At this stage I would like to elaborate slightly on the theories of Hirsch. My contention is that Prepredication, experience and negation as propagated by Hirsch are three suggestive concepts for applying phenomenological theory. Before using the term prepredication, there is some discussion and elaboration that need to be done.

The history of predication is the history of formal logic. Again one can go right back to Aristotle to find the origin of predication, but I will try to put it forward as simplistically as possible. For every categorical proposition there has to be a subject S, a predicate P and a form of the verb "to be". According to Husserl such a concept of the predicative judgement stands at the centre of formal logic. Apophasis is used synonymously with predicative judgement. One weakness of this theory of predication is the problem of evidence. The apophatic judgement cannot be substantiated, proved or verified. Husserl distinguishes between two domains viz. the objective or linguistic and the subjective or inner world of the writer, or the cognition. The former supplies objective self-evidence, the latter (the cognition) gives subjective self-evidence. It is from the latter that prepredication comes, that is, the sum total of all subjective experience. It also determines the existence of the objective realm. It seems then that prepredicative experience is the core that forms the basic substrata for all objective statements.

Prepredicative consciousness is the sum total of all presuppositions, pre-intentions, beliefs and convictions of the individual. It is a determining factor for his reactions because it is his basic core personality. It is also the basic, pre-given faculty which

determines the kind of response an individual might have once a stimulus has been applied to him. Unlike the behaviouristic stimulus, this response cannot be determined and calculated. Again the question of the testability of literary theory comes to mind. According to Husserl prepredication is easier to study if approached from an angle of external perceptions, and thus what can be recognized externally will be discussed initially.

At this stage I deem it necessary to turn to Stanley Fish. His original affective stylistics influenced much of my thinking but it seems that while trying to explain the mechanics of reading as experience, Fish fails to account for the inevitable changes in the reader and remains very close to the structuralists, whom he vows to correct. His concept of **the informed reader**, while an extremely useful critical tool, is limiting in so far that it abstracts reading into a univocal and unchanging process. Fish has recently repudiated his original methodology. He now denies that reading in the traditional sense exists at all, since formal features are inseparable from the reader's experience of them (Iser, 1978:50-156).

From this point of view it is the reader who writes the text. When he attacks the independence of textual meaning through his idea of interpretative communities, he also becomes a kind of negative hermeneutic. Although I have found his affective stylistics much more useful thus far than his recent polemics, the exclusive moment-by-moment emphasis on sequential response to the language of the text, seems too restricting. I feel more comfortable with Iser and other phenomenologists who articulate some of the concerns mentioned. He stresses that no two readings of the same work can be identical because the reader will be entering the text in a changed way.

One of Fish's most influential essays, written in 1970, launched a frontal attack on prevailing orthodoxies. In this 1970 essay he claimed that "the objective of a text is an illusion" (p.140). A year later he wrote in the preface of **Surprised by Sin : The Reader in Paradise Lost** (1971)"making the work disappear into the reader's experience of it is precisely what should happen in our criticism, because it is what happens when we read." It is quite clear that Fish and the New Critics

do exactly the opposite regarding the relationship between text and reader. To the New Critics the text focuses prominently as the centre of all meaning, while they condemn the reader's response as fallacy. Fish goes further in asserting that the determination of meaning is not a consequence of the act of reading but a concomitant: "Meaning is not the property of a timeless formalism but something acquired in the context of an activity" (1971:89).

To him the reading experience is a temporal flow. He defines reading as "an analysis of the developing responses of the reader in relation to the work as they succeed one another in time" (1879:126-127). It is during the development of these responses and not in some holistic reflective interpretation **after** reading has ended, that meaning is conceived.

The question that inevitably has to be asked is "when does meaning eventually become clear?". To this Fish replies that it never does, since to conceive meaning in this way is to acknowledge that there is some final and essentially text-bound meaning to be taken from a literary work. Therefore Fish's critical method has no end while the reader is still reading. It "has no point of termination; it is a process; it talks about experience and is an experience; its focus is effects and its result is an effect"(1970:161). It seems that it is a process and not a product.

It is clear that Fish's doctrine permits a charge of radical relativism. As pointed out earlier, in my discussing Barthes, relativism is not in accordance with Reception Aesthetic theory. All readings are valid since the interpretations they make are specific to the individual and can therefore never be challenged. To counter this, Fish formulates his notion of interpretive communities based on some of his earlier formulations, especially **Interpreting the Variorum (1976).** His idea of an interpretive community is basically that of a group of readers who share a set of preconceptions about literature which permits only certain readings. This must not be confused with the restrictive prescriptions of the New Criticism, but rather seen as the result of a community's internalization of certain assumptions about literature which predispose its members to bring similar interpretive strategies to bear on the text. This theory can also be applied to people with different cultural backgrounds. They have much the same conceptual framework about the nature

of literature which has not been prescribed in some overt rule book, but which is internalized and remains private.

Fish explains the workings of interpretive communities in **Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift** (1983). He explores the use of irony and argues that irony, like any formal feature of literature, is not a matter of objective fact to be mined from the text, but rather a function of the assumptions of the interpretive community which reads the text. From this point of view irony "is neither the property of works nor the creation of an unfettered imagination, but a way of reading, an interpretive strategy that produces the object of its attention, an object that will be perspicuous to those who share or have been persuaded to share the same strategy" (p.189). It seems that members of an interpretive community tacitly agree to look for certain literary facts which are then used as evidence to support the given interpretation.

Fish puts it like this in his essay **How to Recognise a Poem When You see One** (1980): "It is not that the presence of poetic qualities compels a certain kind of attention but that the paying of a certain kind of attention results in the emergence of poetic qualities" (p.326).

If I understand this doctrine of Fish correctly it seems that he hints at the disappearance of the literary critic, and criticism as a formal enterprise. Yet he advocates the function of the critic as that of making public the private experience of the reader. By doing so the critic "brings texts into being and makes them available for analysis and appreciation"(1980:368). But there is more to it than meets the eye, because Fish also introduces the role of the critic as propogandist of a particular type i.e. "to alter the conditions of seeing" (1983).

At this stage I doubt if I can present original philosophical or rhetorical theory, but I shall try to apply seminal philosophical insights drawn from aesthetic and phenomenological theory to the process of reading.

Husserl asserts that acts of perception usually work according to the expectations of an individual. These expectations, rooted in the prepredicative realm, are usually fulfilled so the acts of perception go on smoothly. If expectations are not fulfilled, but thwarted, unexpected blanks or gaps come in between, events take a wrong turn or simply become inexplicable and thus the whole system of external perceptions is either broken down or destroyed. These unfulfilled expectations have been labelled as negations by Husserl and it is evident that they do not conform to the ideas that Iser and Jauss have on the same subject.

Unfulfilled expectations do not destroy the continuity of the total activity. The reader can still have a single unified experience by putting together all the blanks which will form a common thread. Although the **erlebnis** can be unified, the chain of events that has generated such an experience does not have every link following the preceding one logically and smoothly. Negations are inevitably part of the process. Although a negation is discernible only in acts of external perception or the realm of predication, Husserl asserts that the roots of a negation are deep down in the prepredicative sphere.

Ingarden complements Husserl's point of view in **The Literary Work of Art** (1973:163-165) in which he presents his theories of aesthetics. Most of his theories are beyond the scope of this paper, but the following two points have significance. Ingarden points to the intentionality of the reading process not only considering what Brentano and Husserl had said earlier on the subject, but elaborating further on the actual process involving a reader's mode of access to the written word as his comprehension of it.

Secondly Ingarden presents his idea of indeterminacy which has its roots in Husserl's theory of negation and which would be used later by phenomenologists like Iser to build their models of the reading process.

In the following chapters I will try to point out the importance of the prepredication experience and negation in response, using as models three plays by Athol Fugard viz. **The Blood Knot, The Island** and **No Good Friday.**

I will try to avoid quoting previously established interpretations of the works, although I may acknowledge some major critical responses which are relevant. These specific plays have been chosen as they focus on important cross-cultural and political issues, typical of the twentieth century South African scene. The themes require intervention strategies to help the students read as informed readers so that their responses can be meaningful and uninhibited.

If this analysis seems repetitive or lengthy it is because of my contention that literary theory should be ingested before research can be attempted and used for reification so that it does not become a mere application of certain terms and concepts but the actual functional use of the theories.

The common basis of contemporary literary theory ranging from the initial reception aesthetics, including Geneva criticism and neo-Freudian psychoanalytic criticism, is the central importance of the reader's response in the process of comprehending literature, but theory begins to matter only when it determines practice.

In retrospect the key concepts of the various theories could be summarized as follows. Husserl propounds the ideas of the reader being a clean slate and uses the term negation to identify the unfulfilled expectations of the **reader.** His interpretation of negation influenced Ingarden's concept of indeterminacy. Other key concepts are phenomenological reduction, apodicticity, experience and prepredication. Iser uses the term negation in a different sense. He is convinced that a **good writer** deliberately creates blanks and he uses negations as one of a few measures to estimate the artistic value of any work of art. His multiple interpretations and Hirsch's significance and the reader as signifier have much in common.

Husserl's prepredication and experience, Iser's horizons and Fish's informed reader also show certain similarities. The following table is an effort to put the relevant theories into context:

Philosopher Husserl	Brentano	Aesthetic Ingarden	Iser	Hirsch	Fish
clean slate no presumptions phenomenological reductions and bracketing apodicticity experience N.B. prepredication unfulfilled expectations = negations negation indeterminacy	intentionality (from medieval scholasticism) bridge gap between mind and body	concretization internalization conceptual frame= work not deeper structures intentional sentences correlatives	sentence correlatives concretization artistic-aesthetic multiple inter= pretations (a) stock response no literary value (b) negations - determine value wandering viewpoint predictions	meaning/significance stable in the text beyond text unlimited reader = signifier significance changes without ch. meaning prepredication apophatic judgement not to be proved	affective stylistics informed reader reader writes text objective of text = illusion meaning during response process focus is effect interpreting commu= nities and irony

3.1 APPLYING THE MODEL ACCORDING TO ISER

The application of response theory that follows is not derived from an automatic spontaneous response, but it is a preconceived or pre-programmed theoretical response according to the model prescribed by Iser. What has become evident is that the theoretical response implies an informed reader.

The reaction of the reader, i.e. emotional meaning-giving, identifying, and integrating, becomes an experience. Because the text is recreated in the mind of the reader, the reading experience is necessarily subjective and not subjectivistic.

Iser points to certain problems, e.g. the subjectivity of the text that is presupposed in the form of the reader, the frustration of meaning-giving and the undermining of systems, especially meaning systems.

In **The Blood Knot** the reader/audience is emotionally affected before he is allowed to acquire an intellectual understanding of the material he is confronted with. He must immediately work at making sense, before he is able to situate himself spatially or temporally. The horizon of the audience/reader is already directed by the title of the play, viz. **The Blood Knot**, as well as by the visual décor (givens) on stage. Conventional expectations are alerted by the stage and the theatre, providing the onlooker has had previous experience of drama. (For 8% of the group of black students this performance was the first experience of watching professional live theatre.)

The title and its interpretation, according to Iser, demonstrate the working and creation of irony in the reader/observer. There is a dichotomy in the lexical semantical given "knot" and the communicated aurol "not"(not) which implies negation. **The Blood Knot** is not a frequented term in normal communicative situations. Thus to interpret the title the reader/audience becomes unwittingly aware of the paradigm "knot" and "not". The process is separate yet simultaneous. A whole stream of associations is released, e.g. blood as a life-giving substance

along with all its qualities: e.g. congealed blood, clot as opposed to knot, all the idioms and proverbs associated with blood, like "it runs in the blood", "bad blood", "blood is thicker than water". A second stream of associations round "not" can be established. This accommodates the combining activity of passive synthesis in the reader. The reader is confronted with vacuums or a vacuum, an interpretation space where normal referential language is used as a mask for the actual meaning. It is the thread of the known that implies the reader in the text or vice versa, the text in the reader. Thus the title becomes a perspective, a focal point in the reader that makes it possible to assimilate the external text. In terms of this initial perspective the reader/audience now continues to read/observe.

Language usage should concretize the situation as presented on stage but the converse happens. The implications of the given situation are negated with the entrance of Morris. The reader starts asking questions about what is not directly stated or verbalized in the text. That which is negated by the text e.g. sympathy, disgust or perhaps even anger, is being read into the text by the reader.

A certain tension is created between the text and the reader's horizon. It is as if the text is continuously casting the reader back onto his own horizon, involving him as a person. Thus the opening scene could be interpreted and accepted as a typical interior of our South African deprived, underpaid blacks, used or abused by the ruling white minority. The stinking lake fits perfectly into the scene and becomes a metaphor for the so-called inhuman apartheid system. Having once established a specific interpretation or perspective, the reader finds it difficult to be persuaded to any other, perhaps more sober point of view and the actual aesthetic object becomes foggy.

Virtually all major issues are contained in the wordless opening scene. Immediately there is a conflict between appearance and reality. The expectation is created that some important person is due to arrive, a person of stature, with a domineering and demanding personality hence the servile attitude of Morris and his obvious agitatedness. Yet the opposite proves to be reality. Contrary to our expectations the figure who enters is haggard; he looks worn-out and crude. The reader/audience feels surprised and cheated to a certain extent, yet when referring back to initial

givens, realises that an important well-clad figure would simply not fit into the third-world environment. Thus this early dilemma is solved by using Iser's wandering viewpoint, although there is as yet no text to use for verification and the reader has to rely on his own horizon. Not only would an important persona be contradictory to the poor background and surroundings, but it would subvert an accepted cultural concept and help shape in a fundamental way the reader's response to the material worldview developed in the play.

