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The goal of this text is to reassert the importance of the imagination and the reader in the process of reading. It is my experience that the reader and text interaction has come to be dismissed as being too prone to individuation. Such a mindset comes from the foundation set forth in criticism by the New Critics and has is continued on in the works of some critics today. While I do not dispute that there are cases where an individual may overstep the process and map their own feelings or emotions onto a text, to discredit the communication that we all share with a text is a step too far in the opposite direction. Therefore, I have set out to not only assert the importance of the reader and the imagination in the process of reading but also to show how through their involvement a referential world is formed which aids the reader in establishing perceptions both in and out of the world of the text.

In order to do this I will first discuss the imagination as a crucial part of one's engagement with art. Oscar Wilde's "The Decay of Lying" will be my primary source in this venture as Wilde is an avid promoter of the imagination and asserts a new way of viewing its usage. I will then begin my discussion of reading as an imaginative and transactional act through the use of Louise Rosenblatt's work in reader-response theory. Delving further into reader-response theory I will place Rosenblatt in to juxtaposition with theorist Wolfgang Iser to reveal how the communication between text and reader is prompted through what Iser calls the "gaps" in the text. All of this will be brought together by my inclusion of cosmopolitan theorist David Harvey and his three-part spatial

taxonomy of absolute, relative and relational space. Harvey's theory, as well as the concept of dialectic tension, will help me to reveal how the works of these three theorists connect together in forming a unified theory of the reading process. It is through this unified theory that I assert the referential world is formed by the reader and for her use.

Following this I will utilize Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes as a means of displaying how the reader's imagination and the referential world are engaged during the reading of a text. By referring to Doyle's use of clues, highlighting the genre of detective fiction as a whole, and discussing the concept of Holmes existing as more than a fictional character, I will show that the referential world transcends the boundaries set forth by criticism in its distinction between fact and fiction. It is also here where I will provide justification for seeing the imagination as more than a means of relating to fantasy, and instead assert that it should be seen as an influential portion of human understanding. Thus to remove the reader or her imagination from any process of attributing meaning to a text is harmful to the future of literary criticism.

A RETURN TO THE READER AND THEIR IMAGINATION:

THE FORMING OF A REFERENTIAL WORLD

IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH

MEANING IN A

TEXT

by

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To my Mother.

You were the one who pushed me to be what

I wanted to be, to see what others could not see,

and above all else to be proud of who I am.

I love you.

This thesis written by Michael D. Smith has been approved by the following committee members of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Oscar Wilde's "The Decay of Lying" (2010) stresses the importance of the audience's imagination not only in reading a text and approaching art but in viewing the world at large. The author chooses to have the term "lying" take the place of "imagination" in order to subvert the way society has come to define the very idea of the imagination[1]. In doing this Wilde playfully challenges the perceived meaning of the term as well as taking jabs at the way in which society understands meaning to be established. For Wilde the imagination leads to the understanding of meaning since it is a person's ability to imagine that leads them to engage with art aesthetically and ethically. Wilde uses the character of Vivian to display his concern of society losing the ability to imagine. Vivian asserts that young people are born with the gift of lying/imagining, but they will inevitably "[fall] into careless habits of accuracy, or [take] to frequenting the society of the aged and well-informed"; either choice is "equally fatal to [their] imagination" (Wilde 14). These "careless habits of accuracy" lead young people to place more stock in what is perceived as fact to understanding and defining meaning rather than relying on their imagination to guide them. In turn this mindset is perpetuated among

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[1] Imagination (n)(b); "An inner image or idea of an object or objects not actually present to the senses; often with the implication that the idea does not correspond to the reality of things"; *Oxford English Dictionary*.

those who consider themselves to be the "well-informed," who then seek to educate others on the correct manner of viewing things.

Literary criticism, and by association literary history, has been for some time now devaluing the impact that the reader and reader-response theory has on literature. The beginning of this process can be linked back to the New Criticism movement which sought to separate a reader's personal or emotional reaction from the analysis of a text and to shift the focus more towards the structure that makes up the piece. In spite of this approach finding a foothold in criticism as well as academia, theorists such as Louise Rosenblatt and Wolfgang Iser continue to promote the reader's importance, but their work is buried beneath the critical assertion of structure and the perceived factual nature of a text. The choice of some critics and scholars to remove the imagination from their approach to literature, forgetting to think of themselves as readers, has influenced students and everyday readers to develop a disregard towards the importance of the interaction between reader and text. Such an interaction is crucial to stimulating the reader's imagination, as Wilde encouraged his audience to see that through its stimulation the reader's understanding changes and grows. It is my aim to use a three part spatial taxonomy developed by cosmopolitan theorist David Harvey to show how Wilde's view of the imagination, Rosenblatt's concept of circumstance driven choice in a reader's reading, and Iser's idea of textual "gaps"[2] all come together to enable the reader to form a referential world for imaginatively engaging with literature; leading her to comprehend from aesthetic and ethical/efferent points of view. Then by applying this concept to

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[2] *The Act of Reading* (1978) (Iser 28-29)

Arthur Conan Doyle's "Sherlock Holmes" I will illustrate how this referential world is formed through the reader's imagination and what sort of impact it can have on the her ability to perceive and comprehend.

The Decay of the Imagination

In his article "Wilde's Trumpet Against the Gate of Dullness" (1990) William E. Buckler says that "The Decay of Lying" signified what many would call a "turning-point in Wilde's literary career and in the modern literature's efforts to define itself" (Buckler 311). Truly "The Decay of Lying" was innovative for its time (originally published in the January 1889 edition of *The Nineteenth Century*) as it was uncommon for someone to pull back the metaphorical veil and to push people to really think about how they understand or define things around them as well as what those definitions mean to them. Wilde's text demonstrates a way for his audience to understand who they are and more importantly what they could be if they only realize what is going on around them. As Wilde asserts, life should not be about simple observation and reaction but about what that reaction can tell a person with regard to themselves and what is being observed. The experiences of a person should be just as much about the self-conscious reflection that follows as it is about the moment itself. Buckler says that Wilde "looked upon the critical imagination as the key to life's quality for the cultural group as well as for the individual" (Buckler 312). A critical imagination does not accept being told how and where to find meaning but instead finds purpose in making meaning. In order to achieve this level of understanding an audience must engage openly with their imagination. Many people,

myself included, assume that the imagination functions as a fanciful perspective on reality[3] or as more of an aesthetic response to objects and ideas than anything else. After all aestheticism, from a cultural standpoint, is defined as: "the pursuit of, or devotion to, what is beautiful or attractive to the senses; as opposed to an ethically or rationally based outlook"[4]. More often than not educators teach the influence the aesthetic movement had on Wilde and his writing in conjunction with "The Decay of Lying." While the text certainly displays Wilde's belief in the concepts of aestheticism it also shows his prowess in critical/ethical theory, which combines into a piece that changes the perspective on the imagination as not just being aesthetic but ethical as well.

The entirety of "The Decay of Lying" is a dialogue between two friends named Vivian and Cyril. After having his offer to venture outdoors and enjoy nature turned down by Vivian, Cyril asks the subject of his friend's important article: "I intend to call it 'The Decay of Lying: A Protest'" (Wilde 10). The two friends engage in a back and forth debate over the importance of lying and what it means not only to the world of art but to the "natural" world as well. Vivian rebukes Cyril's claim that politicians "kept up the habit" of lying and then goes on to put forth the notion of what being a "true liar" means: "How different the temper of the true liar, with his frank, fearless statements, his superb irresponsibility, his healthy, natural, disdain of proof of any kind! After all, what is a fine lie? Simply that which is its own evidence" (Wilde 10). From this response it becomes clear that what Vivian admires about the liar is not a fondness for misleading people but

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[3] Imagination (n)(b); "often with the implication that the idea does not correspond to the reality of things"; *Oxford English Dictionary*.
[4] Aestheticism (n), *Oxford English Dictionary*

rather the gifted imagination that this person possesses. In his biography *Oscar Wilde*

(1987) Richard Ellmann says that the author favored using the term "lying" over

"imagination" because the latter had "grown stale" and just using the word was "too

natural and involuntary" (Ellmann 302). By linking the common term "imagination" with

a taboo one such as "lying" Wilde breathes new life into what the concept means as well

as giving it a new purpose when it comes to art. As Vivian says: "If a man is sufficiently

unimaginative to produce evidence in support of a lie, he might just as well speak the

truth at once" (Wilde 10). Rather than saying that if one cannot lie they should always tell

the truth, Vivian suggests that if one does not possess an imagination they should stay

with what is understood or perceived as fact. In other words, an unimaginative person

should distance themselves from art in order to preserve the free-thinking concepts and

notions put forth by this form of expression, whatever its medium may be.

During the course of educating his audience on the importance of making

meaning Wilde is subverting and converting terms through Vivian's paradoxical

arguments and ironic/humorous perceptions in order to illustrate his own perspective.

Buckler addresses Wilde's "conversion" of the term "lying" by saying that it "is the act

of a writer interested in more than demonstrating his skill at playing the idea-game"

(Buckler 315). The whole concept of "lying" being of "inestimable value to mankind"

(Buckler 315) is difficult for the mind to comprehend given the social connotation

associated with the term. As Vivian reads from his article:

> He [the everyday man] has not even the courage of other people's ideas, but
> insists on going directly to life for everything, and ultimately, between
> encyclopedias and personal experience, he comes to the ground, having drawn his

types from the family circle or from the weekly washerwoman, and having

acquired an amount of useful information from which never, even in his most

meditative moments, can he thoroughly free himself (Wilde 13).

Wilde's utilization of "lying" is symbolic of taking what society has accepted as the

term's meaning or its set memorized definition, and turning that meaning on its head to

prove that it is pointless until applied by those who are taught it. Lying to someone is

considered wrong, for what reason? Society bases this negative connotation for the term

in the belief that a lie is "a false statement with intent to deceive" and for many it is

border line "criminal"[5]. Even still there are times when lying, although this practice is not

completely acceptable from certain perspectives, can be seen as a proper recourse in

order to spare someone's feelings as well; this is called a "white lie"[6]. A paradox begins

to form around the meaning of this term lying. According to one definition lying is wrong

and society for the most part accepts that it is wrong, yet there are times when one feels

compelled to lie and may even receive a favorable outcome from doing so. Looking at the

difficulty of pinpointing a meaning in regards to one word it becomes apparent that the

idea of defining an entire work on an individual level is impossible. There are multiple

factors that come into the fold when trying to decipher what a piece of art means or how

it should be approached by its audience, too many to take into account in a single

definition. Wilde understood the impossibility of what society has come to accept as

absolute meaning and pushed his audience to exercise their own critical thinking rather

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[5] Lie (n.1.a), *Oxford English Dictionary*.
[6] Lie (n.1.b), "A consciously untrue statement which is not considered criminal; a falsehood rendered venial or praiseworthy by its motive"; *Oxford English Dictionary*.

than relying on outside sources to dictate what a piece means. The key to this process is first and foremost the acceptance and engagement of one's own imagination.