From the outset the reader is confronted with a universe in which nothing can be taken for granted. Things acquire meaning only insofar as they relate to human relationships. It is not until a second reading that the uninformed reader can construct a clear picture of what is happening, because initially there are no preparatory explanations. The spectator has no resort but to allow himself to be carried along by the characters. He has trouble in making sense of the details that are deliberately misleading, and yet he acquires a surprisingly large amount of insight into the character of Morris. It is evident that he is being dictated to by time and a sense of punctuality and duty not characteristics of the average black man. *

There is no doubt that the opening scene of **The Blood Knot** provokes in the audience a sense of disorientation for he is thrown into the middle of a situation, the meaning of which he cannot grasp completely. Simultaneously the reader's disorientation is made more marked by his affective involvement in the plight of the character on stage, viz. Morris. The onlooker finds himself in a seemingly paradoxical situation. He is being led by Morris, into whose psyche he has become immersed, to anticipate one thing, while the reality proves to be the opposite. The double perspective in the reader is essential, for as it will prove, the play does not 'work' unless a delicate balance is kept between an affective proximity between the one hand and the reader on the other, as well as sufficient distance for the reader to fill in the gaps in the text; an activity which Wolfgang Iser demonstrates in **The Act of Reading** to be fundamental in giving rise to communication in the reading process.

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* The term "African Time" speaks for itself. The sense of urgency, haste and punctuality rate low in the black system of values.

Although Iser does not allow for cultural differences specifically, he foresees that the reader/receptor might be disorientated if his expectations do not fall into a pattern. This proved to be the case with the group of black students who attended the production of **The Blood Knot** at the Little Theatre of Wits. Credibility was lost when Zach entered and many students 'opted out', when Morris, with an elaborate show, started washing Zach's feet. The brother relationship had not yet been established and a virtually white man dropping down to wash the feet of a black man, obviously a labourer, was scrutinized critically and dubiously. The establishment of the brother relationship brought with it other problems. According to tradition, be it rural or urban, it is the woman who does the housework. Marriage is not an issue. Women being readily available, the whole setup is questioned and not readily accepted or acceptable. One must keep in mind that although the reader/receptor is called upon to contribute very actively he is never allowed to objectify Morris's situation completely.

The reader/receptor is now confronted with his own political convictions, which could be anything from "verkramp" to socialistic and simultaneously he is creating an illusionary ideationary development. The activating of a political or socio-economical realization or awareness in the reader/receptor is the aesthetic object coming into its own in the reader. The liberal reader would readily empathize with Morris in the feet washing scene. It could be seen as an effort of a guilt-ridden white to placate the angry and frustrated black man by playing the role of the servile and thus allaying his guilt. The inhuman unequal system is verbalized in utterances like "hotnot", "kaffir", "swartgat" and personified in the vapid, stupid Ethel de Lange.* Although it can be deduced from his behaviour that Morris is more intelligent, and might even have the more acceptable system of values, there are depriving and constricting laws against him because of the colour of his skin.

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1) It is interesting to note that for all abuse in Fugard's plays he uses Afrikaans. Most of the characters, especially those who do not depict a good relationship with the black man, carry Afrikaner surnames. In the case of Ethel de Lange he seems to try and justify the fact that she writes in English, by giving her a more English sounding name, but still a typical Afrikaans surname. If Fugard intended this as a subtle indoctrination, it did not work because the blacks failed to notice this.

It is clear that the text can create very specific perspectives in the informed reader. The reader is free to construe and believe as he wishes, and as it complies with his horizon. Perhaps this is the reason why Fugard's plays are so popular with the audiences at Broadway and why he receives comparatively little recognition and support by means of attendance in his own country, South Africa. One could interpret the very non-attendance of the South African audience as a response statement. After a visit to a virtually empty theatre situated in the centre of Johannesburg, which is supposed to be the crucible of South African society, one realizes the reluctance of the public to be confronted with themselves in relation to the country's problems on stage. It is far easier to sink into a comfortable uninvolved lethargy or simply deny that there is any identity crisis or human conflict in our sunny South Africa. Or could it be that Fugard as eminent dramatist does not focus on our horizons?

As said, the text can create very specific perspectives in the reader, which ironically, the text again might force him to reject at a later stage. The stinking lake might very well be found in any polluted over-populated industrial township in any part of the world. A widely read, well-informed reader would definitely find international applicability and interpret the drama as "a parable of the post industrial world in conflict with people attuned to a pre-industrial world" as Raymer describes it (Raymer, 1984:12). This rejects the initial "white-black oppression" interpretation. This serves to illustrate Iser's idea of the text itself acting as meaningful instruction or instructor, expecting of the reader to make certain rejections. Yet Iser's theory in isolation cannot account for the response or non-response of the reader as it is evident that the key concept in this case is "informed reader". The fact that the black students do not respond according to the prescription of Iser, cannot only be attributed to their different cultural background, but also to a certain extent to their uninformedness. It could be postulated that most undergraduate students belong to this category, but in this case it would then be necessary to differentiate between more and less uninformed, as the white students proved to be the more informed. The uninformedness of the black students verged at times on the brink of a resistance or an unwillingness to accept certain

facts, especially of global perspective.*

At times the pragmatic language usage might cause the fanatical political reader to regard Fugard as unsympathetic e.g. Morris: "You stink!" (**The Blood Knot**:29) and Morris:

> You know something? I hate you! What did you mean crawling around like that? Spoiling the view, spoiling my chances! What is your game hey? Trying to be an embarrasment? Is that it? A two-legged embarrassment? (p.31).

There are other nuances and levels of meaning, certain codes either moralistic or political, which evoke doom and a slumbering anguish, sympathy and disgust, e.g. the alarm clock ringing can indicate to a sensitive fearful reader the irredeemable passage of time, how much time have we wasted, how much is left? Irony plays a role here in revealing the reader as individual. As soon as the attitude of the speaker can be assessed, irony becomes a blank or vacuum of indeterminacy. For this the reader relies on the text. The deictic situation provides data according to which the personae are victims of the unequal political system. Depending on the horizon of the reader, the speaker can or cannot be unmasked.

The "pondok" as example of the existing housing system for the underprivileged poor does not suffice. Providing a shanty does not presuppose a decent standard of living, or imply additional facilities necessary for healthy living conditions. The township is called a "scab" which implies that it had not been planned but had simply burst open like a sore which has deeper underlying causes pointing to some malfunction or imbalance in the system. Because of its location near the stinking lake it obviously had been an unwanted, useless piece of land. The framework has to be completed by the reader from his own actual or political

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* It is interesting to note that when the black students were shown a photo of Fugard at the introductory stage of the project their response was one of resistance. This is difficult to define other than saying that after a three year "relationship" with one's students one reads certain signs, like silences, meaningful glances, a word uttered in the vernacular etc. and decodes the atmosphere as positive/friendly or negative/unfriendly. They entered the text prejudiced, as a result of the fact that the author was white.

horizon. His actual knowledge of the system is called upon e.g. annual expenditure of the government on housing per annum, economical climate, housing subsidies etc. The reader is forced to select such items from the actual horizon that will elucidate the attitude of the speaker. Consequently he is forced or guided, depending on his disposition to reconsider his political actualities. Only a reader who has recently visited some township or to be more specific Korsten, will know whether such housing conditions still exist.

The drama becomes a way of thinking and to a certain extent the reader becomes the creator of irony as Ingarden suggests. Assuming that the reader is a contemporary South African, he will be confronted with the drama while reading. He will then select actualities and unmask statements, in the process unmasking himself. While reading he will be read. If there is no political strain present in the drama, which is doubtful, it would simply mean that the reader is being formulated by the text instead of the other way around. The drama can also force the reader to think against his own convictions.

This double perspective is not limited to the first reading. Even after the reader has solved the "mysteries" of the plot and is able to assess Morris's relationship with his brother, he is denied a position of detachment in relation to the text. Multiple readings draw the reader closer to Morris's plight, while on the other hand they continue to require that the reader participate actively in the process of filling in the gaps. The first scene again provides a good example of the intensification of the affective involvement of successive readings.

Having established that Zach is Morris's brother, the reading can now relate an ordinary reference to a crucial emotionally charged event in Morris's life, *viz.* his inability to act, and his guilt complex. The result is that the second reading, while allowing the reader to establish new relationships, also draws the reader affectively closer to the character.

Not only can the reader share the enormous human cost involved in Morris's failure, but because of his experience of having had to adjust his initial perception, the

reader also realizes his own vulnerability to blindness. Although he can go beyond Morris's vision he is, like Morris, denied a final vantage point from where everything would coalesce into a clearly designated pattern. According to Fish the reader will never reach a fixed point where he can be completely certain about the material confronting him therefore each reading becomes quite different from the preceding one.

Perhaps an ultra-reading, i.e. an amalgamation of all the different readings into an ultimate synthesis, would come closest to a complete response. Nevertheless such a synthesis, even if it were possible, would deny fundamental open-endedness and would establish a final totally rational perspective for the reader which would destroy the delicate balance previously described. What happens in **The Blood Knot** is a constant re-adjustment of the reader's own projections, a process which according to Iser results not in a definite shape, but in increased communication, except in the case of those students who rejected the text and opted out after a series of events which resulted in no sense for them.

It is evident that constituting meaning is only provisional and this creates tension and an urge to continue reading to complete and define the process of giving form and meaning. In terms of Iser's model this is an automatic process, providing the reader is informed. The drama presents itself on various levels of meaning, and the informed reader is able to differentiate at a glance sociological, economical, political, micro-cosmic and macro-cosmic themes and interpretations. Thus it comes to the fore, e.g., that Zach has a health problem or a slight handicap in that his feet and back cause him much discomfort. Add to this that he is doing menial labour and consequently receiving minimum pay. Add to this that Morris has returned because his conscience has allegedly alerted in him the awareness that he owed his brother something and should get him out of his malaise. Certainly the roles of the brothers should be switched; Morris as the educated, more intelligent, without any health problems, should be able to bring in more money to contribute towards achieving his own ambition sooner. The black students, incidentally, at no stage related this inversion to the South African apartheid policy, while a few white students questioned this possibility.

Black students refuse to identify with either of the characters. In Zach's case this is easily definable. He is illiterate, has no aspirations, no decent job. It reminds the black students of a part of their heritage that they would rather forget, as many Afrikaners wish to forget or deny that many of their ancestors were poor-whites, uneducated, "takhare"and "bywoners". They have acquired a new role model: educated, informed, sophisticated, well-spoken, well dressed, and negate the image of inferiority. They do not identify with Morris, because of the new awareness of "black is beautiful", as discussed earlier. Be proud of the fact that you are black, no longer non-white!

Whatever Fugard's intentions had been, and what kind of audience he had in mind when writing, the black students miss much if not most of the meaning at a higher level, e.g. the symbolism represented by various objects like the alarm clock, the Bible, the journey, and the lake. In the group of thirty-six only four gave the ringing of the alarm clock any thought, while eleven did not hear it ring at all, and the rest thought the alarm had gone off accidentally. This corresponds with the typical notion of the African that time is of no significance (discussed earlier), as opposed to the westerner in his linear time orientation and work habits. Zach does not understand or appreciate the values that are important to Morris, and the latter seems incapable of converting Zach to his point of view.

> Zachariah: I was in here ten years and didn't worry about feet, or a future or having supper on time! (p.82).

The double perspective used creates a sense of incompleteness which is fitting in the process of the brothers trying to reconstruct and understand their own past. Particularly two issues obsess Morris, viz. should he try for white, and his responsibility towards his brother.

The double perspective eventually also includes the mother figure. Appropriate to the focal point of this paper is the brothers' different recall of, or response to, the mother figure. Which of the two images of the mother is more acceptable

to the audience is another matter. The mother who should be the binding factor in the brothers' relationship proves to be the contrary. Morris with his light skin and sophisticated western style visualises his mother completely differently from the way his brother does. There is no text to turn to as Iser suggests, and the students are left to their own repertoire. Could it be that Morris had been named after his father? In which case cultural heritage could be a factor influencing his perception. Thus in an indirect way Fugard validates and invites extreme responses to his text.

The complexity and ambiguity prevent any one of the perspectives from becoming central. Neither of the brothers provides all the parameters by which the reader is to assess the mother. The key to making sense lies in the reader's search for orientation between different emotional responses. Significantly, this element of searching for meaning by the reader/audience parallels what is taking place in the drama itself. A voyage is a traditional symbol for search and **The Blood Knot** is no exception. Morris' first journey into the world is a search for meaning and a search for identity. The second intended but abortive journey signifies that the first has been unfruitful. This type of reading with much emphasis on temporal development, keeps the reader's understanding provisional, and the text itself open.

I would like to point out how this process operates by examining the interaction between the different women and the brothers, i.e. Zach's woman before the arrival of Morris (Minnie), the central mother figure and the white penfriend. Like in many of Fugard's works **The Blood Knot** focuses on a search for meaning and a sense of loss. Through the mention of the first woman we are made aware of this. He, Zach, loses her as Morris moves in, loses his mother long before that with the birth of Morris and now also loses the penfriend without ever having actually possessed her. He also loses his money, his freedom and his dignity. But he is not the only one to lose. Morris loses the grip on himself and his ability to face the world and reality and perhaps worst of all, Zach's love and respect.

Formulating the text is a subjective action and includes self-formulation. The working of the reader's own imagination can be demonstrated according to the simulated reality of the text. Textual combinations can be indicated in the reader as meaning that he forms on the grounds of his own activated competence and attuned model of reality e.g. the more religious reader can establish many biblical responses, starting from the feetwashing in the opening scene, followed by the various readings from the Bible. The feetwashing will serve to him as a viewfinder, and although the diectic specifics might clash with his interpretation, he will continue searching his horizon to strengthen his initial experience. He might interpret the play as the clash between good and evil, with as the tempter Zach trying to persuade Morris to his lifestyle of indulgence and "carpe diem". Thus details can be experienced not as specifications of meaning but as detractors and evaders of meaning. They serve as clues that lead the reader away from the aesthetic object. The presentation is experienced as a negation and thereby strengthens the dialectic tension between text and reader. Another reader, with a strongly developed sense of equality and fraternity, might decode the mother figure as personification of the "land that gave me birth", but which, like the mother, doled out separate packages of love, affection and acceptance to her black and white children. She discriminates to such a degree that she eventually seems to be two completely different persons according to the recall of the brothers. Thus the mother, like King Creon in **The Island**, subtly but devastatingly indicts the South African apartheid system. In the same strain Morris can be seen as personification of the manipulating white oppressor by one reader, or as representative of the Western urbanized, technologically-orientated world versus the Third World, the former desperately trying to convert the latter to its own self-aggrandizing purposes. In these cases politics serves as the referential code. According to Barthes (1975), the referential code does not explicitly include actualities, but could be implemented to that extent. In literature actualities also become a code.