During Vivian's explanation of his statement that "Life imitates art far more than Art imitates life" he says that one's imagination is "essentially creative," that it always "seeks for a new form" (Wilde 38-40). Society, through the acceptance of modernity of form[7], has come to understand literature as influencing the imagination; Wilde says this is untrue. Yet, if life is imitative of art then would it not stand to reason that the imagination would be influenced by the art of literature? Vivian uses the example of young boys reading "Jack Sheppard and Dick Turpin" who then subsequently go off and "pillage the stalls of unfortunate apple-women, break into sweet-shops at night, and alarm old gentlemen…by leaping out on them" (Wilde 40). One might consider this a normative response of the imagination as the boys are imagining themselves to be these characters and copying their exploits. However, Wilde does not see the imagination as a part of life or "Nature" but instead it is responsible for housing the "infinite variety" that the two are thought to hold (Wilde 8). The imagination is not what is influenced by art but rather a part of the influential act that art has on its audience. When Vivian says that the imagination is "creative" and constantly seeking a "new form" he is talking about the influential capabilities the imagination has when it is engaged. As an audience interacts with art it challenges them because their approach is reflexive of the world they know and art is displaying things in a manner that does not necessarily fit their level of

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[7] "…modernity of form and modernity of subject-matter are entirely and absolutely wrong. We have mistaken livery of the age for the vesture of the muses…Certainly we are a degraded race, and have sold our birthright [imagination] for a mess of facts"; "The Decay of Lying" (Wilde 25).

understanding[8]. Wilde sees art being anticipatory in regards to life, as Vivian says: "[Art]

does not copy [life], but moulds it to its purpose" (Wilde 41). The challenge art provides

manipulates its audience to engage their imagination and seek out a way of understanding

the piece that will benefit them. For Vivian as well as Wilde this is the only way one

should or can be able to attribute meaning to art. It also bears noting that Vivian's

statement about life being molded to art's purpose is made about the artistic medium of

literature. An important distinction to make due to the fact that reading is arguably the

most interactive experience any audience can have with a piece of art.

    Still, when it comes to literature James Grant says in his book *The Critical*

Imagination (2013) that the "constitutive aim of criticism" is imparting upon a reader the

understanding "that such-and-such is an appropriate response [to a work], or an

appropriate reason [for responding to a work], or a part, feature, or represented element

[of the work]" (Grant 39). Later in his argument Grant begins to examine a view of

criticism which Buckler explains as being important to Wilde (it has also been attributed

to many others including Kant, Hume, Scruton, etc.), that being the idea of the critical

imagination. An imaginative critic values the same end goal as a typical critic but their

focus includes the reasons why an audience may or may not have had a certain response

and what events led to their reaction (Grant 85). While it is not possible to take into

account everything the imagination or an aesthetic consciousness of a person has to offer

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[8] "Art finds her own perfection within, and not outside of herself. She is not to be judged by a standard of resemblance. She is a veil, rather than a mirror" (Wilde 37).

accessing the critical imagination would allow a critic to explore the elements that could

persuade an audience to view a particular piece of art one way or another. As Grant says:

> Beliefs about the role of imaginativeness in interpretation have shaped some
> philosophers' accounts of literary meaning; their evaluations of certain kinds of
> literature; and even their views on the ontology of literature. Views on the
> imaginativeness of aesthetic experience have influenced views on the nature and
> reality of aesthetic properties. Famous instances of imaginative criticism have
> shaped many theorists' views on what the point of criticism is. Many have
> appealed to claims about the critic's imaginativeness to mount defenses of the
> value of criticism (Grant 55).

Audiences do not have to work or research in order to possess a critical imagination as it

is a system already at work within their understanding. Critics work to prove a vision or a

perspective they have of a piece of art. In order to do this they spend hours researching,

writing and debating all in the hopes that at some point someone will say: "I see it too" or

"That's a valid observation." What the idea of the critical imagination is trying to show

audiences is that if someone has a claim about a piece of art or has a particular vision of

what the art is saying then that is all the evidence they should need. Despite any argument

against their view, based in contextual or artistic analysis, it cannot be denied that the

person saw what they saw and understood the art as supporting that vision. Looking at

meaning in this way does not take away from the artist's ability or the effort that they put

into the piece. If anything stimulating the audience and the imagination in this way lends

credibility to the abilities of the artist. Great critics and philosophers began all of their

works with an idea. Although ideas can be supported by fact and evidence they do not

always come from places of perceived truth but instead are formed out of the

imagination. This idea in no way is meant to diminish the importance of research or the

pursuit of study in regards to delineating a better understanding of a topic or medium of art. Instead the concept of the critical imagination is aimed at the field of criticism as a reminder that a big part of what critics do is based in imagination almost, if not as much as, the artists.

Wilde promoted the importance of the imagination and concepts such as the critical imagination because he did not want to see such a gift diluted by the structure the concept of absolute meaning had begun to establish. For the author the loss of the imagination would leave society with nothing but mere fact as their guide and Wilde saw that as being dangerous. This is not to say that the author thought fact to be bad or that it had no place in society, facts can play a role in one's engagement with the imagination. As Vivian says: "The ancient historians gave us delightful fiction in the form of fact; the modern novelist presents us with dull facts under the guise of fiction" (Wilde 6). While facts at one time operated under the imaginative act, alongside fiction, since the devaluation of the imagination facts have come to represent empty accuracy. Wilde's stance is reflexive of that of Louis Agassiz who, according to Samuel H. Scudder's piece "In the Laboratory with Agassiz" (1874), believed facts to be "stupid things…until brought into connection with some general law" (Scudder). Wilde's view of fact as nothing more than an idea or an opinion that has been perpetuated so long that it has become accepted as actuality or truth. Despite this acceptance facts ultimately mean nothing unless they have a purpose behind their use. Returning to the anecdote of the young boys imitating the stories of "Jack Sheppard and Dick Turpin," Vivian saw them as representative of fact and fact's continuing pursuit to "reproduce fiction" (Wilde 40). I

would say that fact is not pursuing fiction in order to reproduce it but instead fact is trying to find its purpose again, which exposes its need to be a part of the interpretative process. As long as society continues its "monstrous worship of facts"[9] as a universal truth the purpose that could be found in the interpretation of fiction will be lost to fact and the reader.

Through Vivian Wilde displays his concern with losing the free-thinking nature art provides to a mindset that will value concrete or absolute definitions with no purpose[10]. Art seeks to stir and inspire the imagination with its intangible amounts of potential for creating or realizing meaning, but if it is limited and constricted by audiences being persuaded to place stock in "stupid facts" then it loses its potency. It can be argued that it is because of this concern that Wilde is writing "The Decay of Lying" in the first place. With his text the author aims to change the perception of the imagination and promote his own theory on how one is to engage with their own imagination during the act of interpretation. Samuel Taylor Coleridge also writes on engaging with the imagination in his *Biographia Literaria* (1907), where he says that:

> The IMAGINATION then, I consider as either primary or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation…The secondary Imagination…dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify (Coleridge 272).

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[9] Fact (n, II, 7), "That which is known (or firmly believed) to be real or true; what has actually happened or is the case; truth attested by direct observation or authentic testimony; reality," *Oxford English Dictionary.*
[10] "Facts are not merely finding a footing-place in history, but they are usurping the domain of Fancy" (Wilde 33); "and if something cannot be done to check, or at least to modify, our monstrous worship of facts, Art will become sterile, and Beauty will pass away from the land" (Wilde 15).

Wilde's view of the imagination reflects a few of the same aspects that Coleridge touches on here. Foremost is that Wilde like Coleridge held the imagination as being a multifaceted function however, Wilde did not see the imagination as split in two. Instead the imagination for him is a combination of both the aesthetic and the ethical or what is pleasing and what is moral. What happens in the process of interpretation then is that the audience actively engages their imagination as they begin their interaction with art and are then able to approach the piece aesthetically or ethically, based on what the art invokes in them. From this perspective the actions of the hypothetical boys Vivian discusses are not due to an over active "imagination" as a social construct but an act of the imagination and the boys' choice to read ethically and see the stories as moral guides.

In "Oscar Wilde and the Eclipse of Darwinism" (1993) Andrew R. Morris says this of the author: "Wilde subverts and ridicules the restrictive norms of his time, while entertaining the audience whose values he is undermining" (Morris 515). Morris believes that Wilde is intentionally stepping on the "popular sentiment" or "contemporary morality" of the people he is writing for as a way of diminishing the "Victorian respect for utility and scientific fact" (Morris 515). While there is no mistaking that Wilde enjoys subverting and destabilizing normal conventions, "The Decay of Lying" does not whole heartedly support the view that the author is attempting to tarnish morality or ethical pursuits. Wilde is instead encouraging people to see the ethical as an extension of the imagination just like the aesthetic. As Vivian says in response to Cyril's declaration that writing an article was "not very consistent" of his friend: "Who wants to be consistent? The dullard and the doctrinaire, the tedious people who carry out their principles to the

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bitter end of action" (Wilde 9-10). Cyril has known his friend to live a lavish life of self-indulgence, even belonging to a group known as The Tired Hedonists[11], which Vivian considers to be purely aesthetic in nature. Therefore finding his friend working on something as constructive as writing an article leaves Cyril at a loss. It is not until Vivian begins explaining his topic that Cyril realizes his idea of an article is nothing at all like the article his friend has been working on. Utilizing this socially accepted form as a means of presenting his ideas Vivian urges readers against separating what is ethical from what is aesthetic. As he says to Cyril:

> Believe me, my dear Cyril, modernity of form and modernity of subject-matter are entirely and absolutely wrong. We have mistaken the common livery of the age for the vesture of the Muses…Certainly we are a degraded race, and have sold our birthright for a mess of facts (Wilde 25).

The main issue Vivian has with fact is that it limits the ability of lying/imagining which in his view is the primary function in the realm of art. While Morris chooses to view Vivian's words as Wilde trying to undermine his audience's ethical perspective, Vivian cannot be viewed as the sole interpretation of Wilde's thoughts on ethical criticism. Cyril and Vivian both occupy a balanced space within the piece even though Vivian speaks more frequently than his friend. It is because of their relationship and the dialogue between them that one can understand Wilde as promoting both the ethical and the aesthetic as parts of the whole imaginative act of interpretation.

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[11] "The Decay of Lying" (Wilde 11-12), A group used by the author for satirical purposes; Ellmann asserts that through the mention of The Tired Hedonists "Wilde smiled decadence away" (Ellmann 302).

As Vivian explains to Cyril: "Many a young man starts in life with a natural gift for exaggeration …But as a rule, he comes to nothing…He either falls into careless habits of accuracy, or takes to frequenting the society of the aged and well-informed. Both things are equally fatal to his imagination" (Wilde 14). Lying or rather the imagination is a skill that is a part of everyone and it enables artists to create new things (worlds, portraits, histories, etc.) for audiences to enjoy. After all, according to Vivian, lying or "the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of art" (Wilde 63). Wilde was clearly passionate about not wanting art to be diminished, but he also valued his audience's quality of life. In a discussion with Yeats, Wilde is quoted as saying that it is his belief that "a man should invent his own myth" (Ellmann 301). Without the imagination society will come to put more stock in the "worship of facts," and "Art will become sterile…Beauty will pass away from the land" (Wilde 15).While art is seen as a purely aesthetic form of expression Wilde is asserting that the ethical aspects it possesses cannot be overlooked either. Looking at the manner in which Wilde portrays Cyril and Vivian demonstrates his belief that both are present within any imaginative or communicative act. Ellmann chooses to view this dialogue between the two characters as an attempt to "entertain" as well as "persuade" one another (Ellmann 304). Wilde embodies both approaches in the argument and gives the reader reasons to side with one friend or the other based on the rationality or perhaps the ingenuity of their argument. Even though Vivian's and Cyril's opinions differ heavily neither friend definitively wins or loses ground throughout the discussion.