The act of reading has been illustrated in the foregoing as a meaningful interplay between textual data and readers' horizons. On a smaller or bigger scale (including the text as a whole) the internal play of perspectives can be indicated, a reflective play rooted in the text, surfacing as the meaningful and meaning-giving act of

reading. What is ordinarily considered as literary or structural device, now creates vacuums that challenge and invite the reader to interact to create meaning.

When the reader makes his choice of a certain model of interpretation early in the first scene, he is busy with an illusionary development of the presentation and the true aesthetic objects become blurred. If at any stage the text should prove these interpretations as reductions, the reader will be confronted with his own set of religious or political values. The text of **The Blood Knot** provokes just such illusionary constituencies because of its multi-leveled and symbolical structure, or as Iser terms it, the distancing and uncertainty of one's own likes, emotional reactions, and the activating of political and religious awareness in the reader **is** the aesthetic object that is being established in the reader.

If irony is interpreted as lacunae of indeterminacy, it follows that the text will create certain perspectives in the reader. Irony can also be considered as certain givens in the text that accommodate hidden, unacceptable statements. The reader is forced by the text to reject one premise. The reader reads as he anticipates the implied author would want him to read. Thus he is in my terms inhibited by the author and not really free to construct meaning on his own terms. Irony illustrates Iser's idea of the literary work as instruction of meaning.

As Barthes defined it, "To read is to find meaning, and to find meaning is to name them; but these named meanings are swept towards other names; names call to each other, reassemble, and their grouping calls for further naming: I name, I unname, I rename" (1975:11).

The black students fail to recognise any of the conflicts that Raymer advocates e.g. the conflict between two entirely different worlds viz. the western, urbanized, technologically orientated world, and the Third World, or more specifically Zach as typical Cape black or coloured used by the white as represented by Morris. They do notice some of the differences between the brothers but not all. The most obvious differences are noticed e.g. skin colour, interests, education and intelligence. If applying the findings of Hynds (1985), it seems that these students on the whole have a low degree of cognitive complexity, which might also account

for their inability to empathize. From the point of view of Barnitz there are other variables: "Reading is a complex interactive, hypothesis-generating psycholinguistic process which is tied intimately to the reader's language proficiency" (1986:95). It is not relevant in this paper, which has the greater significance, but that the actual literary work of art relies for its meaningful existence on subjectivity which seems to be incidental. The informed reader realises that ordinary language proves inadequate for sophisticated expression, accommodating nuances and levels of meaning. Iser postulates that there is no literary experience if a subjective reading is eliminated.

According to Iser's model only the informed reader can function in his model. The uneducated, non-literal individual excludes himself automatically from this model as he does or does not attend the theatre, read a book or poem of his own free will. Therefore it follows that the reader will not expect the drama to be only what he could deduct from the title. An informed reader will know in advance that drama has more to say than just the obvious words on the page, although it makes use of ordinary everyday language. Thus the reader continues to read, assuming that he will find another level of meaning.

Culler (1975) asserts that the reader is convinced that there is a closed coherent literary meaning in the poem or drama. This convention is so strong that the reader will look for meaning and coherence in the most nonliterary statement or negation. The first half of this assumption rings true if applied to the black students. They expected a performance with a clear story line; a beginning, a middle and an end, a story with a linear progression. When this proved wrong, some initially looked for meaning elsewhere, while others opted out. (This could explain why blacks ingest Shakespeare comparatively easily. According to research by Kaplan (1966) each cultural group has its own idiosyncratic, interrelated thought patterns and it could be a factor to consider, although not proven, that blacks prefer a linear pattern.)

The focal point from which the reader continues, changing as he progresses, constitutes the horizon of the drama and the reader. This subscribes to Iser's

theories of observation according to which the text might disappear but the drama per se will remain. It exists in the reader as memory, as concretized meaning, and it proves to be more or less dynamic, all depending on the way in which the aspects of the textual memories of the reader interact and change in the light of newly found perspectives. Language can be dynamic only as subjective text.

Iser's theory eliminates the notion to see the text as meaning. Subjective recreating of the text includes the subject in its totality. The literary work activates the interpretations as meaning systems in the reader and uses them as focal points from which the aesthetic object can be experienced. The aesthetic is the antithesis of everything that the text wants to solve in the pragmatic reality. Meaning-giving is one such solvent. The aesthetic is anti-hermeneutic and in the words of Susan Sonntag (1980), the erotics of the literary experience.

The reality in the text is a combination of selected elements of reality through which the elements can be separated from their systemized meanings in reality. The imagination of the writer forms combinations to create a holistic text.

Eckhard Lobsien (1978) and Schwab (1981) (discussed earlier) prove how the dichotomous reactions on Joyce's **Ulysses** and Beckett's **Endgame** are meaning giving without exhausting the text. These texts invite meaning giving and then evade it because it supposedly has a broader intended effect.

"Iser is ... a phenomenon" says Fish. If the myth of theoretical truth is discarded then Iser's text remains as a code of the system of literary science with all its historical cultural and other external text qualities.

Instead of giving ontological definitions of systems the relation of systems is revealed - the relation between science and science, between system theory and literary theory, between text and reader.

2.3 ACTUAL RESPONSE

Although what follows constitutes the second phase of the actual research programme, I deem it appropriate to include it here, to accentuate the stark contrast between the model and what actually happened.

Realising that a structured, preconceived questionnaire, answered in writing, resembled testing or exams to the students, I turned to oral responses in the form of oral questions by the students. The students directed these questions orally either at the text or at the lecturer, i.e. myself.

After having established the depth of their argumentation and questioning, the students were in turn questioned orally on much the same level. Needless to say, these questions were graded down considerably from what I initially intended to question them about. What follows is briefly my hypothesis and the eventual actual communication.

The students had not been exposed to any interpretations of lecturers or critics. I realized that their "Weltanschauung"/world view would differ from mine and the peer group A and took it for granted that each student had his own opinion of the existing political climate at this point in time. Their historical and intellectual dimensions, I hypothesized, would not necessarily include things like the crumbling of religion in our value system, as opposed to the importance of rational objective sciences; or the influence of Karl Marx which changed spiritual dialecticism to cold lifeless material dialecticism and class struggles dictated by the ordinary desire for economic betterment.

The name Marx might never come to mind. They might not be aware that the emotional states of mind which Fugard is here connecting with blacks and coloureds also exist in the whole of the western world. After two world wars man witnessed a moral vacuum, which is yet growing wider. Modern man feels isolated and derelict in a less than benign world, unprotected in a universe which at best seems

indifferent, at worst malevolent. To the majority of modern man life has lost its meaning, its significance, its function. But whether the students would be able to connect this with **The Blood Knot** remained an open question.

Seeing that the students had never been exposed to the theatre of the absurd, it seemed unlikely that they would see traces of the absurd in the characters of Zach and Morris. Nor did I expect them to recognize or identify certain absurd motifs like the threat of time moving on mercilessly, a search for identity inevitability of never coming to terms, a certain 'angst' about life and loneliness, but I did expect them to notice these motifs and at least question their relevance.

Eliminating what was unlikely to happen I hypothesized what Fugard would mean to the students. Although the story is quite simple at surface level, it becomes more complex the deeper one delves. If the theory of Iser worked in practice the students, by referring back and forth to their own horizons should be able to arrive heuristically at an understanding of the story. They might even be able to recognize the general malaise of twentieth century man in one or both of the characters.

Some of them, I hypothesized, would identify personal experiences closely related e.g. the societal pressures of freedom being one; draft resistance, and liberal and sexual mores as opposed to the more/conventional values of duty and temperance. Or the experiences of the "typical" black unskilled labourer who despite his physical strength feels weak, insecure even threatened in the prevailing social context. I did anticipate that not all responses would have direct bearing on Morris or Zach, but was convinced that they would relate phenomenologically to the suffering of one of the characters. It would then be relatively easy to add on to this workable framework a further discussion to provide them with a referential infrastructure so that they would be able to interpret and assimilate the ideas implicit in the action.

COMMENT

Thirty-six black students attended the show which made up the first test. The rest of the audience constituted approximately 28 people, some obviously students and quite a number of foreigners.

The students were not coached or provided with any background. It was not possible to re-assemble them immediately after the show, and formulating of responses to the text and the production had to wait till the next morning.

During the show it was interesting to listen to the audience responding as if in relay. There was no simultaneous response at any point during the evening. What amused the black students, grouped together, somehow did not appeal to the rest of the audience, and vice versa. Strange as it may seem, the black students found incidents, that could be described as the (in) human degradation of Zach by Morris very amusing, from his calling him "swartgat" and other forms of abuse, to the more physical attack with the umbrella. Whether they interpreted this as the absurd need of the white to uphold himself is difficult to tell. I could not assess whom the laugh was on.

Students were invited to question any event or incident that they either could not understand or disagreed with. The following issues surfaced when I was attempting to reconstrue the response of the evening:

STUDENT QUESTIONS

Q1 Why does Morris wash his brother's feet?

Q2 How could Zach just let go of Minnie?

Q3 Why does Zach work if Morris is obviously better educated and will consequently be able to earn more?

Q4 Why does Morris not help Zach to find another job if he is not happy?

Q5 How can Zach be satisfied with the food Morris gives him? (Food focuses prominently on the black people's horizon.)

Q6 Who is the woman in the park?

Q7 Why do they throw stones at her?

Q9 Why does Morris want to buy a farm? Surely a car is better.

Q10 Why do they read out of the Bible like that?

Q11 Why does Morris set the alarm for the middle of the day?

Q12 Surely the white woman would not go into the location and the brothers know that. Why do they buy a suit then?

Q13 Why does Morris go on talking about butterflies and moths?

What confused most students were the games played at various stages. They were not provided with the necessary equipment to decode and make sense of these games. The result was that to many the play was "very confusing".

The students were in turn questioned on much the same level as the questioning initiated by them.

QUESTIONS TO STUDENTS

Q Which character did they like better? (This question was asked in an attempt to assess if they had identified readily with either of the characters.)

R The response is very hesitant. They do not like either Zach or Morris, for different reasons. Zach is "too stupid" and Morris is "very confused", "very queer".

Obviously the way Fugard depicts the brothers is not how the students would prefer others (i.e. whites) to view them.

Q Would they like to marry a white girl? Is it important?

R Hesitant response. No. Some would like an evening out together. A few are of the opinion that it might be "nice" if they did not have to change and do things her way. They would not like to be told. On the whole they agree marriage will be more comfortable with one of their own women.

Q Would they want to buy a farm?

R The answer is no, without exception. A car is better.

Q Would they like a big house?

R If they have a wife and children, but if single a car is better.*

Q Why do they think did the mother love Morris more or in a different way than she did Zach?

R There are various answers, such as, he might have been cleverer from the start, more obedient, a pretty baby, etc. None mention the fact that he could be loved better because of his light skin.

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* This possibly relates to the fact that different societies and cultures have different rules for measuring wealth. For the rural black of the previous century, wealth was measured in terms of cattle, women and children. The house was but a protection against the elements. Today the position is more modernised. Housing with basic needs is provided and not really owned. A motorcar is considered as a sign of wealth, a status symbol. Dressing up smartly is also very important. To most, big houses do not make sense. At college we experience the phenomena of huddling together. In a big class, a small group will huddle in one corner, share a desk or even sit three at one desk, even in summer. The same thing happens at home.

Q Fugard wrote the play as he wanted to. Why do you think he made the mother love one better than the other? What did he want to achieve?

R No response.

Q Why do the brothers play the imaginary game with the motorcar?

R Perhaps to remember their childhood days.
To think of the good times they had together.
Because Morris would like to have a car.

No symbolic meaning is attached to this.

Q The readings from the Bible create the impression that they did not read systematically but opened the Book at any place. Why did Fugard select the specific chapters as he did?

R No response at first.
Hesitant. Perhaps they were not very religious.

One could generalize the students' responses and aesthetic experience by saying they are superficial and distanced if not uninvolved. The inconclusiveness of the interaction could indicate that the students did not implement the communicative approach, not even as negative dialogue. The text was set aside or rejected before meaning as a whole could be formulated. The vacuums have been left incomplete. Certain issues remain enigmatic. Why throw stones if there is no woman at all? Why does Morris not leave, or why did he return when it is obvious he is ashamed of his brother?

It seems as if a literary work attains its strongest hold on the reader through becoming a meaningful whole and not so much through the application of meaning. Iser's assertion that there is an unwillingness to leave the literary experience incomplete, once it has been manifested as experience, seems to imply that most of the students had no literary experience, therefore the unconcerned way in which they opted out. He, Iser, also asserts that rather than leave a literary experience incomplete, the reader will restructure his own habits. This did not happen to

the group of black students. Nor did they negate the real world during the course of observing to become what they saw. Their viewing was influenced through the historical, cultural and typical world in them. To observe means to be observed, to read implies to be read. Only literature has the ability to unmask a reader in this way, because the literary experience is subjective. The readers of Fugard's text reveal themselves as uninformed, uninvolved readers.

In a political sense they reveal themselves as middle of the roaders who are not inclined to instigate rebellion. They prefer to keep a low profile and take whatever benefits might come their way (cf. **Hello and Goodbye** (p.54)

Johnnie: I don't hate, I don't love.
I play it safe.)