In the first few pages alone the author's equal representation of both an aesthetic and ethical view to nature shows the manner in which Vivian and Cyril will be used to engage the audience. Cyril invites Vivian to accompany him outside rather than remaining in the library all day, he asks his friend to "lie on the grass, and smoke cigarettes, and enjoy Nature" (Wilde 7). Vivian responds that he does not enjoy nature and that he is quite happy to have "lost that faculty" (Wilde 7) furthermore, he feels that his diminished appreciation for nature has come from his study of art. Vivian makes some disparaging remarks to the idea that "art makes us love Nature more" and then tells Cyril: "What art really reveals to us is Nature's lack of design…her absolute unfinished condition" (Wilde 7). Upon hearing this Cyril simply replies: "Well you need not look at the landscape. You can lie on the grass and smoke and talk" (Wilde 8). Nature to Cyril appears to be operating aesthetically, representing an escape from the dinginess of the indoors and affording himself and his friend the opportunity to relax and enjoy what they see around them. Vivian on the other hand, while his entire argument is a call to arms for aestheticism, can be seen as looking at nature ethically. For him nature is "indifferent" and "unappreciative," when Vivian walks in nature he "[feels] that [he is] no more to her than the cattle that browse on the slope, or the burdock that blooms in the ditch" (Wilde 9). Of course Vivian's view of nature and what is 'truly' aesthetic are over exaggerated for the purposes of the piece, however, his belief that nature provides nothing useful to his outlook on life and is simply too defective to interact with shows him thinking through his response to nature ethically. Both characters are imagining what purpose the fact of nature serves in regards to them or their understanding and from there they have

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chosen there response accordingly. Through playing with these concepts and relying on cultural paradigms Wilde engages his audience with the theory he is presenting and maintains interest throughout his text.

"The Decay of Lying" and Wilde's concept of "life imitates art far more than art imitates life" (Wilde 38) is rooted heavily in the ideals of the aesthetic movement. However, Ellmann argues that Wilde's exposure to the concept of the "aesthetic man" and the "ethical man" came not from the aesthete Søren Kierkegaard[12] but rather from a piece aimed as a rebuttal to the idea of aestheticism which was published by W.H. Mallock entitled *The New Republic* (1981)[13]. Following this exposure to the ideals of the aesthetic movement Wilde would apply the concepts to his own time at Oxford, utilizing both texts as influence and employing a mix of "self-parody" along with his "advocacy" of the movement (Ellmann 90). Looking now at Wilde's relationship with aestheticism it is easier to see how his view of the imagination began to develop. Rather than simply being caught up in the movement itself the author operated more objectively, observing both the functional aspects of ethical views as well as the enriching perspectives of aesthetic views. Wilde could see how both concepts benefited a person and the only time they came into conflict with one another was during what he would refer to as the "violence of opinion" (Ellmann 100). Opinions can become violent when they begin to be

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[12] The aesthetic man operates consciously hedonistic/self-indulgent, just as Vivian does in Wilde's text, while the ethical man is bound by a since of ethical duty to his fellow man. The text is made up of a series of articles, each written under a pseudonym and embodying the mindset of the lifestyle the fictional author has chosen, all seeking to answer the question posed by Aristotle "How should we live?" *Either/Or* (1959) Kierkegaard.

[13] A satirical piece, which consisted entirely of dialogue, written by Mallock to mock and ridicule the important figures of aestheticism at Oxford University.

perceived as fact or as some sort of truth. Although the choice of how to approach art is

left to the individual in Wilde's theory of imaginative interpretation, recent criticism has

come to put value in finding the best or more appropriate choice[14]. Critics and scholars

favor their understanding of an efferent perspective because it eliminates, according to

some, the flaws of individual perspective. As Wayne Booth says in *The Company We*

Keep (1988) critics approach the art of literature with the "belief that a given way of

reading, or a given kind of genuine literature, is what will do [the reader] most good"

(Booth 5). Academia has come to reflect this view as well in the way it educates students

on how to read or understand literature. Based on this learned approach to art Wilde

appears to be aggressive in his promotion of aestheticism in "The Decay of Lying." The

author is actually over exaggerating the aesthetic and utilizing humor in order to draw the

reader in and show her that she has a choice when it comes to interpreting meaning.

      In his book Booth considers the notion of Wilde as a cultural theorist. While some

scholars see the author's work as "disparaging all ethical concern" Booth says that

"Wilde's aim is to create a better person—the kind who will look at the world and art in a

superior way and conduct life accordingly" (Booth 11). What the critic views as Wilde's

attempt to develop a "superior way" of looking at the world may instead be understood as

the author pushing his audience to acknowledge what they have possessed all along, the

imagination. Art should be seen as stimulating the imagination and garnering a response

from its audience that enables them to approach a piece aesthetically and ethically. Booth

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[14] As most literary critics operate under the "belief that a given way of reading, or a given kind of genuine literature, is what will do [an audience] most good"; *The Company We Keep* (Booth 5).

asserts that: "Many critics today still resist any effort to tie "art" to "life," the "aesthetic" to the "practical" (Booth 5). Through "The Decay of Lying" Wilde undermines this resistance by pushing the audience to think through the piece and understand that a singular definition carries no power to define anything unless it is applied by them. Wilde's use of humor and his toying with established social definitions attracts the reader's attention and allows an interaction with the text by engaging her imagination. Therefore instead of simply reiterating the ideas mapped out by those who have read before her the reader is choosing a path of her own and understanding the piece based on what she sees for herself. It is Wilde's contention that such an interactive process should take place any time an audience engages with art not just when reading his work. Louise Rosenblatt in her book *Making Meaning With Texts* (2005) calls this process the "choosing activity" (Rosenblatt 8). Like Wilde, Rosenblatt believes the interactive process between reader and text is imaginative and the effort the reader puts in, combined with her choice in perspective, opens up the channel for what the theorist calls "transaction.

CHAPTER II

THE IMAGINATION AND READER RESPONSE THEORY

Reading as an Imaginative/Transactional Act

In her book *Literature as Exploration* (1976, cited as *LE*) Louise Rosenblatt says that the human element of literature is forgotten when it is approached in a "purely practical" way or as Wilde asserts when the imagination is forgotten:

> When concern with the human elements in literature has become confused with the purely practical approach to those elements in life itself, distortion and critical confusion have followed. Literary works have then been judged solely in terms of their conformity to conventional aims and standards…[this] approach is possible only when the nature of literature as an art is forgotten (Rosenblatt 29).

For Wilde the imagination was a part of human nature[15] and to separate one from the other renders them sterile and useless in regard to interacting with art. Similarly, Rosenblatt is asserting that literature should be seen as both a piece "accomplished by means of artistic form" as well as being a way of "[ministering] to human life and human needs" (Rosenblatt 28). The audience may be taught to look for functional aspects of a piece but they should view them as being a part of the same imaginative and interactive process as their personal knowledge or memories. As Rosenblatt says: "The most sophisticated reader, extremely sensitive to the subtly articulated qualities of the poem or

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[15] "Many a young man starts in life with a natural gift for exaggeration [lying] which if nurtured in congenial and sympathetic surroundings, or by the imitation of the best models, might grow into something really great and wonderful" (Wilde 14); "The Decay of Lying."

play or novel, cannot judge its technical worth except as [she] also assimilate the substance which embodies [the human emotions]" (Rosenblatt 6). Without the imagination a reader is only reacting to a part of what she is reading instead of interacting with the whole text. A reader should not be seen as focusing solely on the structure or functionality of a work nor is she reading for a pure emotional experience either. Both of these approaches work towards an overall experience that will prove to be the most beneficial for the reader and thus the importance of understanding Wilde's view of the imagination. The audience is being led by the imagination to form their ethical and aesthetic understanding of art, which displays the "human element" (Rosenblatt 6) in literature.

The Reader, the Text, the Poem (1978, cited as *RTP*) is where Rosenblatt says that one's "imaginative capacity is not limited to art but is basic to any kind of verbal communication" (Rosenblatt 32). The theorist goes on to assert that the imagination is "required in any reading" whether it be historical, scientific, legal, or philosophical (Rosenblatt 32). Modern conceptions of the imagination place it outside the "real world", or the perceived reality of the reader, and into a world of fantasy. While my aim here is not to argue whether there is or is not a singular/definable reality, the debate itself is a crucial part of the ongoing struggle to maintain the importance of the imagination that Wilde discusses and Rosenblatt picks up in the course of her theory. The concept of realism or the idea that there is a reality which all things are to be compared to[16] has

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[16] Realism (n,I,b), "…the theory that the world has a reality that transcends the mind's analytical capacity, and hence that propositions are to be assessed in terms of their truth to reality, rather than in terms of their verifiability"; *Oxford English Dictionary*.

found a foothold in the wide spread perception of how the world works. It is because of this acceptance of realism that some audiences feel the need to deem objects and ideas to be either realistic or fantastic. When looking at literature the different genres reflect realism's influence over the artistic medium, most notably is the distinction of whether a text is fiction or non-fiction. Fiction is considered as any text that is "imaginatively invented" and this invention process is viewed as acting in opposition to that of fact ("fiction"). Based on this definition the social connotation of the imagination has come to place it strictly in the genre of fiction rather than in the reading process as a whole. The "imaginative character" (Rosenblatt 31) of a text to some critics bears no weight on the reader's overall understanding of any piece unless it's in a fictional framework. One's imagination has therefore become a fantastical ideal which is accepted and supported in their youth but begins to be devalued and limited by society as well as academia once they grow older[17].

The reader builds or constructs a perception of her own world that is defined by her personal understanding and assumptions of what is real or realistic. Such assumptions from out of the reader's knowledge and memories, which are gained through past personal experiences. Rosenblatt says a reader "must call forth from memory of [her] world what the visual or auditory stimuli [of the text] symbolize for [her]" and in doing so they are able to "reach through [themselves] and the verbal symbols to something sensed as outside and beyond [their] own personal world" (Rosenblatt 21). The world of

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[17] "Many a young man starts in life with a natural gift for exaggeration…But, as a rule…He either falls into careless habits of accuracy, or takes to frequenting the society of the aged and the well-informed. Both things are equally fatal to his imagination," (Wilde 14); "The Decay of Lying."

the reader is perceived as a series of learned responses based upon the aforementioned concept of realism however, even the use of this concept is reinforced by the reader's imaginative capacity. For the reader her perception is reality and the text is fiction therefore any interaction between the two must involve some sort of go-between in order for the reader to understand the text, thus the need for the imagination. Critics and scholars place emphasis on creating a "distinction between the work of the art and the "real world," sometimes referred to as the fictionality of the work, sometimes as its imaginative character" (Rosenblatt 31). In doing this it can be argued that critics and scholars are attempting to assert that reality or the context of the reader and the fictional nature of the text do not and should not intersect. However, the "real world" we perceive comes from "what we bring to it not only from past "reality" but also from the world of fiction or imagination" (Rosenblatt 33). Whether there is a confirmed reality or if figures and places in a text truly exists is irrelevant to the reading experience. A reader can decide which parts of the text she wishes to apply to her future perception of reality or another text by choosing to look at parts of the piece efferently or aesthetically. Even so, readers have come to accept that the imagination is connected with fiction and that has led to the assumption that it should be seen as operating in a purely aesthetic form.

Although the "aesthetic stance brings with it a certain distancing from "reality," because it is known that the experience is generated by the words and not by…images, situations, characters, actions observed directly without verbal mediation," this has no effect on the imagination as a whole (Rosenblatt 31). Wilde says that the imagination could not be seen as an extension of fantasy nor the aesthetic but rather an ideal of its

own which incorporates both fact and fiction. From the author's perspective this means that the imagination's role in the interpretive process is to influence the audience to view art aesthetically and ethically, depending on how they are engaging with the piece. Aestheticism to Wilde represents an immersive and free-thinking approach to art, embodying the more modern phrase of "art for art's sake"[18]. In looking at "The Decay of Lying" Vivian, for the most part, takes up the charge of the aesthetic movement and in the course of his argument does push for the re-establishment of the imagination's importance. Yet, the character's warning is not that without aestheticism art will become "sterile"[19] but that without the ability of lying/imagining senseless and purposeless facts will come to dominate the realm of art and eliminate both the aesthetic and ethical from perception. Wilde sees the ethical response as the search for morality in a piece or something that appeals to and influences one's everyday thinking. Although Vivian certainly does not see such a view of art as on par with an aesthetic view, through his text Wilde does promote both the aesthetic and ethical in order to tame fact into knowing its place. Thus when the reader engages the imagination during the reading process she is influenced not only by the piece and its fiction but the facts surrounding it in order to form an aesthetic or ethical approach.