When asked for a more holistic response the general comment was more or less as follows:

The drama is about two brothers who have different views of life and how they argue and influence each other.

If the literary experience had realised as it should have, according to Iser, the reader's own subjective experience would have become text, and the text reality, which is the opposite of the initial position when the reader reduced the literary to his own reality in order to gain entry.

One reason why this did not happen can be brought to the account of the uninformed reader. He is unaware of the rules, therefore cannot play the game. The other might be an error on the part of Fugard. He overstepped the line concerning certain cultural do's and don'ts rather grossly, viz. he did not keep in mind the blacks' reverence for the dead. Speaking badly of the deceased is bad, if it is your own mother worse, and throwing stones at her the worst. Disturbing the natural hierarchy of the strongest, bravest, cleverest as rulers is not acceptable. Morris

as the educated clever brother should be respected and served, not the other way round. Changing a real warm woman for a dummy paper woman, far removed, makes no sense. Related research concerning cultural background and influence on recall and comprehension underlines the response of these students.*

If this had not been so the reader might still have responded by ingesting all possible perspectives, and bringing to the surface certain aspects of his existence like being black, oppressed, black white relationships, and the desperate plight of the black caused by restricting legislation. When the reader tries to interpret the text in terms of his own reality, he will discover that he is also involuntarily interpreting reality in terms of the text.

The reader who focuses on the symbolic, will become aware of a foreboding, of a warning or a prediction. The more cosmopolitan reader will be impressed by the objectivity of the text, the open-endedness. Therefore the text is only acceptable and can only be experienced in terms of appeal. The aesthetic experience comes to the fore in continuous dialogue between text and reality, the continuous tension in the reader generated by himself as implied reader and himself as a real human being.

The text relies for its effectiveness more on the intensity of real problems than on the problematising of reality. The text as perspective in the reader becomes the political reality of the reader in a possibly new perspective. A political play by implication creates a political experience in the reader and his aesthetics must be expressed in terms of this experience. The play prevents a total surrender to himself on the one hand and also to reality. When the reader endeavours to fill in all vacuums he has, inevitably, to identify with the play. He must be able to understand it as projection of part of himself. If he fails in this, there is no aesthetic experience, as in the case of most of the black students. If the reader succeeds the play becomes his own and in a certain sense he is rewriting it. The text invites identification by its very unpragmatic nature, its fabulation and switch in time sequence. The reader can reformulate himself and his world, without

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* See section on Reading Research done in America on the influence of cultural background.

any consequence. The incompetence of the text to be pragmatical is internalized and the reader is led, often against his convictions, to establish a critical perspective that he has to apply at some later point in time. This perspective might even be applied against himself.

The realistic details make known or reveal what the ideal archetype of the historical past did not know and deforms the no longer reachable ideal into a historical manifestation which is possible or in reach of the reader.

The Blood Knot, according to my layman opinion, does not really work with black students, as it activates the reality in the reader as a correction, with an unconvincing reversing of the reader's value system. The reader is never placed properly in perspective (so that he can enjoy the view) thus the text is applied before the reader is ready to adapt it.

Even after being exposed to prepredication, i.e. an explanation that the play consists of a surface level and an underlying symbolic level, and that the surface level again may be divided into two narrative conflicts, viz. Zach's need for female companionship and Morris' striving to improve his status as black South African, the students did not agree with all the givens, e.g. Morris' suggestion to Zach to start a correspondence is "silly" as the latter cannot read or write. Fugard, through Morris, is obviously trying in this way to focus on the racial issue. This is the undercurrent of the play but now it is embodied in the white woman who according to law (at that time) was not allowed to marry a black man. At the time of the research, however, legislation had been changed, and this could account for the low-keyed response.

It is again explained that Fugard's intention is to focus on discriminating and restricting laws. After some probing and brain-storming it proves that for the students a more workable, acceptable issue would have been applying for a job, and not being accepted on account of colour. The buying of new clothes and writing of letters in this regard need not be changed. As far as Fugard's involvement

with the black man in white society is concerned, this would have evoked a much more lively, graspable response. Women are easily available, jobs not.

Another more important issue at this point in time is the right to make decisions, to have a choice, in short the right to vote.

Fugard's presentation of Zach and Morris as representing the black/white polarity in society does not work well, neither do they grasp the many references to time. Another issue that falls through is Fugard's effort to illustrate the restricting law according to which blacks cannot be landowners in South Africa. This links up thematically and structurally with the penfriend episode. To a black a farm is equivalent to menial labour for a boss and that is the very thing he detests and which he is trying to escape by studying. In a century where urbanized blacks, collar-and-tie jobs and education rank highly, this choice of Fugard was perhaps less successful. The students expressed themselves unambiguously on this matter.

3.1 APPLIED READING RESEARCH IN THE USA

While much research is conducted on first language reading, a need exists for investigation on the effects of cultural and linguistic differences of schematic and text structure on the reading and response of second language learners. Cross-cultural response research can contribute to our understanding of the reading process in a first and a second language.

Some research is available which documents certain characteristics of second language reading. Goodman & Goodman (1978), using the oral reading miscue paradigm with story retellings, examined the reading performance of children from several language backgrounds. While language differences were found to influence oral reading performance, the children demonstrated proficiency in using such universal reading strategies as selecting, sampling, confirming, rejecting, predicting and correcting.

In contrast, additional oral reading research by Cziko (1980) suggests that a reader's competence in a second language affects the reading strategies used to read it. Cziko found that junior high native and advanced readers of French as a second language were able to interact with text, using bottom-up and top-down processing, and relying on graphic as well as contextual information in reading, while less proficient readers of the second language used more bottom-up strategies.

In a comparative study of native and non-native English readers at the university level, Carrell (1983) concluded that native and non-native speakers do not comprehend and respond alike. Non-native speakers of English do not appear to use context (top-down) or textual (bottom-up)clues efficiently when reading English, the second language.

Hudson (1982:176) on the other hand, indicates that existing prior knowledge or induced schemata can override the short-circuiting effect of limited second

language proficiency. Thus there appears to be an interactive relationship of language proficiency and schemata in second language comprehension, even through reading is similar across various languages (Hudelson, 1981). The role of first and second language proficiency effects on bottom-up and top-down cognitive processes needs a substantial amount of further exploratory research in naturalistic and experiemental settings.

One of the early reports of the influence of cultural schemata is that of Bartlett (1932) who reported observations of how Englishmen read and responded to stories based on North American Indian folk tales. Bartlett recognized that when readers process unfamiliar texts, manifestations of the cultural differences in schemata are evident. Fifty years later, Kintsch & Greene (1978) presented American college students with two stories: one a Grimm fairy tale, the other an Apache folk tale. Recall protocols indicated that the American students recalled the Brothers Grimm story better than the Apache folk tales. Carrell (1983b) noted that this experiment involved a confounding of formal and content schemata. Later researchers found that Kintsch & Greene did not require American and Indian readers to read both stories. So a more intricate study was designed. American and Indian university students were required to read two letters; one about a wedding in each of these countries, America and India. Free and probed recall data indicated the influence of cultural schemata in reading both letters. Readers distorted information contained in letters from unfamiliar cultures as well as recalling more relevant idea units from the letters about their own cultures. It is also interesting to note that readers read the letters about the wedding of their own culture much faster.

Steffenson & Colker (1982) conducted an additional experiment comparing comprehension of American and Australian aboriginal subjects while hearing two stories each about the medical beliefs of their respective cultures. The researchers found that respondents reacted more lively and made appropriate elaborations for the stories about their own culture, while there was less gist recall and more distortion of the foreign passage.

A related study by Reynolds, Taylor, Steffenson, Shirey and Anderson (1981) reported similar phenomena when comparing reading comprehension of urban

Black and agrarian white eighth-graders who read a letter about an incident in the school cafeteria. In the letter were quotations of ritual insults commonly found in the Black community called playing the dozens. The Blacks readily understood the whole situation, while the White agrarian students distorted the whole issue, bringing in physical aggression.

Cultural knowledge, it is clear, cannot be ignored in a model of reading.

Recently Andersen (Psychological Review, 79:97-123) used probed questioning to determine the role of creativity variables and cultural schemata on inferential reading comprehension by sixth-grade children from New Orleans and New York. He constructed 24 short passages, six containing cultural and religious content familiar to New Orleans area Catholic children. The next six contained religious content familiar to New York Greek Orthodox children and the last set contained information unkown to everyone. The results demonstrated a strong relationship between a cultural group and performance on measures of inferential reading. What also proved very interesting was the fact that children who were judged as creative individuals, as measured by tests of creativity, tended to take more risks at inferring information about unfamiliar topics.

These studies on cultural differences and comprehension, focus on cultural schemata and how these affect inferential and literal comprehension and response but they do not examine cultural variables interacting with second language factors.

In 1982 Johnson investigated the role of background knowledge or horizon, as Iser terms it, on the reading performance of university students (Tesol Quarterly, 16:503-516). In the first study Johnson examined the potential interaction of language complexity and cultural background of Iranian students at an advanced and intermediate level and American English-speaking students. They had all read stories from Iranian and American folklore. There were two versions of each story viz. one with simplified syntax versus another with a more complex syntax.

Johnson came to the conclusion that the Iranian group was not troubled as much by the linguistic complexity as by the cultural origin of the text. Carrell did very much the same kind of test with Japanese and Chinese students and confirmed Johnson's results.

Mother tongue students were influenced by language complexity and cultural origin of the text. Students made more inferences or elaborations when responding to the text from their own culture. This points to an interaction of language and culture when reading.

Johnson did further experiments in 1982 with second language students (Tesol Quarterly, 16:503-516). They were exposed to texts with respectively familiar and unfamiliar information about Halloween. The students were divided into four groups. The first group read the passage without a vocabulary list.

The second group studied explanations of target words after reading the passage, but not while reading it. The third group studied target words before reading. The last group had the benefit of prior study of word definitions as well as the words defined in the passage.

Respondents were asked to participate in free recall. In general Johnson found that students responded better to the familiar than to the unfamiliar portion of the text. He also concluded that vocabulary exposure did not have a significant influence. According to this experiment prior knowledge or content schemata (or horizon) was more important to second language than vocabulary definitions.

These are but a few of the many research projects that I investigated. Although all have reading as focal point, it is obvious that they have not deliberately applied or tested any of the theories discussed in Chapter II. However, under close scrutiny, there are areas in each of these projects closely related if not similar to certain aspects of the various theories. Thus prior knowledge or induced schemata seems

closely related to the informed reader although in the study made by Hudson the focus is on the aspect of the comprehension of the foreign language and the interactive relationship between second language and schemata. Just as comprehension was distorted because of different cultural schemata, I will later indicate that response is likewise influenced. Carrell uses the term **schemata** per se much in the same context as Iser uses the term **horizon.**

The study completed by Bartlett regarding cultural schemata proves undoubtedly that culture has to be taken into consideration when studying any aspect of reading. In his study he concentrated more on recall and not so much on response.

In **Theory and the Reader : Bleich Holland and beyond** Kathleen McCormick investigates and reports on theories of Bleich and Holland and suggests that reader responses can be redeemed from banality if the teacher gives them focus. As she puts it: "An alternative to the purely spontaneous response statements is one that is given direction suggested by the instructor: such focused assignments enable students to discover the aspects of literary theory they bring with them, without knowing it"(p.837). With this I agree only partially. It is so that the teacher can open students' eyes to the obvious, and once they know what to look for, they find it, but nothing more. (In this respect I refer to the tests done on the students to assess the degree of inhibitedness they manifest.) But the "literary theory that they bring along with them without knowing it" sounds too much like Chomsky's built-in language skills.

According to Bleich, response statements can be used to discover and analyse the subjective factors like perception and association that influence the reader's reaction to the text. Bleich is of the opinion that once readers adjust to writing about the perceptions, they will try and find the cause of these perceptions within themselves. It is evident that theories of psycho-analysis have had an influence on his approach. To him the source of meaning is the reader, therefore he does not pay much attention to analysing the social and institutional influences on readers' responses. Holland also sees the reader as "the origin of meaning".

Together with Eugene Kintgen in **Carlos reads a poem**, he investigated response by means of a personality test and then related this test to the readers' protocol of a poem, explaining why one reader responds in one way and the second in another. They based their study on Holland's assumption that readers possess individual identity themes. Each transforms the text he reads according to his defences, expectations and fantasies.

Both Bleich & Holland see the role of the student reader as a passive one. The reader, according to them, simply reacts to the text and does not stop to analyse factors influencing him - this is left to the teacher. It seems that, for Bleich, response is the exploration of the readers' lives rather than an exploration of what happens in the literary text.

A reader will always assimilate what he reads to his identity theme according to his own defences, the fantasies the work provides and the transformations he can apply. Holland's New Critical training and loyalty betray him.

Language is still a transparent medium, although now a window into the reader's response. Holland cannot hold his focus on the relationship between reader and work, but replaces one object with another. Instead of works he studies readers.

Interactive criticism goes beyond Holland's critical transaction because it uses all there is to use. He is interested in relationships, sociology, holistic methodology and phenomenological metaphysics.

If response is used correctly and followed through all the possible phases, the text should still focus as priority. The accusation has been made that response is an emotional issue, restricted to what students already know and that it does not open a student's mind to the text itself. For this reason response has not been explored as a possible critical tool. To bring a student to the awareness of the possibilities of response is a gradual process, but once he realises the need for more kinds of information, he becomes a stronger and better informed self-conscious reader.

Before actually starting with literature, McCormick focused on different kinds of response statements, from cultural and historical to phenomenological. She found that first year students still clung to what has been institutionally defined as literature and did not readily accept what has become literature in a wider cultural context. As Eagleton put it "there is an increasing tendency to ... study various signifying practices of our society all the way from **Moby Dick** to the **Muppet Show**" (1983:207).

McCormick assigned a response statement on Petrarchan and Elizabethan love sonnets to show students how their historical and cultural awareness influence their understanding of literary and linguistic conventions. Then an assignment on **Hamlet** demonstrated the relativism of interpretation along with the possibility to develop criteria for evaluating interpretations. An assignment on Pirandello's **Six Characters in Search of an Author** shows how students' expectations and reading strategies affect the ways in which they respond to the text. Finally the fairy tale **The Canary Prince** and Kafka's **The Metamorphosis** make students conscious of the role their literary competence plays in determining the kinds of systems and structures they supposedly discover in the texts.

This approach of McCormick reminds me of I.A. Richards who remained an old paradigm critic despite his investigation of response. He wavered uncomfortably between contextualism and a reference theory of meaning. This confusion vitiated his reader response studies, both the famous **Practical Criticism** and the less well-known **Interpretation in Teaching**. On the one hand his procedures could not claim objectivity and on the other, his discussions reveal little interest in response as such. He wanted to improve the students' performance according to his own standards. Perhaps McCormick is guilty of the same. In fact, she too is dictating to instead of studying response.

Research done by Carrell in 1983 illustrates the interactive nature of the second language reading process. Carrell investigated the effects of three aspects of background knowledge viz. context, transparency and familiarity on the reading

and comprehension of three groups of readers. The groups were mother tongue speakers, advanced second language speakers and intermediate second language speakers. The students read the passage either with a title and picture or with no context. Passage variations either contained or did not contain lexical items crucial to understanding the passage (transparent versus opaque). In the last test conducted in the familiarity framework, the students either had background, or schemata or none.

In general Carrell found that normative English speakers were less efficient at using contextual and textual clues at reading, while advanced second language readers recalled the novel text better than the familiar one.

This study clearly indicates the interactive nature of second language reading as schemata, context and language are critical variables in a model of first and second language reading. The studies on cross-cultural schemata in first and second language reading can be used to argue that culture and language factors are crucial factors in a model of reading. It appears to be the case that prior knowledge interacts with language proficiency but she did not specifically investigate the area of response.

A factor which Iser did not bring into consideration in response is the interrelationships of thought patterns and reading. According to Kaplan (1966) cultures vary in their thought patterns and their organization of the written text. Kaplan claims that more significant differences seem to be in those areas which affect the operation of language at the highest level. The differences influence the discourse-processing strategies of second language readers. Thus research on contrastive rhetoric is important to our understanding of discourse processing and can lead to empirical psycholinguistic experiments for a model of reading.

A few examples of ethnolinguistic thought patterns claimed by Kaplan (1966, 1983) to be represented in texts are as follows:

English: A general linear pattern is expected in expository writing. Example, topic sentence followed by subdivision with support of top statement followed by further development of central idea.

Semitic: Semitic languages are characterized by a series of parallel structures.

Oriental: Chinese and Korean are characterized by a "turning and turning in a wandering gyre". A writer does not describe a subject directly but discusses it from a variety of views tangentially related, thus writing around the topic.

Romance: Prose in French or Spanish is characterized by many digressions with additional material. Moreover there is a higher proportion of co-ordinate structures, nonsequential sentences, additive constructions and short paragraphs in Spanish than in English.

Carrell did further research on second language comprehension of expository prose in Japanese and English readers. Recall protocols indicated that English readers processed the Japanese discourse with far more difficulty than did the Japanese readers. The differences in English and Japanese discourse patterns were found to affect the processing strategies of English readers. It can be inferred that English readers used their English processing strategies which were not appropriate in sampling and predicting information represented in a foreign discourse pattern. This illustrastes the roles of culturally specific discourse patterns in reading comprehension.

The seeming lack of specific background schemata led to the inappropriate use of cohesive connectives. Therefore problems of cohesion in second language comprehension may be the result of underdeveloped schemata.

Research on cross-cultural schemata can be classified into two branches: content schemata and formal schemata. The latter fall into two natural categories:

linguistic studies on written rhetorical patterns of various cultures and psycholinguistic studies of the discourse processing of culturally different texts and or cultural categories. The question is, how do these studies relate to our understanding of reading? On a general basis it can be said that these studies on cross cultural schemata demonstrate the importance of cultural variables in the reading process. The degree to which readers are informed of cultural content, represented in culturally variant texts, has an influence on construction of meaning. Cross-cultural research provides insight into the types of elaborations and inferences made by readers.

During top-down processing readers construct meaning in terms of their own prior knowledge and value systems. These aspects of cognition serve as filters of relevant and irrelevant information. It is possible that culturally variant readers may distort text information or add information not relevant to the text. On the other hand they could also negate certain issues that they cannot come to terms with as happened during the reading of **The Blood Knot** and **The Island.**

Instructional practices which bridge the cultural knowledge gap between the native culture of the reader and the new culture information in the text should be implemented. Strategies which build background knowledge and interrelate schemata with text are crucial. Building and assessing cultural schemata can provide the necessary context for text comprehension. Many second-language learners may compensate for limitations in second language knowledge by relying on their content schemata. This may be a successful coping strategy if the readers are familiar with the cultural content.

Language proficiency variables can influence the top-down and bottom-up strategies of readers. As language proficiency is a variable in first and second language reading, supportive language expansion methodologies can be employed within the context of meaningful reading instructions for developing awareness of schemata.

There is a need for research in this area as research on content schemata will not only contribute to but also influence the existing theory and practice.

The knowledge or lack of knowledge of culture patterns will influence the readers' expectations and prediction strategies during reading. If the text structure is beyond their awareness, comprehension and response may be impaired. Research and instructional practices need to be implemented in this growing area of interest in the fields of reading and response. Research crossing disciplinary lines can support understanding of the second language and second culture reading process.

Susan D. Hynds of the Syracuse University launched an interesting research based on the premise that the impressions readers form of literary characters are limited or facilitated by the complexity of their interpersonal construct repertoires. She quotes Kelly who asserts that "human beings are not inert organisms subject to the constant push and pull of motives, drives and needs, but rather naive empiricists attempting to predict their environments. In seeking to anticipate events people gradually develop a hierarchically organized system of "constructs" or reference axes (e.g. good-bad, god-ungodly) to represent experiences in the social world" (Hynds, 1985:381). These construct systems are likely to change or stabilize to the degree that events validate or challenge existing perceptions. The degree of complexity in the construct system has been termed "cognitive complexity". Because these construct systems can vary, individuals can perceive the same social situation in highly dissimilar ways. It follows that readers will differ in their response to the text depending on the degree of their cognitive complexity, since they must often invoke social perceptual skills in interpreting the actions and motivations of literary characters.

The actual number of dimensions within an individual's construct system cannot be determined, but measures of complexity can be based on representative sampling of an individual's construct repertoire. A relatively simple and highly reliable procedure for determining cognitive complexity is to count the numbers of constructs in free-response descriptions of peers.

Little attention has been given to the role of interpersonal cognitive complexity in readers' understanding of and response to literary texts. According to Hynds, individuals with a rich repertoire of constructs for perceiving social phenomena (cognitive complexity) will possess a similar ability for perceiving characters in the realm of literature. The converse might also prove true. Those readers who are limited in their abilities to construe interpersonal events (low complexity), although fluent readers, may be limited in their abilities to respond fully to the complexities of characters, and consequently, to complexities of literary works.

Hynds' study investigated the role of interpersonal cognitive complexity in character impressions, story comprehension, response preferences, and literary attitudes of adolescent readers. A fundamental premise of the research was that readers would construe literary characters similarly to the way they would construe individuals in their social environments.

Students had to read and respond to the William Carlos Williams' short story **The Use of Force.** They were told to describe in writing the character they liked most and the one they liked least. They also had to describe a disliked peer and one they liked in a free response format. The questionnaires were then scored for the number of interpersonal constructs in each impression.

It was expected that individuals of high complexity would have higher interpretation scores than would individuals of low complexity. Results indicated partial support for this expectation. Generalizations about the relation of comprehension and interpretation to either type of complexity are limited by the lack of sharp distinction between the measures used. The results of this study suggest that interpersonal cognitive complexity predisposes readers toward complex perceptions of literary characters. The finding that literal comprehension has little relationship to character complexity is interesting particularly for those literary educators who base decisions about whether students have grasped the essentials of any literary work solely on literal or perception questions.

According to Hynds studies of complex perceivers have shown that they are more able than non-complex perceivers to take in social perspectives, to empathize, to account for multiple dimensions of people, to avoid stereotyping, simplifying, or projecting their own idiosyncracies into their perceptions of others.

In this study, the group from the university, however, had an above average reading speed, but for comparative purposes will be indicated as standard ten. Remedial work, to increase reading speed with the black students, has been in progress for quite a few years, whereas none of the A group has been identified as needing remedial work. As reading speed is something acquired through continuous exercise, it seems as if the white students had done more actual reading than the black students. As mentioned in another chapter, many reasons can be found for this. What is relevant here is that greater exposure to literature develops into a certain critical approach. It is something acquired and falls to my mind in the same category as acquiring a taste for good music or the ability to assess good acting in cinema and theatre. If reading speed is taken as an indication of hours of exposure to literature it seems that the white students have "acquired" a certain degree of "informedness"which the black students lack. This could be a direct cause for lower response in the black group.

A second cause which has direct bearing on the text, also has to be taken into consideration.

According to these researchers and their projects, the black students had an advantage in terms of culture and background knowledge, and should have responded in a more lively way, made more elaborations and showed more inclination than the whites to empathize. But the converse proved true. If I had only hypothesized on these matters, it would have remained unsubstantiated. Seeing that all these researchers, using different culture groups, at different times and different places, different circumstances, proved the same phenomena, it is impossible that all could be wrong.

So the reason for this specific low response of the black group should be sought elsewhere. The first possibility casts the blame on the students, the second on the text. Which one is guilty cannot be proved at this stage and will therefore remain a moot point.

Although reading speed has no direct bearing on the research done, it might in an indirect way influence response. As students at the College of Education have as part of their methodology syllabus testing of reading speed, they were used as an experimental group to demonstrate the process. It was revealed that this particular group had an average reading speed equal to a pupil in standerd four. Other tests were done on groups not majoring in English, and they had reading speeds as low as standard two.

The relevance or significance of this chapter might be questioned. As all variables could not be tested in this one research project, it is necessary to use related research to support certain premises. It was clear from the start that the B group had a lower response than group A. Both groups are non-native English readers, therefore language can be ruled out as a restraining factor. What cannot be ignored however, is that the language proficiency could influence the reading strategies used, e.g. as Cziko found with top-downs and bottom-up processing. On the other hand, Hudson proved that existing prior knowledge can over-ride the short-circuiting effect. Seeing that the texts of all dramas used focus on blacks, it seems that they should have an advantage over the white group regarding prior knowledge. Taking culture into consideration, it would seem that the blacks again had an advantage according to Steffenson and Colker who proved that respondents reacted in a more lively way and made appropriate elaborations for the stories about their own culture. A related study by Reynolds, Steffenson, Shirey and Anderson was done in 1981. Johnson investigated background knowledge on reading and found that complex syntax did not adversely influence comprehension if the text was of the same cultural origin as the readers. Further comment on this will be made in the concluding chapter.

ASSESSMENT OF RESPONSE USING THE ISLAND AS TEXT

The first phase of the research had as focal point a student production of **The Island** as well as the actual text. The initial stage had as primary instrument of measurement a written questionnaire divided into three sections viz. YES/NO answers, response to basic facts, and open repsonse. Parallel to this students were tested for possible inhibitedness, using the very basic test as illustrated in **Writing Step by Step** by Audrey Ross and Thelma Altshuler.

The first series of questions were designed to assess previous experience of Fugard and live theatre, i.e. horizon according to Iser, as well as specific ways of interpretation, while the second half measured more general attitudes and personal response about the production. Sex, I.Q. and age were variables not taken into consideration.

The instructions to the written responses were as follows:

(i) There is no right or wrong answer for any question, but it is important to be truthful and sincere.

(ii) Please feel free to express strong opinion or emotion if evoked, or none at all if the question seems irrelevant to you or has not come to your mind.

(iii) Do not force any answers. Be honest.

(iv) Now complete the following:
MALE FEMALE AGE

(names were not asked as this could curb frank and idiosyncratic answers.)

Q1. Do you know the name Athol Fugard?

A: The Potchefstroom group (that will as from now be referred to as group A) all answered in the affirmative. The Sebokeng group (that will now be referred to as group B) were not all that familiar with the name although two students from this group were actually responsible for staging the production.

Ten out of a possible thirty six responded in the affirmative = 28,7%

Q2: Say something about him if you can.

Group A	100% response
Group B	5% response

Q3: Have you ever before read any other plays by Athol Fugard?

Group A	100% response
Group B	13,3% response

Q4: How many have you read?

Group A:	At least one.	100%
	Two or more	58,2%
Group B:	At least one	22,2%
	Two or more	5,6%

Q5: Write the name(s) as you can remember it (them).

Group A:	Master Harold and the Boys	100%
	People are living there	5,3%
	Hello and Good-Bye	67%
Group B:	Sizwe Banzi is dead	5,5%
	Nongogo	5,5%

Q6: Have you seen any of these plays performed on stage?

Group A	83% negative
Group B	100% negative

Q7: If you have, how many?

Group A	17% had seen one play
Group B	-

Q8: Give the name(s) if you can remember it (them).

Group A	ALOES, People are living there.	
Group B	None	

Q9: Have you ever heard about Robben Island before?

Group A	Affirmative	100%
Group B	Affirmative	66,5%

Q10: Only if you have, how do you picture the place in your mind?

Group A	Barren, rocky	97,3%
Group A	Tropical island	2,7%
Group B	Wild, lonely	94,6%

Q11: What do you know about the island?

Group A	Nothing	2,7%
Group A	Has a prison for (political) prisoners	97,3%
Group B	Has a big prison for blacks	41,6%

Q12: What does the name Hodoshe mean to you?

Group A	Nothing	100%
Group B	A green fly that favours stinking places	100%

Q13: Did you visualise Hodoshe for yourself at any stage in the play?