Rosenblatt echoes Wilde in her promotion of the imagination but instead of seeing the responses as being aesthetic and ethical her theory views them as "the aesthetic and the efferent attitudes" (Rosenblatt 33). For the theorist society's "usual definitions of

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[18] Originally a French phrase accredited to Théophile Gautier, but appearing in other works prior to or around the same time as Gautier by the likes of Victor Cousin, Benjamin Constant and Edgar Allan Poe.
[19] "…and if something cannot be done to check, or at least to modify, our monstrous worship of facts, Art will become sterile" (Wilde 15); "The Decay of Lying."

literature-as-art [did not provide] a satisfactory basis for categorizing [all texts]"

(Rosenblatt 35). One cannot just define a text as aesthetic or nonaesthetic "based on such

matters as the author's purpose or methods, the linguistic devices present in the text, the

fictionality or nobility or emotional intensity of the contents" (Rosenblatt 35). Instead

Rosenblatt says that an "aesthetic reading…the reader's primary concern is with what

happens during the actual reading event" (Rosenblatt 24). Unlike Wilde's aesthetic

response Rosenblatt sees the aesthetic as being a "qualitative" response where the reader

is focused on "the associations, feelings, attitudes, and ideas" that the text draw out of

them (Rosenblatt 25). This is not to say that this process is not free-thinking as Wilde

asserts rather that Rosenblatt's aesthetic is more grounded in the direct response of a

reader influenced by what she is "living through" (Rosenblatt 25) instead of just free

association[20]. An efferent reading places more emphasis on the direct meaning of the

words and structure of the text, looking for "the information to be acquired, the logical

solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out" or what the reader can "carry away"

[21] from the text and utilize in other readings (Rosenblatt 23-24). Whether she is reading

aesthetically or reading efferently is based on what the reader needs from the text at that

point in time as well as how the imagination aids in interpreting the text. In all cases the

exact same text can be read either aesthetically or efferently depending on the reader's

disposition.

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[20] "The aesthetic stance, as I have described it, should not be confused with a simple revery or train of free associations" (Rosenblatt 29); *The Reader, the Text, the Poem.*
[21] "I am not sure that all aesthetic reading excludes or is diametrically opposed to an awareness of possible later usefulness or application" (Rosenblatt 25); *The Reader, the Text, the Poem.*

In the wake of New Criticism critics and educators began to devalue the personal opinion or experience of the reader when it came to the process of establishing meaning in a text. The New Critics sought to bring a more objective form of criticism that would exclude the influences of reader-response, authorial intent, historical context or any sort of moral position. According to their beliefs the only true way to determine the meaning of a text is to analyze its structure and form[22]. While New Criticism did seek to do some good by urging the reader to focus on the text itself, which can still be seen today in the form of literary textbooks, the disregard they showed for the reader's involvement in attributing meaning has become a foundation for how the reading process is viewed today. W. K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley addressed the issues the author and the reader present when it comes to literary criticism in two separate articles. "The Intentional Fallacy" (1948) details the problematic nature of authorial intent as Wimsatt and Beardsley say that what the author felt or thought when penning the piece, or its "intended meaning," is irrelevant. Since the early works of the New Critics the author and their context have found a place alongside the all-important structure form but the reader remains neglected in criticism. The neglecting of the reader takes shape in "The Affective Fallacy" (1949) where the two theorists target the emotive and moralistic views of the reader. Wimsatt and Beardsley argue that the affective fallacy is the "confusion between the poem and its results" or rather it is an attempt to "derive the standard of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism" (Wimsatt and Beardsley 31). When reading a text New Critics felt that all that mattered

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[22] "Criticism, Inc." John Ransom (1937); "The New Criticism" Cleanth Brooks (1979)

was what was on the page and to consider any outside feelings that are not represented within the text would detract from delineating a more accurate meaning. From their perspective the experience a reader receives from the reading process does little to aid in understanding the meaning of a text and should be seen as merely emotionally driven and therefore too relative to be considered valid in the realm of criticism.

The theoretical pair even go so far as to say that reader-response theory, or "affective theory" as they refer to it, has "produced very little actual criticism" when it comes to literature (Wimsatt and Beardsley 44). In order to prove this point Wimsatt and Beardsley dissect I. A. Richards's text and question the relevance of his principles of criticism[23]. While the theorists state that Richards's principles may make since with regard to "affective state synaesthesis"[24] when it comes to "applied criticism there would seem to be not much room for synaesthesis or for the touchy little attitudes of which it is composed" (Wimsatt and Beardsley 45). The intention here is clearly to relegate the reader's response and any aesthetic reading as simply emotive and therefore unstable to base one's criticism on. Rosenblatt says that this "readiness to attack the straw man of art-as-pure-emotion" could also lead to her "distinction between the efferent and the aesthetic reading [as being] equivalent to a distinction between…referential or cognitive, versus…affective or emotive" (Rosenblatt 45). However, the theorist asserts that even texts that seem purely referential in nature operate "within an ever-present matrix of

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[23] *Practical Criticism* (1964) by I.A. Richards; "(1) that rhythm [which the theorists equate to emotion] and poetic form in general are intimately connected with and interpreted by other and more precise parts of poetic meaning, (2) that poetic meaning is inclusive or multiple and hence sophisticated" (Wimsatt and Beardsley 45).

[24] "Among these the theory of Synaestheisis (Beauty is what produces an equilibrium of appetencies)…was developed at length by [I.A. Richards]" (Wimsatt and Beardsley 40).

feeling" and that a reader is not merely reading for the "affective impact of verbal

symbols, but must attend to their cognitive import, often as the core of other dimensions

of consciousness" (Rosenblatt 45). New Criticism's view of the aesthetic stance as being

intrinsically tied to the reader and her emotional response seeks to discredit the "human

element" of the reading process but doing so diminishes the potential an efferent

approach (which seems to be what New Critics would favor) would have as well. Even so

the work of theorists like Wimsatt and Beardsley over time has influenced many critics,

scholars, and readers to turn from reader-response theory as a way of understanding the

text. Consequently this has led to the development of there being an ideal way of reading

or an appropriate way to approach certain texts. Teachers who place emphasis only on

structure or language rather than the reading process as a whole are perpetuating this

conception that there is an appropriate means of interpreting a text.

The Double Perspective (1988) by David Bleich discusses this shift that has taken

place in criticism and academia as well as what it is doing to society's perception of the

reader:

> …the concept of "reading" in the academy has moved away from Louise
> Rosenblatt's original concept of classroom-based, interactive reading, toward
> abstract concepts of "the" reader and "the" text and models that would apply to *all*
> instances of reading. These models presuppose the idea of a single person facing a
> single text as a reasonable or even natural way of coping with the subjectivity of
> reading. But as this position is articulated, the "reader" is more of a purely
> hypothetical being (Bleich 17).

Despite the reader approaching a text from her own personal contextual space and

perceived reality, she is advised to put that aside in order to understand the 'true'

meaning of the piece. Many educators promote the authorial context and critically accepted structure of the text as the main focus of close reading and analysis. Louise Rosenblatt asserts that once an understanding of reading as the "literary experience" is developed it will become clear to society "that teachers of literature have indeed been somewhat shortsighted" in their approach to the reading process (Rosenblatt, *LE* 4). Not only will society come to realize that, but those educators will see that they have forgotten how much they "affect the student's sense of human personality and human society" (Rosenblatt, *LE* 4). It is because of criticism's evolution of the concepts of New Criticism that literary theory suffers in its "failure to recognize that the reader carries on a dynamic, personal, and unique activity" (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 15). While critics may feel that leaving the reader out presents a more objective point of view for their audience, they are forgetting that they themselves are readers first. Bleich says that there are "very few instances [in which] the critic actually [studies] his or her own readings, much less the readings of others" (Bleich 17). Viewing literature as purely practical and its meaning subject to its own form causes distance between the piece and the reader which limits the level of engagement she has with the text.

Due to the desire of some critics to remain objective and separate themselves from readers they have chosen to embrace an efferent discourse over the aesthetic. In denying the experience of immersion in the world of the text, they risk only receiving part of what the text is revealing to them. Rosenblatt says that "those who seek in the texts alone the elements that differentiate between the aesthetic and the nonaesthetic arrive at only partial or arbitrary answers" (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 23). Critics who look at the

structure and form of a text only tend to operate under the assumption that the text offers a defined framework for its reader that will guide her to its "appropriate" meaning. Rosenblatt views this as creating "an arc or area within which meanings may be organized" or "a pattern that…may be applied to a wide range of surfaces…and still retain its basic form" (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 76). Although she acknowledges the existence of some sort of overarching structure in a text Rosenblatt does not view it as being completely efferent because the aesthetic response is so ingrained in each piece that when a reader's response to a single word is changed "it may affect the organization or structure of the entire work" (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 76). While a text or situation can require a reader to take an efferent approach, it should only be viewed as an approach not the primary tool for interpretation (the same should be understood for the aesthetic). Like Wilde, Rosenblatt is asserting that there is no primary and secondary way to read only the reading process and its activation of the imaginative faculties the reader possesses[25]. Through this interaction the reader is given the ability to choose which manner of reading she will utilize and how she will imagine the framework of the text functioning. Therefore, if one views the framework of a text as fixed the transactional process occurring between the piece and the reader is inhibited and the text becomes generalized.

Not only does a fixed framework place generalizations on a text and restrict its ability to interact with a reader it also implies that there is a defined or "generic" (Rosenblatt, *LE* 25) reader as well. In her discussion of early readers and the reading

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[25] "Actually, no hard-and-fast line separates efferent—scientific or expository—reading on the one hand from aesthetic reading on the other. It is more accurate to think of a continuum, a series of gradiations between the nonaesthetic and the aesthetic extremes" (Rosenblatt 35); *The Reader, the text, the Poem*.

process Rosenblatt says that a child must be "emotionally ready" to engage in the act of reading as it is a "highly complex operation" incorporating both physical and intellectual attributes (Rosenblatt, *LE* 26). Physically the reader must be able to take in the text which requires training and practice. What most readers at a later stage in their life would take for granted as words begin as just markings on a page to a child. Yet, as the child develops and grows in their familiarity with different texts one can see how they learn to "[draw] on past experience of life and language to elicit meaning from the printed words" (Rosenblatt, *LE* 26). This process shows the reader's ability to combine fact, memory, and imagery all in the course of trying to decipher a text. If the understanding of how meaning is derived is beginning to place more stock in fact and the efferent alone and ignoring the other faculty of the imagination (the aesthetic) does that mean the reader is just supposed to just disregard this process she has developed early on in her learning? Literature is not meant to function as "comfort to the teacher [or critic] who seeks the security of a clearly defined body of information" (Rosenblatt, *LE* 27). Although it may not be as clearly defined and factual in nature as most critics would like to believe, Rosenblatt does make mention of the presence of fact surrounding literature. Facts about "social, economic, and intellectual history of the age…the responses of contemporary readers…the author and [their] life…facts, even, about form, structure, and method of the work" (Rosenblatt, *LE* 27). Despite the existence and acceptance of these bits of information as fact they ultimately mean nothing when it comes to the literary experience unless they benefit an individual's reading of the text[26]. Everything hinges on the reading

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[26] As Agassiz said: "Facts are stupid things…until brought into connection with some general law"; Samuel

process itself and how the imagination is stimulated during what Rosenblatt calls the "transaction" between the reader and the text.