Group A	Yes	44,4%
Group B	Yes	8,3%

Q14: Only if you did, select any of the following and add if you want, to make the picture fit your visualized picture complete:

Underline words you find appropriate:

fat, lean, tall, small, red hair, bold, dark hair, blonde, beard, moustache, gruff voice, squeeky voice.

Two images came to the surface in group A, the one added up to a typical bombastic type, while the features of the second type mirrored inferiority e.g. squeky voice, bald, slight etc.

The four who visualised in group B, conjured up a picture of a tall fat man with a loud voice.

Q15: Do you have any feeling towards this man?

Group A	Yes	91,6%
Group B	Yes	5,5%

Q16: Only if you have, select one of the following or add if you want to: fear, anger, disgust, hatred.

Group A	Mostly disgust and anger
Group B	-

Q17: Does the name Antigone mean anything to you?

Group A	Yes	11,1%
Group B	Yes	2,7%

Q18: Do you think it was a good idea to perform this specific play at the prison concert?

Group A	Yes	94,6%
Group B	No	41,6%

The remainder of the groups made no comment.

Before continuing with the second half of the questionnaire, I think it necessary to comment on the responses of the first half.

The first four questions are self-explanatory. More white students have read plays by Fugard than the black students have. A related research could be done to trace the reason(s) for this. I can only postulate that various influences

contribute together e.g. availability of books; access to libraries; socio-economical circumstances, which would influence leisure time, privacy of own room and atmosphere conducive to reading; Fugard as dramatist against other dramatists, novelists etc. It is interesting to note that the choice made by the students concerned point to the white students selecting those plays by Fugard depicting their own cultural group and the blacks choosing those plays that obviously centre on black protagonists. This could point to cultural background as an influence, although too few students were involved to give the results real credence.

Very few students have attended any of Fugard's productions, which again might be due to a number of reasons e.g. access to theatres, money, interest in drama per se and Fugard in particular.

More white students are informed about Robben Island. For some reason the blacks prefer to think that only blacks are imprisoned there, which could have further implications regarding their attitude to politics.

Although the black students, because of their knowledge of the vernacular understood the connotative meaning of Hodoshe better than their white peers, they failed to respond emotionally as well as group A. I was at a loss to explain this inability of the B group to empathize, until I read the research paper of Hynds regarding the ability of readers to emphathize. According to her this corresponds with the complexity of the reader's interpersonal construct repertoires.

Although neither of the groups rated high in visualising, the B group had an extremely low count. Again this seems to justify a study on its own, as many factors will have to be taken into consideration that could possibly have an influence, e.g. exposure to books, exposure to any aspect of the media; domestic conditions (were they tucked away with a story, sowing the first seeds of fabulation and visualization, were their imaginations stimulated sufficiently if at all during the

crucial first five years of development, etc.). Although I had foreseen this to a certain extent in my hypothesis, I had anticipated the white students would show a livelier response. Incidentally while reading I came across a test done by Ross and Altshuler on inhibitedness. When tested, both groups of students showed a very high degree of inhibitedness. It was interesting to note that the exceptions who responded freely, visualized and empathized, were far less inhibited than their peers, according to the test. This will be discussed again at the end of the questionnaire.

The last question of this section was approached from two absolutely different perspectives by the respondents, which could point to the difference in cultural background.

The students in group A focused on the similarities of the situations in **Antigone** and Fugard's play, and the point that John is trying to make. From this point of view they regarded it as a good choice. Group B interpreted the question in a different way. They focused on the results of the performance and decided that it had been futile, the choice was unwise if not downright stupid. The speech or act would have no value and little significance to the remaining prisoners who might never be released. Freedom was rated higher by these students than a "heroic imprisonment". According to them, the cause of the people and his family could be served better at home.

SECTION II General

Q1a: Did you have prior knowledge of the play?

Group A	100%
Group B	93,7%

Q1b: Did you have any expectation concerning the play or about Fugard in general?

Group A	Yes	91,6%
Group B		-

Q1c: If so, what were they?

Only group A responded, and very restrained or superficially. The average answer was: "Interested in his work".

Q1d: Did you have a wandering viewpoint?

Group A	No	44,4%
	Yes	19,9%
Group B	Yes	83,3%

Q1e: Do you think you have sufficient knowledge about social conventions?

Group A	Yes	88,8%
Group B	Yes	83,3%

Q2: What is the predominant effect that the play had on you? Underline, or add what you think is applicable:

confusion, suspense, identification with characters, interest, boredom, sympathy, frustration, amusement, terror, anger.

Group A	No emotion	8,3%
	More than one emotion	22,2%

Most emotive responses were disgust and hatred. Two students admitted boredom.

Group B	Mostly interest and amusement	
	No emotion	44,4%

Q3: Explain plainly why the play had the above effect on you. Certain guidelines that you can use are themes, language usage, characterisation, social norms.

Group A Most students, many female, found the language disgusting

Group B Very non-committal answers, e.g. It is a good play. All students complained about the use of abuse. It creates the impression that blacks do not receive a decent upbringing.

Q4: Do you *think* this play has influenced your point of view concerning the political issues in the country, and if so, how?

Most students from both groups responded negatively.

These responses were recorded after students of both groups had read the text and watched a production of **The Island** by two black students of the Sebokeng College.

After comparing the responses of both groups, it became evident that group A responded more readily and seemed to be more informed, or had a wider horizon. Although ample space was provided in the Second Section, the responses were short and stilted and disappointing.

Although all students were part of the research on a voluntary base, and they were not expected to identify themselves, it was evident that they did not respond freely. Seeing that the language medium is not their mother tongue, some might hold this as a reason. It should be taken into consideration however, that group A take English as their major subject, and group B use English as a medium of communication daily and have used it during the whole of their school careers. Although group B are diploma students, they major in English Methodology. Therefore English as a restricting factor can be ruled out, and some other reason will have to be found.

This phase of the research measured denotative meaning but did not operationalize the measurement of connotative meaning which may constitute the difference between simple communication and artistic expression.

The following example is used to illustrate the influence of historicity on response:

John: ... Went down the corridor to Number Four ... Solitary and Spare Diet!! But at the end, instead of turning right, we turned left into the main block, all the way through it to Prinsloo's office.

(Titter from audience.)

Winston: Prinsloo!

(Crescendo in titter.)

John: I'm telling you Prinsloo himself, man. (More laughter). We waited outside for a little bit, then Hodoshe pushed me in. Prinsloo was behind his desk, busy with some papers. He pulled out one and said to me: (John does a perfect mime of the important official). 'You are very lucky. Your lawyer has been working on your case. The sentence has been reduced from ten years, to three.' (Loud laughter from audience).

Winston: You say you saw Prinsloo?

John: Prinsloo himself. Bastard didn't even stand up when I walked in. (roars of laughter). And by the way ... I had to sign. Ja! ... bastard didn't even look at me: 'Ten years!' I watched ten years of my life drift away like smoke from a cigarette while he fidgeted and scratched his arse. (Utter pandemonium. Red faced students buckle up with laughter.)

The response was so vehement and unexpected that for a short while the players were quite confused.

During the student production of **The Island**, it became very obvious how subjective knowledge could be mobilized by the text. The group of Potchefstroom students had an idiosyncratic response when the name of the chief prison warden, Prinsloo, was mentioned.

What had happened here was that the students' subjective knowledge of an actual person, Prof. Prinsloo, was activated. The comment by John combined with each respondent's subjective knowledge, causing quite an explosive reaction.

This response occurred only during this one particular production, performed to

to the university students. No other group could be mobilized even to smile at John's comment, because on their horizons Prinsloo was simply a prison warden. But to the students the idea of the dignified professor "scratching his arse" was too much for their self-discipline to try and keep composed.

3.3 READ AND THINK-ALOUD TEST

(Group A students study at Potchefstroom,
Group B students at Sebokeng College of Education)

In view of the difficulties explicated up to now, a further test was undertaken.

What follows is a generalization (which has been substantiated in the Preface as it would be impossible to comment on each response per se) of the read and think-alouds test that was done, using the text of **No Good Friday.**

Although students are better prepared after having read or seen a play of Fugard's, a new set of coordinates, new philosophical and rhetorical concepts - in fact completely new predicative information is needed for the treatment of the following play. It is very difficult to establish on the one hand an 'informed reader' that can respond as an individual, and on the other hand lead the student to arrive at the meaning through self-discovery. The lecturer has to design a strategy which combines lecture and practical exercises so that he can intervene and guide the responses of the students without actually doing the thinking for them.

The first exercise is usually very simple to test only preliminary response. Then they are provided with workable prepredicative information, followed by a second set of questions which, needless to say demand considerably more sophisticated responses than the first.

Having been provided with a workable prepredicative experience the students should be able to fill in the negations in the play. This step should be taken at two levels: the rhetorical and the philosophical. At the rhetorical level

the lecturer could discuss Fugard's concept of human rights, dignity, opportunities, in short, his political views. Also at this level symbolical and metaphorical use of language should be discussed. At the philosophical level a teacher may introduce three concepts viz. the concept of subjectivism, the concept of order and the concept of reality in a state of flux.

At this stage it is perhaps appropriate to point out that the phenomenological approach has a significant advantage over the New Critical approach in that the New Critics work on the premise that one should avoid the life, philosophy or "weltanschaung" of the author and take art only at its face value. But even at the risk of tainting this approach, it is deemed necessary to create a horizon for the students concerning the time, place, background, and if needed, structure of symbols used in the relevant plays. A knowledge of the playwright's convictions and philosophical coordinates is essential prepredicative information that could only create a fuller response from the reader.

On the philosophical level the idea of subjectivism is the simplest of the three. The same objective situation can generate different subjective reactions among different classes of real or hypothetical knowers. The ultimate form of subjectivism is the creation of one's own world. A particular individual is the sole creator of his own world. He alone lives in it and he alone can destroy it. Nobody else can recreate his world. To some degree the same objective stimuli and the same time and space frames can be recreated but the particular experience cannot be duplicated. The reasons are obvious: not only is each individual different but also he himself is constantly changing. Thus the reality of an individual is in a state of flux and not static. Subjectivism even in such an extreme form has to fall short of **solipsism.**

Therefore even in the most homogeneous group of students not all students are likely to respond with the same depth of thought. Different students although equipped with the same prepredicative experience should cover significantly different distances when they respond to the same questions. It should be urderstood that the prepredicative experience is essentially a working tool,

which should help them to respond to the questions.

Thus far it could not be established that any of the theorists propounding readers' response have actually empirically proved or tested the theories. One of the reasons could be that the lecturer asks the students to complete only the negations that he sees or that he has chosen to forward to them. They do obviously have the latitude to venture as far as they can but then again they are informed readers only in as far as their teacher has chosen to inform them. Obviously there are weak and more bright students in any group and therefore it can be expected that some will merely answer a few questions mechanically whereas others may have the courage to venture farther and discover by themselves ideas which are implicit in the writing. Most questions in my questionnaires have been designed not so much to test literacy or analytic response; instead their aim is to generate such thoughts in the minds of students that they themselves can heuristically arrive at a thematic understanding of the play.

By making them aware of the focal points in the play the teacher is leading his students unobtrusively to respond. This does not imply that he is actually saving them the effort of thinking.

Reading while thinking aloud directs attention to the process of reading and not so much to the interpretation the reader finally develops. Gadamer's notion of 'horizontverschmeltzung' or fusion of horizons explores the tension between a perceiver's past and present experiences and can be a useful starting point for the teacher to explore how students respond to a text which conventions are outside their realm of experience by making them conscious of their existing horizon.

The students were all exposed to the following instructions on the tape recorder before commencing:

* This think-aloud process is not an effort to assess how brightly or correctly you respond.

* You will not score any marks at any stage.

* There is no single correct response.

* You are free not to respond at all if that is how you feel.

* Please respond naturally.

* Do not try to censor your thoughts even though they might seem irrelevant and sometimes ridiculous.

* You may respond by reflecting on your own life experiences or convictions.

* You may refer back and forth in the text.

* If you feel that you cannot respond for some reason, feel free to say so.

* If you have read a few pages which constitute a unit of meaning to you, you are free to respond holistically even if it means that you differ from your initial response.

* You will be asked to do a second reading on the same text and may now respond more or less frequently, quite differently or exactly the same as the text dictates to you.

* Do not hesitate to express strange ideas for fear that they might be wrong or that you might be penalised.

* There are no wrong responses.

To assess Ingarden's theory of sentence correlatives, students were asked to read silently one sentence at a time and respond after each sentence. They

were instructed to say as much as they could about what they were thinking when reading. They should also indicate what they did not understand.

After having completed a selected unit, the respondents were given an opportunity to look over the given passage once more. This was to ascertain that they did form a complete, coherent version of the extract that might otherwise have been fragmented as a result of the continual interruption while concentrating on the think aloud task.

Comment on Group A

Two types of response were immediately obvious - the extensive and the reflexive modes. In the reflexive mode readers relate affectively and personally, direct their attention away from the text and toward themselves and focus on their own thoughts and feelings rather than on the information of the text. They tend to respond in the first or second person.

In the extensive mode readers attempt to deal with the message conveyed by the author; their focus is on understanding, and filling in gaps not by relating the text to themselves, and they tend to respond in the third person.

The following is an extract from a group.

A student responding in the **extensive mode:** (Fugard:1977:138).

Shark: Well, isn't anyone glad to see me?

Response: The name is very suitable. The man is like a shark, a predator, you know in the sea. Always hunting and killing. And people running away like. You can feel the atmosphere.

Harry: Lot of dumb bastards. Come on, betaal jong.

Response: Perhaps this fellow is inferior and now he had some position and he likes pushing people around and he won't get into trouble. Like the speed cops you know.

Shark: Don't be so vulgar, Harry. You're always thinking about money.

Response: This is not sincere, is it? Because I mean obviously money is all that matters to him.

Harry: That's what we come for.

Shark: Yes, that's true. It is Friday night ...
I want to report to you chaps. After all you are entitled to something for your subscription ...