The theory of transaction is not original to Rosenblatt but her application of it to the process of reading is interesting given its original intent was a philosophical one. In the course of explaining her intended use of the "transactional terminology" Rosenblatt cites John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley as phrasing the philosophic approach rooted in the works of William James and Charles Sanders Peirce in a way that best fits with her "view of the dynamics of the reading process" (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 16-17). Dewey and Bentley, in their text *Knowing and Known* (1949), produced a transactional formula that would give one the ability to "see together, extensionally and durationally, much that is talked about conventionally as if it were composed of irreconcilable separates" (Dewey and Bentley 69). From the theorists' understanding the "known" would be represented by the text and would take on a "knower" in the form of the reader, then the reading process or the transaction taking place between the two would lead to the "knowing" or the establishment of meaning. Yet, this relationship is not set in stone. The "knowing" leads to the reader being more knowledgeable during the next interaction with the text. In *Making Meaning with Texts* (2005, cited as *MM*) Rosenblatt says that: "Every reading act is an event, or a transaction involving a particular reader and a particular pattern of signs, a text, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context" (Rosenblatt 7). This is why Rosenblatt asserts that the same text can be read both as being efferent and aesthetic because the reading of the text is not contingent on the reader or the text but the time and

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H. Scudder, "In the Laboratory with Agassiz."

place of the reading process. During transaction not just the past experience of the reader is invoked but her "present state and present interests or preoccupations" as well (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 20). New Criticism saw this as impairing the ability of the reader to understand the structure of the text, influencing her away from the true intentions of the piece. What they fail to realize is that a reader cannot fully give in to this "affective fallacy" because she is trying to remain "alert to the clues concerning character and motive present in the text" and at the same time "[organizing and interpreting] such clues" based on their "own assumptions" to establish a "tentative framework" for reading the text (Rosenblatt, *LE* 11-12). The reader's tentative framework is not created out of this emotive aesthetic that Wimsatt and Beardsley attribute to reader-response theory but comes from how the reader is lead to interact with the text as she takes in both its emotional experience as well as its structure.

The only difference then between the aesthetic and the efferent comes from the reader's approach and how she carries out the stance in regards to the reading of the text[27]. Surely there will be cases of extremes on both ends of the spectrum. An extreme aesthete, like Vivian, would "fix [their] attention on the experience [they] are living through," finding the purpose of the text as occurring in the process of reading itself and the engagement with the art (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 27). The efferent extreme would then be a reader who "disengages" from such a qualitative response and "concentrates on what the symbols designate, what they may be contributing to the end result that he seeks"

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[27] "The selective process operates in weighting responses to the multiple possibilities offered by the text and thus sets degrees of awareness accorded to the referential import and to the experiential process being lived through. Hence, my phrasing of an efferent or an aesthetic stance, since that term suggests a readiness to respond in a particular way" (Rosenblatt 43); *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*.

(Rosenblatt, *RTP* 27). Nevertheless, the overall experience of reading remains and the

reader's dependence upon the imagination in the forming of her approach still plays host

to both lines of thought. A reader will come in contact with multiple genres and forms of

text throughout her life and not all of them will be able to be read as purely aesthetic or

purely efferent. Just as Rosenblatt says: "Many texts are susceptible of being experienced

at different points of the continuum by different readers, or even by the same reader

under different circumstances" (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 36). Whether or not a text is read in an

aesthetic or efferent way is dependent upon "the attitude of the reader" and "what

dimension of [their] response to the text becomes central to [them]" (Rosenblatt, *RTP*

36). It is because of these multiple opportunities that the reading experience provides that

meaning in literature cannot be viewed as being inherent to the text nor can it be found

residing solely in the reader.

  Instead Rosenblatt asserts that meaning should be viewed as "[coming] into being

during the transaction between reader and text" (Rosenblatt, *MM* 7). As she states in *The*

Reader, the Text, the Poem:

> A person becomes a reader by virtue of [their] activity in relationship to a text,
> which [they organize] as a set of verbal symbols. A physical text, a set of marks
> on a page, becomes the text of a poem or of a scientific formula by virtue of its
> relationship with a reader who can thus interpret it and reach through it to the
> world of the work (Rosenblatt 18-19).

The text is written to be read, therefore, it needs the reader in order to be realized just as

much as a person needs to read a text in order to become a reader. Vivian echoes this

when he says that: "Nature has good intentions, of course, but…she cannot carry them

out" and so must rely on the "imagination, or fancy" to find achieve these goals (Wilde 7-8). The term transaction points to reading as being "an ongoing process in which the elements or factors are…aspects of a total situation, each conditioned by and conditioning the other" (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 17). The reader's and the text's need for one another in fulfilling their accepted roles leads both of them into what Rosenblatt calls the "choosing activity"[28]. Despite being the crucial part of this activity the reader is not consciously aware of making a choice because it is based on her subconscious expectations for the stimulus the text provides[29]. Looking at another piece by Dewey titled "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology" (1896) the theorist asserts that during transaction the normal model for stimulus response would not fit and instead asserted that one must view an organism as selecting the stimuli that it wishes to respond to: "Something, not yet a stimulus,…becomes a stimulus by virtue of the relations it sustains to what is going on in this continuing activity…It becomes the stimulus in virtue of what the organism is already preoccupied with" (Dewey 255). Before a reader even begins to read there is already a level of "expectation, some tentative feeling, idea or purpose" which "develops into the constantly self-revising impulse that guides selection, synthesis and organization" (Rosenblatt, *MM* 2). Expectations of the reader come from her past reading experiences and it is based on those previous texts (whether they are of the same genre, by the same author or from a similar time period) or the same text in the case of re-

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[28] Originally attributed to William James (1890) and his concept of "selective attention" which Rosenblatt uses as a bridge between the idea of linguistic transactions and the transaction that takes place in reading (Rosenblatt 6); *Making Meaning with Texts*.

[29] "Because readers are usually not aware of adopting one or another stance, this element of choice usually does not come into consciousness unless there is some inappropriateness to the text or context" (Rosenblatt 39).

reading that the reader imagines how the text will read. Due to the reader's being

predisposed to expect things from a text literature begins to operate in a constant state of

flux.

A reader will approach the text each time she reads it with new knowledge and

memories which create new expectations for the piece. Whether these expectations are

met or not is dependent upon how the reader chooses to read the text and what framework

her transaction with the piece creates. Rosenblatt articulates the occurring transaction

between reader and text as such:

> As the reader's eyes move along the page, the newly evoked symbolizations are
> tested for whether they can be fitted into the tentative meanings already
> constructed for the preceding portion of the text. Each additional choice will
> signal certain options and exclude others, so that even as the meaning evolves, the
> selecting, synthesizing impulse is itself constantly shaped and tested. If the marks
> on the page evoke elements that cannot be assimilated…[the] framework is
> revised; if necessary, it is discarded and a complete rereading occurs (Rosenblatt,
> *RTP* 9).

Having an expected framework already established a reader tests what is written and how

it functions within her preconceived idea of the text's outcome. Yet, this can change

drastically depending on the emotions, memories or prior knowledge the text provokes in

the reader. Rosenblatt says that the reader's attention is drawn "not just to the words

themselves, but to their potentialities for qualitative response" (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 34) and

this typically leads them to an aesthetic response to literature. In some cases an aesthetic

stance will prove more successful at establishing an understanding and be more beneficial

to the reader, other times a text or circumstance will call for an efferent reading. The

reading process creates an environment for the reader and the text to grow and influence

one another through their interaction which promotes not just a way of discerning meaning but of evolving the reader's ability of making meaning. While a reader may bring with her a "sense of something called reality" in the process of reading this becomes "transmuted into something "rich and strange" under the magnetism of the patterned words of the text" (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 34). A reader in this sense can be seen as filling in the gaps between her world of reality/realism and the world of the text, a process that Wolfgang Iser discusses in the course of his own theory of reader response.

The Appearance and Filling of Textual "Gaps"

Although Wolfgang Iser's approach to reader-response theory is similar to that of Rosenblatt as he too promotes both the importance of the reader and the imagination, the manner in which Iser deals with the theory feels more scientific. The theorist equates his approach to that of a phemenologist or someone who uses "various philosophical methods or theories…which emphasize the importance of analyzing the structure of conscious subjective experience" ("phemenology"). What this means is that Iser looks to find structural stimuli that inspires the reader and pushes her to interact with the text. In his article "Interaction between Text and Reader" (1980, cited as *ITR*) Iser states that at the very heart of reading "every literary work is the interaction between its structure and its recipient" (Iser 106). For this reason reader-response theorists, such as Iser and Rosenblatt, promote the reader so fervently because they know that without her participation the literary work is useless. The reading process is above and beyond simply comprehending words on a page, as Iser says in *The Implied Reader* (1974, cited as *IR*)

that "different readers can be differently affected by the 'reality' of a particular text" and the theorist argues that this "is ample evidence of the degree to which literary texts transform reading into a creative process" (Iser 279). Based on this premise Iser develops his theory that a literary work should be seen as being made up of two separate poles, "the artistic and the aesthetic" (Iser, *ITR* 106). The artistic pole is where the author's text exists as a contextual piece purely designed and defined by the author, while the aesthetic pole houses the "realization accomplished by the reader" or what is achieved from the reading process (Iser, *ITR* 106). Now as I have discussed with Rosenblatt and Wilde the reader and her imagination are to be seen as playing host to both the aesthetic and the efferent (or ethical in Wilde's case). Iser appears to view the aesthetic as being the sole place from which the reader's understanding or reading of the text comes from (the aesthetic plane). However, despite his understanding of the aesthetic differing from that of Wilde and Rosenblatt, Iser's concept of textual "gaps" and how readers are led to fill them will allow a more comprehendible perception of the reading transaction to be delineated. In turn this perception will place the text and the reader in motion as well as shifting the literary work itself into a virtualized position (Iser, *ITR* 106).

As Iser suggests in *The Act of Reading* (1978, cited as *AR*) a focus on only "the author's intention…or historical meaning of a text, or the way in which it was constructed" hardly seems to leave any room to consider "that the text could only have a meaning when it [is] read" (Iser 20). It is impossible to understand the reading process from analyzing "the author's techniques" or "the reader's psychology" [30] and instead Iser

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[30] "But if the act of reading is indeed the transformation of the author's signals, then one is bound to ask

contends that one must look at what takes place between the two (Iser, *ITR* 107). When the text and the reader interact with one another the theorist asserts that the idea of the literary work becomes virtualized or is given existence "by perceiving it as, or demonstrating it to be, manifested or present in a real object, action, etc., within the world" ("virtualized"). The text aids the reader in recreating the world it is presenting, making it a part of her reality even though it operates separately. As such the creation of this textual world cannot be seen as being completely a part of the text nor can it be seen as being a part of the reader. What Iser believes is happening here is that the text and the imagination are converging upon one another and forming the "virtual dimension" (Iser, *IR* 279). With the text's multiple perspectives constantly in motion, due in part to the reader and the process of reading, its nature or world should not be seen as being fixed like the perceived reality of the reader. There are constant variations that occur in the world of the text and how it is perceived, all of which are caused by the reader. Although a text contains its own perspectives that are waiting to be activated Iser says that it is not until the reader groups "together the written parts of the text, [enabling] them to interact" that they can start to "project" what the reader requires to understand the piece (Iser, *IR* 279). In other words, the text and the reader are connected by a dynamic relationship that relies on both side's participation in order for the text itself to have purpose and function.

During the reading process the reader receives information on the perspectives a text possesses from "the codes…fragmented in the text" (Iser, *ITR* 109). From there the

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whether such a process can ever be described without recourse to the psychology of the reader" (Iser 4); *Prospecting*.