Response: He is trying to pretend to do good. He is covering for himself, protecting himself. It is like making it look decent, you know as if he is really doing something good.

Harry: I reckon this is the best yard in Sophia Town ...

Response: You see he uses psychology. It shows how clever, how sly he really is. He is dangerous ...

This student is trying to analyse and substantiate and comes close to doing a critical analysis. This kind of response, however, was only recorded among group A students.

The following is an example from group A students of a response in the **reflexive mode:**

Shark: Don't rush me, Willie. You're as vulgar about money as Harry.

I want to report to you chaps. After all you know are entitled to something for your subscription. That is, other than the protection we give you.

Response: I don't like patronising. You know since I was a kid I hated somebody saying like No, he won't like that. He's a good boy, isn't he? and so on you know.

(He scans the introductory pages reads an African township etc. but cannot recall ever having heard about it. An explanation is supplied about Sophiatown and the more recently developed Soweto).

Response: Oh hang on! I've got it all wrong. I thought these chaps were white. Are they white? I mean they are like gangsters, you know Mafia style, aren't they? No? Hang on, I'll have to read again.

Response: But why do they say here ... "and I got to address the delegates"... they must be white. Afrikaner too, because why does it say here ... "betaal jong". And here it says "All you boys got paid?" We always talk to the blacks like that .. Hey boy!

The page is read a second time with correct interpretation and then continued.

Harry: The very best. We've had trouble from these bums.

Shark: And for that reason you've had no trouble from us. You travel home safely with your pay packets every Friday night.

Response: Oh I see they are like vigilantes. Is that it?

Shark: ... In fact I've had a bit of trouble. Especially down in Gold Street. Heard about Charlie? Poor Charlie. Tell them about Charlie, Harry.

Response: I don't like this.

Harry: He didn't get off the train tonight.

Response: I don't like violence. I never read books on violence or go to movies or so on. Perhaps it's because I'm slight of build, you know. Perhaps I'm scared. But I don't like violence and fighting.

From this response of a male student from group A it can be deduced that the reader returns to the text for verification. In this case, however, the text could not supply him with sufficient information. The indication of "Sophiatown, an African township near Johannesburg" could not alert or "mobilize" any subjective knowledge, as the Sohpiatown "happened" before his time, or at least before he had established a political awareness of the world outside his own town boundaries. As is typical of the reflexive mode, he is continuously relating affectively and personally.

It also proves how the text can lead the respondent astray. Once he has established a certain perspectives he "finds" clues to strengthen this reponse e.g. he thinks the "gangsters" are white, Afrikaners at that, and find corresponding evidence to strengthen his view, in "betaal jong!"

This corresponds with the model of reading as Iser advocates. Once a point of view has been established, there is a reluctance to change.

The following is an extract from a respondent from **Group B**, reading the same passage as the respondent from Group A.

Shark: Don't rush me, Willie. You're as vulgar about money as Harry.

Response: He musn't hurry because he is going to make plans.

Harry: That's what we come for.

Shark: Yes, that is true. It is Friday night. All you boys got paid?

Response: They get money every Friday.

Harry: They wouldn't be here if they wasn't.

Willie: Here's your five shillings, Shark. Take it and go.

Shark: Don't rush me, Willie. You're as vulgar about money as Harry, etc.

The above two interjections can be taken as the only response.

Differences and similarities in the above-mentioned responses

In both sections respondents endeavour to predict what would occur in succeeding portions of the text, although this occurred more frequently in the extensive mode.

Connecting new information with previous content occurred mostly in the extensive mode.

Certain information in the text was questioned at intervals by the respondents of the extensive mode.

Typical of respondents of the reflexive mode was also that they used their own horizon more frequently to explain or extend or classify the content. To a certain extent they also evaluated the veracity of the content, and often indulged in critical appreciation.

Emotive responses to information in the text e.g. the merciless killing of the

old man, also occurred in the reflexive mode.

There was a definite relationship between the length of the passage read and silences before responding. The longer the passage or paragraph, the longer students took before responding.

A longer than usual silence, however, suggested that the reader might not have reported all thoughts that have occurred to him. It is also possible that some students spent some time preparing what they should say or omit, although none admitted having done this when questioned on the point.

Comment on Group B

On the whole students were inclined to paraphrase. Although they were frequently invited to respond freely, somehow the text failed to mobilise their subjective knowledge. Whether the cause lies in the text or the reader, is a matter that can be theorised about at great length. Briefly it can be defined as follows: If the fault lies with the readers, it simply indicates, according to Iser's prescripts, that the reader had no great store of subjective knowledge.

If the fault lies with the text, it simply cannot be classed as good literature, as according to Iser's theory all good literature inherently has the qualities necessary to make the reader respond.

If neither is at fault, Iser's theory is a fallacy. But seeing that group A did respond, if not exactly according to Iser's wishes, then at least to a certain degree, the latter can be ruled out. What should be kept in mind more consistently then is the idea of the informed reader that Fish propagates.

4. CONCLUSION

Just what is going on in the mind of the reader during the process of reading is difficult to grasp, even after an in-depth encounter with most response theories, and an effort to "do" a live response experiment. Most important though, what has surfaced during the development of this research, is that we are in a realm **beyond** criticism, **beyond** theory. Which might cause some critics to cry out, "Then nothing is going on!" Yet **nothing** is inconceivable. Actually so much is going on simultaneously, at various levels, that it is difficult to identify it for oneself, let alone voice it.

A literary work is literary experience. Iser deals in aesthetics of experience. The text is a strategy for recording, i.e. for reading. The recording process takes place in the consciousness of the reader and goes hand in hand with the involvement of the reader. The responses of the reader, whether emotional, meaning giving, **discarding**, identifying or integrating, become an experience. As the text is decoded in the consciousness of the reader, the reading experience is subjective and not subjectivistic.

All literary responses are founded in the subjective reading process. So for instance the texts of **Endgame** (Beckett) and **Ulysses** (Joyce) invite meaning-giving and then evade it because these texts aim at more than mere meaning-giving or planned effect. Polyvalency, according to the latest views of Iser, is symptomatic of the untranslatability of the text, because embedded in the fictional text is a dimension, that can be valued only as response (Erfahrung). The limits of semantics are clearly defined in the multiple interpretative possibilities of the text. In **Der Akt des Lesens** Iser indicates that realism in the text is a combination of selected elements from reality through which the elements are separated from their systematised meanings in reality. The imagination of the author creates combinations to form a text with unity, that can only be described as a world-to-be that cannot be decoded either to reality or the imagination. In the text the reality poses unpragmatically while the imagination is limited and precise.

The word **fiction** that we have in the course of time simply taken for granted, now seems quite difficult to define. Nobody really knows what fiction is, but the word serves as an indicator of the experience outside the known meaning systems. What fiction is, and what the aesthetic reception that it evokes, changes according to culture and time. Fiction refers to the experience during which the validity of reality, or the conventional systemised presentation of reality is temporarily being lifted. That is the aesthetic experience.

To address the problem once again: How does Iser work in Africa? The two key concepts to be taken into consideration are culture on the one hand and response on the other. Sandwiched in the middle is the text. I am aware of the heterogeneity of our society and have been cautious in my interpretation of cultural behaviour. Thus when I comment on the behaviour or response of a group of black students it does not imply that all or even most blacks should react in this way. For this purpose the group of College students resemble an interpretive community as propagated by Fish. They have a common goal, viz. to be educated, to better their living conditions and improve the existing standard of education. Most of them renounce rebellion as a means of solving problems and try to imitate the role model of the perfect teacher as introduced to them in most subjects. The comment is only an effort to create an awareness of broader tendencies or norms in African behaviour.

Although there is great diversity in ethnic groups, I am referring to, in sociological terms, the dominant culture. It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into variations of thought, behaviour and value systems of the numerous ethnic groups.

As an interjection, I would like to repeat what I have discussed in the preface: Generalisation is the result of observation. After observing the phenomena of reading and its accompanying response, I am forced to generalise, because as I have pointed out the specificity of the empirical conclusion depends on the degree in which the empirical premise has been formulated. Because the success of the project depended on a less defined unrestricting approach, it might be that the conclusion can be interpreted as inconclusive, as the conclusion of an empirical

research cannot be absolute, as complete observation is impossible in this very private and automatic phenomenon. At certain stages the temptation was there to steer the object of research in order to arrive at and realise a very definite pre-conceived idea, and in order to impress the reader.

The conclusion will also reveal that the transmission from premise to conclusion, in other words the inference, is more than mere observation. The question will again surface, if literary science can be tested at all, as it has such a notoriously low grade of testability.

However, let us rely on Iser to

1. frame Fugard
2. organise realities and
3. address the existing system.

> The text mobilizes the subjective knowledge present in all kinds of readers and directs it to one particular end. However varied this knowledge may be, the reader's objective contribution is controlled by the given framework. It is as if the schema were a hollow form into which the reader is invited to pour his own store of knowledge (Iser, 1978:143).

1. Framing Fugard

As I have indicated earlier, Iser is not specific in his theory and does not focus on cultural differences. His way of accommodating these differences is implied in "all kinds of readers". As it will prove each segment of the first sentence is a premise on its own. Just as learning a second language or another language often leads to a deeper understanding of one's native language, understanding the values (mobilized by the text) of a second culture can lead to the discovery of values in one's own culture. Winston Brembeck aptly commented that "to know another's language and not his culture is a very good way to make a fluent fool of oneself" (1977:14).

This paper has succeeded in identifying the urgent need to study not only the language, but also the culture of our fellow black South Africans. An error that I have to admit to, is that I took it for granted that the blacks have a culture of their own. What I realised too late was that there is a vast difference between tradition(s) of the forefathers belonging to the peaceful timeless existence of yesteryear and the new fractured worldview of the urbanised black. The latter, with exception of only a few, experience a severe identity crisis. At certain times the ancestral traditions focus prominently, while on other occasions the western model is followed slavishly, often in ignorance. A deliberate effort should be made not only to educate, but also to acculturize the new generation of urbanised Blacks. We should stop talking **about** them and start talking **to** them. Fugard unwittingly stepped into the latter trap. His texts were rejected on account of the fact that the blacks felt "talked about" as he failed to establish a direct relationship between reader and implied author. He also failed to establish an indirect relationship between reader, persona and author in a linear communication. I realise that the linear communication and further triangular relation between reader, persona and authhor do not comprise the sumtotal of the aesthetic experience and response, but these factors cannot be ignored as contributing to low response.

Even though making allowance that a respondent were able to emphathise with certain persona and might be so engrossed in the text that the author disappears, there will be a stage when the implied author once more comes to the fore, and the respondent will realise that the givens, i.e. theme, plot, characterization have not been presented in a "neutral" way.

The text then becomes an illustration of a certain point of view of the author. Taking it a step further the author might deliberately strive to coerce the reader into accepting his ideology as correct. I will not indulge again in an explanation of the different planes on which the reader can enter and re-create the text. It will suffice only to mention that the work of art is re-constructed from a lexical angle, an ontological angle and thirdly the ideational angle, which is the most difficult seeing that it is embedded in the first two. What is important for this paper is that author and reader should meet on this plane to ascertain meaningful communication.

This is only possible if a relation of trust has been established on the first two planes. The text can be accepted or acceptable only if the given value systems ring true. The text, when addressing divergent culture groups, must be authentic and credible.

Whether Fugard's intention was to patronise a black audience or to reprimand a White audience cannot be established. Judging by the response of the lack students from the College, Fugard and his text did not meet the requirements to be accepted. In **The Blood Knot** and **The Island** two worlds, each with its own norms and value systems, are implicitly contrasted viz. white oppressing minority versus black oppressed majority. Both texts are based on an "un-lived" cultural experience. Through manipulation of motifs and symbols, value systems are attacked, and the implied author reaches out to a new world of freedom, equality and fraternity. In this manipulation process the texts become onesided, and lose credibility. The characters who voice his ideology, relate only to a small percentage of blacks, excluding the non-violent and non-violence oriented students. Exclusion of any positive comment or situation, has as result that readers, inevitably experience an imbalance between ideology and reality, which results in the rejection and non-assimilation of the text. The students refuse to become engaged with text and author, resulting in a process of "stone-walling". Extraneous influences and gross miscalculation seduced Fugard away from a completely honest engagement with cultural realities. The obtrusive voice of the philosopher as heard in **People Are Living There** scuttles his attempts to effect a more general, culturally stratified appeal.

2. Organising Realities

As concerns the text mobilising the reading, it has become evident that there are certain prerequisites before this can happen. First and most obvious there must be subjective knowledge present to "mobilise". This concept has been coined the "informed reader" by Fish. If a reader meets with this description, according to Iser, there will be aesthetic reception. If, on the other hand, a reader is informed, but the text fails to "mobilise" him, the fault is obviously on the side of the text and Iser goes as far as to say that such a text cannot be regarded as literature.

He continues to say that such knowledge is directed to one particular end, to which I would like to add, a particular end for each individual reader.

Iser's second premise is that however varied this knowledge may be, the readers objective contribution is controlled by the "given framework". To this I would like to add that the readers' response is controlled, amongst other things, by the given framework. As Iser by implication has stated, certain readers are automatically excluded from his premise and that which he has to say is addressed to the informed reader. There might yet be influences other than the text or the given framework to "control" the reader.

For this specific project no automatic sifting or elimination has taken place and as a result a group of uninformed readers were expected to respond to a model of reading. The result was that group B (Sebokeng)had such low response, in all readings i.e. **The Island, Blood Knot** and **No Good Friday** that measured against the prescriptions of Iser it could not be regarded as response.

Group A, although showing a more varied response, and touching on some of the aspects mentioned by Iser, fell short of realising the model.

A factor that cannot be excluded, though, is the text. Had the same group of students responded differently to a text of Becket, that Iser had used for a model, it could be proved that the text of Fugard does not comply with Iser's requirements of good literature. Add to this the comment of Brembeck and "quite a strong case against Fugard could be established".