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reader is able to form a tentative framework[31] which enables her to engage the

constructed field of reference outside the text (the tentative framework) and test her

views of how the text is functioning. A reader develops this field of reference and her

views from, as aforementioned in the discussion of Rosenblatt, her expectations and

accepted perception of her own "reality." Then the meaning of the work is "transmitted"

to the reader who "receives" said meaning upon "composing" it out of the text (Iser, *ITR*

107). All of this is contingent upon how the reader is approaching the text, which comes

from the "choosing activity" that Rosenblatt describes. Depending on whether the reader

is reading aesthetically or efferently will influence the way in which she views the

tentative framework responding to her expectations. Not only does the reader's utilization

of this framework benefit her in the creation of meaning it also places the multiple

outcomes or perspectives the text provides into relation with one another and thus sets the

work into "motion" (Iser, *IR* 275), as was mentioned above. The idea of motion in a text

is crucial to understanding its meaning because it is what enables the text to be so

versatile during the reading process. If these perspectives were not placed in motion then

the text would become more defined by their origin, which is the author and his/her

intent. However, this does not mean that a text receives its meaning from the author but

rather that due to the artistic nature of the text (remember Iser sees the text as being on

the artistic pole) its initial perspectives should be seen as being forged by the author.

In order to explain this further Iser looks at the narrative text as an example of

how a piece can be "composed of a variety of perspectives, which outline the author's

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[31] Just as Rosenblatt discusses; *Making Meaning with Texts* (Rosenblatt 11-12)

view and also provide access to what the reader is meant to visualize" (Iser, *ITR* 113).

There are four perspectives offered in a narrative text according to the theorist: "the narrator, the characters, the plot, and the fictitious reader [or the hypothetical reader]" (Iser, *ITR* 113). Through the formation and connection of these perspectives the author is forming the world of the text. Now this process is not exclusive to a narrative text. Iser simply uses the narrative because it is easier to see the multiple perspectives taking shape in the course of this type of work. Despite the author being in control of its formation this textual world does not entirely reflect his/her individual perception of reality nor, as Iser says in *Prospecting* (1989, cited as *P*), can it "be fully identified either with the objects of the external world or the experience of the reader" (Iser 7). The world of the text is defined by its virtual nature, its ability to conform and reform, which is indefinable by the perceived reality of the author or the reader. Iser quotes from E.H. Gombrich that: "All art originates in our reactions to the world rather than in the visible world itself," (Gombrich, Iser 7). Oscar Wilde echoes this sentiment when he says that: "[Art] is not to be judged by any external standard of resemblance. [Art] is a veil, rather than a mirror" (Wilde 37). The world of the text is not meant to reflect the world of the author or the world of the reader, but instead should be seen as an extension of both and formed out of the reactions that occur to its cues (the fragmented code mentioned previously) during the reading process. Iser says it is because of this that "we recognize in literature so many elements that play a part in our own experience" (Iser 7). A text's cues help the reader to form the world of the text in a way that is understandable and relatable to her.

Rosenblatt mentions the importance of cues in a text as well and the way in which they function during the reading process. The theorist says that the reader has her attention "called" not only by the words of the text but "their potentialities for qualitative response" (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 34). The words act as cues for the reader to respond to what is taking place, just as social cues enable a person to understand how to function in certain social settings. For Rosenblatt the experience of reading can be diminished if a reader is unable to "respond to, or assimilate, all the cues offered by the text" (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 38). A reader's experience cannot be considered whole when the cues are missed because she is not fully taking in what the text is offering, which will be needed in order to establish the tentative framework. Not only may the reader miss some of the cues in the text but in the process of using her knowledge and past experiences as the guiding factor on how to interpret the "textual signs" the reader may also allow "special and sometimes tangential preoccupations, preconceptions and misconceptions" to influence her (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 38). These are not to be confused with the reader's expectations as the "preconceptions and misconceptions" are not centered on the text or the reading process. When a reader approaches a text she enters into a certain mindset that she is going to have to provide, to a certain extent, a good portion of what is not explained in a text. Such a mindset develops a set of readied expectations that are specific to the reading process and the artistic medium of the text. The "preconceptions and misconceptions" should instead be seen as being inspired by forces and experiences from outside of the text and are negative aspects of the reader's imagination because they interrupt the reading process rather than being involved. Even if a reader is able to catch these biases

and understand that they are interfering with her reading they "may still provide overtones, diversions, interruptions, that diminish the wholeness and integrity" of the meaning (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 38). Despite these possible interruptions and obstructions the reader does not require a completely uninterrupted text in order to achieve whatever her goals are for reading. After all Iser says that the text is supplying perspectives of its own for the reader to wade through in its sentences and the "intentional sentence correlatives".

Iser says that sentences are "component parts" of a text based on the fact that they "make statements, claims, or observations, or convey information, and so establish various perspectives in the text" (Iser, *IR* 277). Citing Ingarden's theory on "intentional sentence correlatives" [32] Iser sought to explain the part that intentional correlatives play in regards to the function of sentences and the interaction between text and reader. For Iser "the intentional correlatives disclose subtle connections which individually are less concrete than the statements, claims, and observations" (Iser, *IR* 277). In this regard sentences can be seen as Wilde understands "stupid facts;" they are useless unless applied to something that gives them a purpose. While New Criticism holds that the structure and form of a text is the only way of offering the true measure of its meaning, Iser feels that the sentences correlatives are essentially useless on their own and do not find their "real meaningfulness" until they come into interaction with one another (Iser, *IR* 277). The

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[32] "Sentences link up in different ways to form more complex units of meaning that reveal a very varied structure giving rise to such entities as a short, story, a novel, a dialogue, a drama, a scientific theory…In the final analysis, there arises a particular world, with component parts determined in this way or that, and with all the variations that may occur within these parts—all this as a purely intentional correlative of a complex of sentences. If this complex finally forms a literary work, I call the whole sum of sequent intentional sentence correlatives the 'world presented' in the work" (Ingarden 29); *Vom Erkennen des literarischen Kuntswerks* (1968).

sentences and their correlatives cannot interact with one another until they are accepted and read by the reader, thus"the literary text needs the reader's imagination" in order to create its meaning (Iser, *IR* 277). Wilde sees the imagination as encompassing both fact and fiction, the ethical/efferent and the aesthetic, and influencing a person to engage with art in a manner that will give them the best experience. Rosenblatt says that by engaging the imagination during the reading process the reader will make choices based on her own knowledge and expectations. However, when this occurs the reader's own perceived reality can come into conflict with the world of the text and based on this confrontation a text's world may seem either "fantastic" if it contradicts the reader's reality' or "trivial" if it is simply read as echoing her world (Iser, *P* 7). What this demonstrates is not only the impact that the reader has on what is realized during the reading process but also the impact of the world of the reader as well.

The entire reading process is dependent upon how the reader reads the text. Rosenblatt and Wilde both discuss how art/literature leads into an efferent/ethical or aesthetic view, while Iser sees the reader taking on multiple identities in not just the reading process but in the reader's involvement with criticism as well. Rosenblatt says in *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* that a reader "reflecting on the world of a poem or play or novel as [she] conceived it and on [her] responses to that world, can achieve a certain self-awareness" (Rosenblatt 146). This self-awareness can be found in how the reader perceives herself reacting/approaching to the text or in essence understanding what type of reader is she. Iser asserts that there are several types of readers when it comes to literature. The "real reader" who is known by her "documented reactions" would be

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realized in the critic and the everyday reader (Iser, *AR* 27). A critic is often published in a

scholarly work, giving their thoughts and interpretations of the meaning within a certain

text; thus, they are known or can become known by audiences. Nonetheless, the average

reader can also be known with the invention of the blog as well as peer review websites

which allot the reader a venue, besides academia, to express their reactions to a text.

Second, there is the "hypothetical reader" which has "all possible actualizations of the

text" placed upon them (Iser, *AR* 27). It is this form of the reader that the "real reader"

may call on to prove a point or offer a counterpoint while depicting her own realization of

the text. In this context the third type of reader, the "ideal reader," may also be used to

"close the gaps that constantly appear in any analysis" because she is depicted as having

"an identical code to that of the author" (Iser, *AR* 28-29). Each of these readers carry with

them distinctions that would not allow much maneuverability when it comes to engaging

with a text. For this reason Iser asserts that a new form of reader is needed in order to

fulfill the role of translator for any text. The theorist calls this reader the "implied reader"

which allows for "the reader's presence [in the text] without in any way predetermining

[her] character or [her] historical situation" (Iser, *AR* 34). Iser utilizes the implied reader

to describe how one can see the world of the reader functioning as well as how he sees

the communication between reader and text occurring.

Like Rosenblatt, Iser also says that a reader brings expectations with her to the

text. She does not just use these expectations to interpret the text because that would

attribute the meaning to the reader's own individual understanding. Iser argues that

"reading is not a direct 'internalization,' because it is not a one-way process" (Iser, *AR*

107), instead there is a system of back and forth between the text and the reader that is dynamic in nature. If this system were replaced with a simple internalizing of the text by the reader then no interaction would take place to allow meaning to be discovered. Instead the reader would only rely on her biases, her predispositions, and her knowledge in order to understand the text. While a reader's expectations are a part of the reading process meaning does not come from them alone, just as it does not come from the author or text alone. During his discussion of sentences Iser says that not only do sentences "work together to shade in what is to come" in a text but they also "form an expectation in this regard"[33]. The reader anticipates and makes projections on how the text is going to play out based on what the sentences are telling her. In the course of this the reader develops expectations of what that particular text will be which compound with the expectations she brings with her in regards to literature in general. While the literary work needs the reader and her imagination to set the sentence correlatives into interaction with one another this does not mean that the expectations they form in the reader's mind will be realized. Iser says "expectations are scarcely ever fulfilled in truly literary texts" because if they were "texts would be confined to the individualization of a given expectation" (Iser, *IR* 278). Continuing he asserts that "the more a text individualizes or confirms an expectation …the more aware [the reader becomes] of its didactic purpose" (Iser, *IR* 278). Therefore if the meaning of a piece is to be attributed solely to how the

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[33] "One might simplify by saying that each intentional sentence correlative opens up a particular horizon, which is modified, if not completely changed, by succeeding sentences. While these expectations arouse interest in what is to come, the subsequent modification of them will also have retrospective effect on what has already been read. This may not take on a different significance from that which it had at the moment of reading" (Iser 278); *The Implied Reader.*

reader reads it, or the psychology of the reader, then that in turn would force the text into conforming to the reader's expectations and thus inhibiting the interaction taking place. A reader must therefore acknowledge the world of the text and engage with its cues to find out what the text is providing with regard to creating meaning. From there it is the reader's prerogative, based on her expectations and understanding, how much of what the text is providing that she accepts.

According to Mariolina Salvatori in her article "Reading and Writing a Text: Correlations between Reading and Writing Patterns" (1983) readers have to understand "that a text contains within itself "directions for its own consumption" (Salvatori 658). If the reader can understand this concept and be aware of what the text already does for her, then she will "know how to read and respond to those directions" (Salvatori 658). The reader must understand that the cues of the text are there for her to utilize alongside her imagination, not as a way of telling her what the text means but as an aid in forming the tentative framework of the text. Of course then through her knowledge and expectations she can create the world the text is providing her, a world not completely mirroring her world but one that allows the reader to be able to relate with the text and sufficiently create meaning. Essentially what a text does then is "[activate the reader's] own faculties, enabling [her] to recreate the world it presents" (Iser, *IR* 279). For Iser the aesthetic plane offers the ideal environment for this creation process to take place, as he sees it as a place formed out of a reader's imagination but not reflecting who she is or the world around her. As the theorist states: "The manner in which the reader experiences the text will reflect his own disposition, and in this respect the literary text acts as a kind of mirror; but

at the same time, the reality which this process helps to create is one that will be different

from his own" (Iser, *IR* 281). The aesthetic plane then acts as a medium between the

world of the reader and the world of the text, since it forms during their interaction.

Regardless of the fact that this plane is formed from the interaction of the text and

reader it does not completely reflect either one's reality. Iser saw the aesthetic plane

functioning as a place of realization, where the reader discovers the meaning of the text,

and therefore it needs to exist independently of both the world of the text and the world

of the reader. In this way Iser's aesthetic plane mimics the way Wilde and Rosenblatt

view the imagination operating. Rather than the imagination being the place outside of

the text that a reader accesses to comprehend its meaning it is a part of the aesthetic

plane. What then happens to the efferent approach? It would appear that Iser is

disregarding the efferent approach because he is focusing his attention on the literary text,

in a way taking a reverse stance of critics. As the theorist says:

> Of course, no one will deny that literary texts do contain a historical substratum;
> however, the manner in which literature takes it up and communicates it does not
> seem to be determined merely by historical circumstances, but by the specific
> aesthetic structure inherent in it (Iser, *P* 5).

The only response Iser seems to value in regard to a literary text is an aesthetic one, being

that it is the approach that the theorist feels is closest to that genre of writing. Much like

other critics Iser lumps the imagination in with the aesthetic and views it as just a part of

the aesthetic plane, rather than it being a part of the actual reader and text interaction.

Iser's conflation of the aesthetic and the imagination applies constraints on the latter that

Wilde and Rosenblatt would not agree with. Nonetheless, the manner in which Iser

describes how the reader arrives at the aesthetic plane is still an interesting and useful

part of reader -response theory. Iser asserts that the formation of this aesthetic

environment or plane occurs in filling what he calls the "gaps"[34]. These gaps exist

between what is occurring in the world of the text and the expectations/projections that

the reader brings with her and can only be filled through the reader's use of her

imagination.

"Interaction between Text and Reader" shows that Iser views the "gaps" in the

reading process as resembling those that occur during a social interaction:

> Social communication…arises out of the fact that people cannot experience how
> others experience them, and not out of the common situation or out of the
> conventions that join both partners together. The situations and conventions
> regulate the manner in which gaps are filled, but the gaps in turn arise out of the
> inexperienceability and, consequently, function as a basic inducement to
> communication (Iser 109).

It would stand to reason that these "gaps" during a reading spur the text and the reader

into communicating with one another. The reader is therefore called upon to fill what is

"meant from what is not said" (Iser 111). However, the text and the reader will not

always act cohesively during their communication. At times the perceived reality of the

reader can cause her to misread cues in the text and impart social or personal bias onto

her expectations which causes the reading experience to be incomplete. For this reason

Iser asserts there must be a control of some kind in place to prevent biases from finding

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[34] "The impact this reality makes on [the reader] will depend largely on the extent to which [they] actively provide the unwritten part of the text, and yet in supplying all the missing links, [they] must think in terms of experiences different from [their] own; indeed, it is only by leaving behind the familiar world of [their] own experience that the reader can truly participate in the adventure the literary text offers [them]" (Iser 282); *The Implied Reader*.

their way into the reader's expectations. Such a control cannot be "as specific as in a face-to-face-situation, equally it cannot be as determinate as a social code" instead these "guiding devices operative in the reading process have to initiate communication and to control it" (Iser 110). Furthermore this control cannot be seen as being a part of the text because it is instead merely exercised by the text and its existence is dependent on the reading process[35]. Thus the communication of the reading process should then be seen as being "regulated, not by a given code, but by a mutually restrictive and magnifying interaction between the explicit and the implicit, between revelation and concealment" (Iser 111). While the explicit, or the space of indeterminacy, is what pushes a reader into engaging with the text it is what is revealed during the reading process, or the implicit, that helps to control what is realized in regards to meaning.

Iser says there are several places where the reader and text meet and they are "marked by various types of negation which arise in the course of the reading" (Iser 112). Other than the aforementioned gaps, the theorist asserts that there are also "blanks and negations" which appear in a text. Blanks in a text "leave open the connection between textual perspectives, and so spur the reader into coordinating these perspectives and patterns" (Iser 112). The reader then is carrying out the basic functions that normally would be fulfilled by the text itself however, with the existence of the blank it requires

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[35] Iser says this is well illustrated by a comment of Virginia Woolf's in regards to Jane Austen novels: "Jane Austen is thus a mistress of much deeper emotion than appears upon the surface. She stimulates us to supply what is not there. What she offers is, apparently, a trifle, yet it is composed of something that expands in the reader's mind and endows with the most enduring form of life scenes which are outwardly trivial. Always the stress is laid upon character…The turns and twists of the dialogue keep us on the tenterhooks of suspense. Our attention is half upon the present moment, half upon the future…Here, indeed, in this unfinished and in the main inferior story, are all the elements of Jane Austen's greatness" (Woolf 174); *The Common Reader: First Series* (1957).

the reader to do the work to achieve the text's desired effect. Negations[36] "invoke familiar and determinate elements or knowledge only to cancel them out" but what is "canceled…remains in view, and thus brings about modifications in the reader's attitude toward what is familiar or determinate" (Iser 112). In this sense the reader is influenced by what is left out of the text to take on a perspective that is more along the same lines of what is already revealed in the text. Blanks and negations therefore offer very little in regards to outside interaction from the reader. Each of these indeterminacies are filled by processes inside the text which means that they do not incorporate the reading process. This is why Iser focuses the majority of his attention on what he calls gaps, as they are directly filled through the reading process and by the reader.

For Iser whenever a text's "flow is interrupted and [the reader is] led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to [her] to bring into play [her] own faculty for establishing connections—for filling the gaps left by the text itself" (Iser, *IR* 280). Depending on how the reader views the gaps they are given to having multiple effects on her reading. It is because of how readers approach the text, efferent or aesthetic, that a single reading is incapable of exhausting "the full potential" of a text (Iser, *IR* 280). Not that there is one way of reading that reaches the full potential of the work, for it is impossible for all the perspectives a text holds to be drawn out in a single reading. Just as Iser says: "…each individual reader will fill in the gaps in [her] own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities" (Iser, *IR* 280). The reader uses her

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[36] Iser is blanketing various types of indeterminacy here under this term.

imagination[37] to access her own knowledge and expectations in order to fill the gaps

based on how she is approaching the text. Nonetheless, a reader's approach can be altered

because of circumstances surrounding the reading, such as what the reader needs from the

text is different or perhaps the context knowledge of the reader has expanded. Often

times this change in circumstances leads a reader to form a different meaning when re-

reading a text. For Iser even when a change like this occurs "the text must be such as to

allow this variation" as a part of its virtual nature (Iser, *IR* 280). Furthermore, it is

important to view the perspectives of the text as in motion because if they were not then

it would be more difficult to achieve these different readings. Some may believe this to

be subjecting the text to the whim of the reader instead Iser's theory is showing how the

text itself is full of multiple perspectives and that it is prompting the reader into engaging

with them.

Even so, there are some authors who attempt to fill in the gaps of the text for

his/her readers through the use of narration. Just as Iser says that:

> We all notice in reading novels that the narrative is often interspersed with the
> author's comments on the events. These comments are frequently in the nature of
> an evaluation of what has happened. Obviously, the narrative contains elements
> that require such explanations. In view of our preceding discussion, we might say
> that here the author [themselves] removes the gaps; for with [their] comments,
> [they are trying] to create a specific conception of the narrative (Iser, *P* 12).

The author is essentially telling the reader how the text should be read rather than

allowing her to discover her own process. In response to a stimulus such as this the reader

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[37] According to Iser "without the elements of indeterminacy, the gaps in the text, [the reader would] not be
able to use [their] imagination" (Iser 283).

can only choose whether she accepts the author's opinion or not, there is little wiggle room for much in-between. Yet, Iser says that there are some novels with a similar formula that "do not seek to interpret the story from one particular, consistent point of view" (Iser, *P* 12). In order to provide his audience with an example the theorist cites the English novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as being representative of how one can achieve this multi-perspective narration. When reading these texts Iser feels that "the author's remarks are made with a view not to interpreting the meaning of the events but to gaining a position outside them—to regarding them, as it were, from a distance" (Iser, *P* 13). A reader may then see the author as projecting along with her as the text is going along and she can interact with the remarks more freely than she could in previous texts. From this position the reader finds herself either questioning the intent of the scene mapped out before her or questioning what the author is asserting about what is transpiring in the text. Iser says that then "the reader finds that [she is] dealing not only with the characters in the novel but also with an author who interposes himself as a mediator between story and reader" (Iser, *P* 13). The author's inserted comments plays off of the reader's approach to create a dynamic reading process both Iser and Rosenblatt call transaction.

Iser feels it is also important to note how often gaps occur in a text. Depending on the frequency of these gaps and what textual level they are appearing on they can have varied consequences over how the cues of the text influence the reader. If the gaps are functioning on a "syntactic level" then they will be responsible for "marshaling the textual patterns into a premeditated order" and pushing the reader to focus on the

structure of the text (Iser, *P* 15). For the purpose of this paper, and the overarching claim I will be making, this understanding of the gaps comes too close to the New Criticism and their promotion of maintaining a text's structure as the way in which to attribute meaning. Iser also says that the gaps may be perceived on a "pragmatic level" which influences the reader to look at the text from the authorial or assigned intent (Iser, *P* 15). This perception of the gaps is reflexive of the critical approach to the reading process as an efferent of fact finding process. Finally, the gaps can be viewed on the "semantic level" meaning that they are more involved with "generating meaning, which is the reader's foremost task" (Iser, *P* 15). This last textual level provides the most insightful interaction with the theories of Wilde and Rosenblatt.

CHAPTER III

FORMING AND USING THE REFERENTIAL WORLD

Forming a Referential World

Throughout this text I have discussed three separate, although related, theories of

an audience's engagement with art/literature. While each of these theories provides an

interesting view on the relationship a reader shares with not only art/literature but with

the world around her as well, taken together they create a unified theory that reveals more

about what occurs during the reading process. Wilde's view of the imagination as an

essential part of human understanding, Rosenblatt's concept of a circumstance based

choice in how one approaches literature, and Iser's discussion of the indeterminacies in a

text or its "gaps" all work towards what I believe to be the creation of a referential world.

During his discussion of the aesthetic Iser partially touched on a concept similar to this,

however, it is my assertion that this referential world should not be seen as operating in a

purely aesthetic manner and is therefore a creation beyond his concept of the aesthetic

plane. I view this referential world as an extension of the imagination and as such, like

Wilde and Rosenblatt assert, it should be seen as incorporating both aesthetic and

efferent/ethical perspectives in its formation. The referential world exists outside of the

world of the text and the world of the reader but is also intrinsically linked to both

realities, thus how the reader perceives the "realities" of those worlds operating are a part

of its foundation. In order.to explain the existence of this world, and how these theories

link together to help the reader create it, I am going to employ a fourth theory in the form

of the spatial taxonomy of a cosmopolitan theorist David Harvey.

When someone mentions the term space Harvey says in his book

Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom (2009) it can cause "multiple

meanings" to come to mind, which brings confusion "because different meanings get

conflated in inadmissible ways" (Harvey 133). As has been discussed previously the

understanding and acceptance of these meanings comes through their perpetuation in

society. People become familiar or comfortable with defining things in a certain way

based on how they were taught and how they contextualize the object or term. In most

cases this may be through social or verbal interaction but it can be argued that visual or

written stimuli can be just as influential when it comes to generalized meaning.

Rosenblatt discusses how the written text contains cues that prod the reader as to how

certain aspects of it should be seen (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 38). One can view these devices as

coming from the author as well as the social understanding of the syntax he/she uses.

These cues would be what Iser calls the perspectives embedded in a text (Iser, *IR* 277)

that the reader must set into motion in order to understand the way in which she perceives

the piece functioning. As can be seen by just this brief explanation the interconnection of

these theories is evident and is also very complex. Harvey's three-part theory of space

and time, which originally centered on "issues of urbanization and uneven geographical

development at a variety of scales (from imperialism to social relations in the city)"

(Harvey 133), helps to: explain how the reader forms the concept of this referential world; and secondly, to establish the importance of the imaginative interaction between text and reader as a communicative act.