But, as the issue was not to prove or disprove the literary worthiness of Fugard's work, this further response test was not done.

The reason(s) for group B responding differently can only partially be ascribed to difference in culture. A factor that cannot be eliminated, is the amount of

exposure that these students have had during their life to television, theatre, cinema, books and magazines. No black child goes to bed with Cinderella, Snow White or the Sandman. Nursery rhymes and fabulation might be introduced at some stage in the primary school, but not necessarily. To bring a group of black students onto the same referential framework as their peers at a white institution, is a matter of impossibility. A lifetime of natural "western" development cannot be artificially crammed into them.

Therefore one can conclude that it is often the students' familiarity with conventions or the absence thereof rather than the conventions themselves that determine a certain kind of response. It is possible that cultural and institutional experience develop a certain competence in the student that plays a major role in determining the kinds of systems that are found in texts. Once aware of their competence they are free to develop creative interpretations. This is mirrored in the inhibition tests, when they suddenly seem to "see" once their eyes have been opened to the obvious shapes in objects around them.

Although it might sound presumptuous, response, in Iser's terms, is a fallacy if tested on an uninformed reader. If the reader has no horizon, no frame of reference, no background knowledge, no "subjective knowledge" there will be no meaningful response in the true sense of the word.

A second factor, that apart from "the given framework" controls the reader, is inhibitedness. Using the tests suggested by Ross & Altschuler (1981) both groups of students reacted much on the same level. The hypothesis I worked on was that group A, having responded on a different level in the other tests, would yet prove better equipped. This proved to be wrong. Both groups of students, with different cultural backgrounds, different exposure to literature theatre and radio, responded similarly when asked to complete elementary figures. Seeing that these tests were used to reveal how inhibited students were regarding creativity, they were used to test in how far these students were inhibited in their responses.

3. ***Adressing the existing system***

QUESTIONS FOCUSING ON CURRICULUM CONTENT

Does the curriculum of the English Department include units or activities which encourage self-awareness?

Does the English Department's curriculum include units/activities on value awareness?

Does the English Department curriculum include activities which explore language related careers in non-stereotypical ways?

Do the English Department curricula include components which deal with the effect of the social environment (political, social and religious influences, for example) on literature (poetry, dramatic work, prose)?

Are the individual works of both men and women of all diverse cultural/racial groups included in all units of the English programme?

Are literary appreciation components taught from a multicentric rather than a Eurocentric perspective, so that there is a recognition of the validity of a variety of aesthetic standards?

Do the English curricula thoroughly integrate the concept of literature as a universal means of human communication?

RECOMMENDATIONS

One common factor that focuses on the horizons of both these groups is a rigid schooling system. The emphasis on observable outcomes limits the possibility of critical thinking and response. Tumposky cites two ways in which a behaviourist mode of prespecifying outcomes inhibits learning. The first is in down-playing the significance of the unpredictable: "Education as induction into knowledge is successful to the extent that it makes the behavioral outcomes of the students

unpredictable" (Stenhouse, quoted in Candlin, 1984:33). The focus on results obscures the complexity and dynamism inherent in effective teaching and may thus constrain the process itself. Second, the concern with "getting there" overshadows divergent thinking or discovery learning. If ends are classified before means are selected, creativity and innovation may be stifled.

Thus, before responding, most people hesitate and attempt to think in terms of what they are "supposed" to say. Then they adjust their answer according to what they think is expected. It is a game most of us have played at different times. The need to survive, and diplomacy, often lead to adjusted answers. In either case you say what you believe is appropriate, or what you are expected to say, because the truth might hurt, offend, alienate friend, teacher or partner. Our rigid schooling system aggravates this condition by labelling most answers or responses as either right or wrong, for which the student is correspondingly awarded some marks or none at all, which consequently could make the difference between passing and failing. Obviously the result is that children from a very tender age are conditioned to think, say, and react as they think the teacher wants them to. This reflects in most branches of the academic curriculum. Innovative ideas are not welcomed as they upset the didactic structure and threaten or challenge the teacher.

For too long criticism as we know it has inhibited response by solving problems, clearing ambiguities and explaining ironies, instead of allowing the reader to experience them as confusions.

For too long the New Critics have convinced academics that the educative function of reading and criticism would be lost when focusing on readers' response, since every reading according to them would have equal worth. Consequently, they argue, it would be impossible to educate the reader to more correct readings since the basis for evaluating these readings - the individual readers' response, would not become public but remain private. Thus the New Critics only recognise the role of the reader in as much as it has value in cognitive response. If a knowledge of literature is to be obtained it should be obtained by examining the ideational

architecture of the literatory work and not through extra-textual excursions.

For too long the affective response of the reader has been denied as a valid source of meaning, because of its alleged inaccessibility to evaluation. Or to put it more simply, there can be no rigid, inhibiting standard to brand an experience or a response as either correct or incorrect.

When response statements are used as a means to develop evaluative criteria, they are made more than records of subjective reactions. In this way contemporary issues of literary theory as well as philosophical material can be integrated into the lecture room without sacrificing the spontaneity of the students' initial responses and without reifying the text or the reader. When teaching from a reader oriented perspective students are not discouraged to respond to culture and politics on a personal level. They are made conscious of the factors influencing their responses to texts, e.g. cultural background, exposure to literature and literary theory.

They try to analyse their responses and the sources from which their reactions originate, rather than branding a drama or novel as good or bad.

In most tertiary institutions, literary theory has achieved a recognized, if somewhat feared, place in the curricula. But if theory is to become more than elitist speculation, its transition into pedagogy will have to become a reality. If the questions that are raised by theory are important, and I believe they are, they must have consequences in praxis. Using specific response statement assignments that address cultural, historical, phenomenological and structuralist concerns, teachers can integrate new literary theory into the classrooms by showing the students that they are already aware of many of the issues addressed. The students' assumptions are of importance in the classroom, even though they may differ widely because of their culturally different backgrounds. Once the students can distinguish between what they feel to be acceptable, e.g. in Fugard and acceptable conventions of our culture, they are introduced to the idea that multiple discourses are always operating simultaneously in any given society. On a less sophisticated

level, the students themselves have made this observation in their discussions, realising that certain perspectives are legitimate in certain contexts. The recognition that multiple discourses speak to individual members of society is reinforced, when discussing, for example, the different reactions of characters in Fugard's plays. If the students gain confidence in their own ability to analyse historical, cultural and even linguistic forces that underlie their experiences of texts, the classroom will become a scene of expansion of ideas and not a rigid, prescriptive inhibiting scene of repression of ideas.

The time has come for us to stop trying to rule that one kind of evidence for a literary interpretation is in principle better than another. This would call for a revolution of institutional methodology for which I think few departements would be ready or willing to implement.

Rather than promoting the acquisition of prescribed behaviours and responses as the central goal, we need to develop a model which begins with problematised aspects of reality, promoting critical reflection on that reality and incorporating competences as a means for taking action. In this way competences become tools in service of education, rather than a constraining framework for instruction. However, if critical thinking is to be the goal for our students, it must be the goal for us as educators in the same way.

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ADDITIONAL READING

PLAYS WRITTEN BY ATHOL FUGARD

1958 **No Good Friday**

1959 **Nongogo**

1961 **The Blood Knot**

1963 **People are living There.** Cape Town. Buren Publishers

1965 **Hello and Goodbye**

1966 **The Occupation**

1969 **Boesman and Lena.** Cape Town. Buren Publishers

1972 **Sizwe Bansi is dead**

1973 **The Island**

1974 **Statements Issued after an arrest under the Immorality Act. Three Plays. Sizwe Bansi is dead. The Island.** London. Oxford University Press

1971 **The Coat.** Cape Town. A.A. Balkema.

1977 **Dimetos and Two Early Plays.** Oxford. Oxford University Press

1977 **Marigolds in August. A Screenplay.** Johannesburg. A.D. Donker

1982 **Master Harold and the Boys.** Norfolk Great Britain. Thetford Press Limited

1974 **Three Port Elizabeth Plays.** New York. Viking

Tsotsi. South AFrica. Quagga Press Crown Mines.

ADDENDUM

The test, done on both groups of students, was borrowed from **Writing Step by Step** (Ross A.J. & Altshuler, T.C.).

The students were all exposed to three basic shapes, and invited to "read into" them as many shapes and figures with which they are confronted daily. They were given the choice to use each shape separately, or to make a combination of two or all of them. Attached is a basic list of possible 'pictures' which seemed obvious. It proved that both groups were completely over-estimated, and they failed to see the resemblance of the basic shapes in everyday objects.

In much the same way they seemed unable to apply their historical background to texts. They wait to be told, and then venture only so far.

OUTCOME OF TESTS DONE ON BOTH GROUPS OF STUDENTS TO ESTABLISH DEGREE OF INHIBITEDNESS AS A FACTOR FOR LOW RESPONSE

GROUP A (POTCHEFSTROOM STUDENTS)

11 no response to ~ the curve
16 no response to = the parallel
3 no response to △ the triangle

17 one response to ~
15 one response to =
17 one response to △

Only 5 students had two or more responses to ~
Only 2 students had more than two responses to =
Thirteen could respond more than twice to △

During the first phase of the response tests using **The Island** as text, twenty one students had no visual response when asked to visualise characters mentioned, but not appearing on stage.

The same students performed poorly when asked to construct their own "pictures" using the basic shapes supplied. With the exception of one student, 21 of the 22 who failed to produce a visual image of Hodoshe and Prinsloo, scored only one, or nothing in each of the various sections.

On the emotional response level, only two of the group of 21 felt emotion towards the prison warden. The rest of the group who had succeeded in deriving concrete presentable objects from the basic shapes, all except two responded emotionally. Of these, nine had a complex response of more than one emotion.

When asked to respond to the play as a whole it was again interesting to note that the inhibited students failed to react to the very amusing incident round Prinsloo, or on the other hand refused to admit that they had been amused for fear of being penalized or offending somebody.

Their prevalent responses were frustration, confusion and sympathy, while two admitted that they suffered boredom.

The smaller, less inhibited group of thirteen all expressed candidly that they were highly amused. Only one suffered from frustration, while eight could empathize and eight others complained of confusion.

From the above givens, it seems that there is a definite direct relationship between visual response and creativity and inhibitedness.

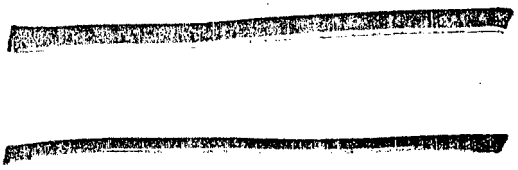
GROUP B

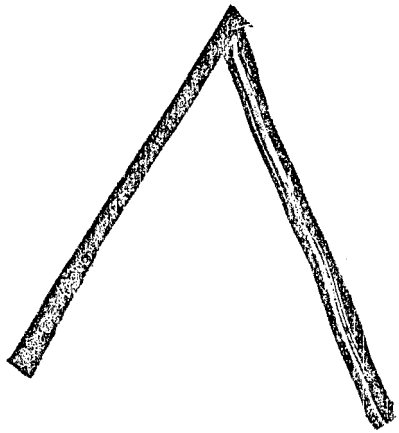
The group of 38 students, exposed to the same test, performed pathetically low.

Nobody responded to the curve
Seven had a single response to the parallel
Everybody responded to the triangle

The last response, however, had a strong cultural element in that most responses resembled the designs on the mud huts of certain tribes. Not one succeeded in relating the triangle to, for example, the various road signs to which they are all exposed daily. This might point to a "compartmentalization" of knowledge.

This test corresponds with the tests done by Andersen on children from New York and New Orleans. Those children who rated high as creative individuals, tended to take more risks at inferring information about unfamiliar topics.





ABSTRACT

Reading is an activity which involves the participation of the whole human being. Before the advent of Reception Aesthetics, most approaches, though outwardly dissimilar, agreed that the literary work is the container of meaning. Reception Aestheticians reject the point of view that the text has only one correct meaning. Thus when different readers read the same text, their responses will differ from each other. According to Iser's model of response the text can "unmask" the reader, depending on his horizon. This concept triggered the idea of setting up an empirical strategy for testing response, comparing readings of two culturally divergent groups. In view of the fact that human rights have been receiving extensive coverage from the media, thus providing the respondents with a broad horizon, Fugard as playwright and three representative plays were decided on viz. **The Island, The Blood Knot** and **No Good Friday.** Before attempting the actual empirical research, extensive reading was done, including the theories of phenomenologists and philosophers, as well as research projects done in America on the influence of culture on reading and comprehension.

OPSOMMING

Die leesaksie betrek die mens in sy totaliteit. Voor die verskyning van Resepsie Estetika het meeste kritiese strominge, hoewel oënskynlik uiteenlopend, saamgestem dat die betekenis in die literêre werk opgesluit is. Die voorstanders van Resepsie Estetika het hierdie opvatting verwerp, dat die teks slegs een korrekte betekenis het. As verskillende lesers lees, sal hulle respons verskillend wees. Volgens die model van Iser het die teks ook die vermoë om die leser te "ontmasker", afhangende van sy horison. Hierdie opvatting het die idee laat posvat om 'n empiriese strategie daar te stel om respons te toets en in die proses die respons van twee kultureel-verskillende groepe te toets. Siende dat die media daagliks dekking gee aan menseregte, het ek gepostuleer dat die respondente op dié manier voorsien word van 'n breë horison wat 'n voorvereiste is vir respons. Fugard as kampvegter vir menseregte het na 'n logiese keuse gelyk en drie van sy dramas, te wete **The Island, The Blood Knot** en **No Good Friday** is gebruik as tekste. Voordat die werklike empiriese ondersoek aangepak is, het ek my deeglik onderlê in teorieë, insluitende dié van filosowe en fenomenoloë. Ek het ook kennis geneem van verwante ondersoeke gedoen in Amerika om die invloed van kultuuragtergrond op lees en begrip vas te stel.