Harvey discusses a variety of topics that touch on cultures as well as individuals, one such topic being his view on how space and time can be understood. According to Harvey space and time exist in two separate dimensions each consisting of three realms. For the purposes of this paper I will only be focusing on the first dimension as that is where Harvey's theory can be more aptly applied to the communication between reader and text. The first dimension consists of three realms he calls absolute space, relative space and relational space. Each of these realms function differently and with their own conception of how space and time operate. Yet, the existence of all three, according to Harvey, is dependent upon one another as they must be kept in "dialectical tension" in order for a person to "understand how concepts of space and time condition [their] possibilities…to understand the world around [them]" (Harvey 134). This idea of dialectical tension, at its root being the term dialectic[38], comes from the work of Immanuel Kant and his assertions on the development of "illusory beliefs and contradictory claims about entities beyond the scope of physical experience"("dialectic"). While society assumes that there is indeed a "reality" and the individual typically believes their reality to be the true form of this assumption, there are still beliefs and concepts that fall outside the scope of this belief. More often than not these outliers are

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[38] Dialectic (n.1,a), "Logic, reasoning; critical investigation of truth through reasoned argument, often…by means of dialogue or discussion"; *Oxford English Dictionary.*

written off as purely imaginative and are thus non-factors in matters of the reader's world. However, if not for the imagination how else could a reader be seen as communicating with an inanimate object such as a text? It is my belief that the concept of dialectic tension can be seen at work in the communication between text and reader and it is through the continued tension of the elements involved (particularly the reader's imagination) that a reader is able to sustain and utilize the referential world.

Absolute space is "fixed" or "immovable" and should be "understood as a preexisting…continuous, and unchanging framework…within which distinctive objects can be clearly identified and events and process accurately described" (Harvey 134). For Harvey this is where an individual develops the ability to define who they are from what they know. The theorist says that it is the space of true "individuation" and no one else can occupy that space other than the one who exist within its framework (Harvey 134). In looking at the reader and text interaction I would place the world of the reader, and by extension the world of the text, in this absolute space. My point here is not to say that the reader's world is defined absolutely, but rather to demonstrate how its perceived permanence appears in the process of reading. While the argument can be made that the world of the reader is not "fixed" or "unchanging" in some cases it is perceived to be by the reader and because of this assumption she then views her world as the "true reality" to which all things must adhere. Therefore, the world of the text is attached to this perceived reality because it is formed out of the author's perception as well as the reader's comparison to her own world. As an interactive construct the world of the text is not held as strictly to the reality that the world of the reader has established. Upon reading a text

the reader has already acknowledged that the world it presents is separate from her own and therefore does not function the same as hers. Still, this does not prevent the reader from linking objects found in the text with an understanding of those objects based in her own world.

Time in this realm is "clearly distinguishable" from space as it unfolds on "a linear line stretching to an infinite future" (Harvey 134). A reader, as Rosenblatt asserts, travels along a matrix of experienced meaning. Past and present come together in order to form new expectations to be utilized in the next reading transaction. These events travel along with the reader not as a part of her reality but as a way of helping her to perceive what is transpiring around her. Rosenblatt says that the reader's predisposition for "expectation, some tentative feeling, idea or purpose" is what helps her to develop her constantly "self-revising impulse that guides selection, synthesis and organization" (Rosenblatt, *MM* 8). Citing this explanation might seem contradictory to the discussion of absolute space however, these expectations are developed with the passage of time and not solely formed from comparisons to the reader's perceived reality (they are also formed through the reader's memories and emotions). If time and space are distinguishable as Harvey says they are in absolute space then the concept of expectation has no correlation to the "fixed" perception of the reader's world. It is also because of this that Harvey states: "History…has to be construed as distinct from geography" (Harvey 134). Despite the reader's thoughts and memories the fundamental existence of her world remains intact. Just because a person comes into contact with a cat that sounds like it barks or a dog that sounds like it is meowing does not change the person's set and

accepted means of recognizing what a dog and cat look like. A reader then will still view

and understand her reality as being fixed despite the shifts that occur within her level of

expectation. It is not until she enters into the relative space that this instability will start to

matter and manifest itself more abundantly.

Relative space is to be considered the realm of "process and motion" (Harvey

135). The individuation which occurred in absolute space is replaced here by an identity

that exists to be multiplied. There are no boundaries or fixed frameworks within relative

space, in fact space and time are not even separated in this realm and instead are referred

to as a joint concept called "space-time" (Harvey 135). Space-time is a circumnavigating

concept where space is in reference to locations and time pertains to the distance between

these locations. Based on this view of space and time Harvey says that, unlike absolute

space, many people can exist within the same relative space in a series of overlapping

locations all "equidistant from, say, some central city location" (Harvey 135). For me this

concept equates to the reading process itself. Iser talked about the multiple perspectives

which a text presents (Iser, *IR* 277) all of which are dormant until activated by the reader,

thus the reader is seen as setting the perspectives into motion. Now rather than seeing

relative space being an overlap of locations focused on a central point, through the lens of

the reading process, it can be viewed as the multiple perspectives or views overlapping

and finding their center in the reader. Each perspective (location) is made relevant or

realized through the reader's choice in how she sees it working in regards to the text. The

shorter the distance between the perspective and the reader, or the more the reader

accepts it, the more relevant that particular view becomes. However, this does not mean that the relevant perspective at that point in time will become a defined meaning for the text.

Just as the frameworks of the relative space "are not necessarily stable" (Harvey 136) neither are the frameworks created during the reading process. Depending on how the reader chooses to read the text (aesthetically or efferently[39]) the perspectives offered can shift and change forming a different framework, either becoming more or less relevant to that particular reading. The very same occurs in the relative space where the existence of "multiple geometries from which to choose" cause the "spatial frame" to vary based on "what is relativized and by whom" (Harvey 135). As has been discussed, based on how the reader is reading the cues of the text her individual preconceptions and misconceptions can find a way of entering into this process. A similar issue is at work in the relative space as Harvey says that "relativization does not necessarily reduce or eliminate the capacity for individuation or control, but it does indicate that special rules and laws are required" (Harvey 135). Therefore, in order to control the level of outside influence during reading, indeterminacies develop between what is expected of the text and what the text actually puts forth. Such a development causes a back and forth between reader and text relying upon what is implicit and what is explicit in the piece. These indeterminacies or "gaps" (Iser, *AR* 28-29) as Iser called them help to both engage the reader into the communication with the text as well limit her ability to overshadow

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[39] *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (Rosenblatt 33)

what the text is providing her. Harvey's final realm can be seen as playing host to these "gaps" and presents the last part needed in forming the referential world.

Relational space is a place where "matter and process do not exist in space-time or even affect it" instead these concepts are "internalized within matter and process" (Harvey 137). What this means for the reading process is that space and time are essentially irrelevant in understanding how the gaps function, instead it is through the reader's interaction with the indeterminate space and the knowledge or memories formed from the passage of time that are the key components. The only discrepancy here is the idea of space and time being internalized. A reader cannot be seen as internalizing the text because that in turn would lead back to the issue of individuation, so the internalization should be attributed to the gaps themselves. Now because space and time are found in the indeterminate gaps the concept of "space-time" is no longer valid and therefore must undergo another change, losing the hyphen and becoming spacetime. With the fusing of space and time together as one Harvey says that this is where memories and dreams are formed. Memories and dreams can be understood as "short-lived permanencies" or events that come and go for the one experiencing them (Harvey 136). Ultimately these events are either stored in the imagination or allowed to fade with time depending on their regular use or relevance. As an "event, process, or thing cannot be understood by appeal to what exists only at some point" they cannot be seen as coming from the reality of the reader, instead they should be seen as forming out of a "field of flows" (Harvey 137). What comes from this field of flows is "an event" or "a permanence" which "internalizes everything going on around it…in past, present and

even future" (Harvey 137). Seeing as these gaps are filled through the reader's

engagement with her imagination and her choice of what knowledge or memories work

best in her reading, Iser's indeterminacies can be seen as taking in or internalizing the

past, present and even the future (expectations) of the reader

Some critics would see this as the very individuation that relational space is

portrayed as being against. Memories and knowledge linked with emotion are seen as

invalid by some critics as a strategy for interpreting meaning. Harvey addresses this issue

for all theoretical pursuits when he says that if one was asked "what is the time and space

of a thought or memory" then they would be "hard pressed to find a material answer"

(Harvey 138). While it is true that the material text and its structure gives the reader a lot

to work with in the process of creating meaning, memory and the reader's emotions

should not be discredited or seen as invalid simply because they are not materially

represented. Just as Harvey says in the course of discussing his theory:

> Dreams and memories cannot be dismissed as irrelevant because we cannot
> quantify and measure their spacetime…Relational conceptions bring us to the
> point where mathematics, poetry, and music merge, where dreams, daydreams,
> memories, and fantasies flourish. That, from a scientific (as opposed to aesthetic)
> viewpoint, is anathema to those of a narrow positivist or simple materialist bent
> (Harvey 139).

My aim is not to promote the relevance of memories or emotions to understanding or

perceiving reality but their importance in the act of reading is obvious. The way the gaps

are filled should not be held to the material or realistic perception that the reader has of

her own world. Instead it should be understood that the gaps are being filled out of the

"field of flows" where the reader's knowledge from past and present come together with

her expectations (future) in order to bridge the gap in the text. The identity or meaning of the text then becomes "open, fluid, multiple, and indeterminate" at least on a universal level (Harvey 137). Wilde argued in favor of such a perception of art/literature, one that would value the imagination and regard it as being more than a way of relating to things of a fictitious nature. By incorporating both the aesthetic and the ethical/efferent into the imagination the author sought to broaden how audiences would see it as functioning. It is in this same mindset that I promote the concept of this referential world, not as a way of simply looking at how one reads but how it broadens their ability to imagine and create meaning.

The key to understanding the manner in which David Harvey's spatial taxonomy functions with regard to geography and cultural relationships is the dialectic tension between the three realms. Without this tension absolute, relative, and relational space would in theory still exist but their purpose would be lost. For it is the continual interplay between these spaces that makes geographic and historical understanding so dynamic. Much to the same effect if the world of the reader and the world of the text never engage each other through the reading process, and the subsequent filling of the gaps between the two does not take place, then meaning is never truly achieved. One may argue that this has no bearing on the world of the reader as the world of the text and the meaning the reader attributes to it is in the course of an imaginative act. On the contrary, I believe the fact that the reader's engagement is an imaginative act highlights the importance of the imagination rather than being a cause for dismissing the reader and text interaction. For if we are to take Wilde at his word and agree that people are all born with the gift of

imagining then who is to say that they do not develop that ability as a means of comprehension and understanding? During the course of the reading process the imagination makes its presence known as a reader responds to the cues that are set before her. There is no dispute that the structural and syntactical aspects of a text are important but it is what they evoke in the reader's imagination that gives them purpose. As Holbrook Jackson says in *The Reading of Books* (1947): "Everyone contains within [themselves] dormant characteristics which can be awakened by the touch of art, and more conveniently and more permanently by those arts which are enshrined in books" (Jackson 21). Reading is a fundamental part of every person's life no matter their culture, race, gender, religion or creed. So it stands to reason that it would indeed have an impact on how they view not only the world of the text but their own world as well.

Through the reader's engagement with her imagination she is able to relate to the text in a manner that fits her current circumstance, whether she is reading for education, work, or pleasure. Whatever one's purpose may be for reading it is an act that they ultimately choose to carry out on their own. Jackson says that there may be times when people want to share some of the experiences of their reading with others, "but first and last [they] read to [themselves] and for [themselves]" (Jackson 13). In turn this causes many to view literature as an escape and in many instances it may very well deserve to be viewed as such. However, it should not be viewed as a means of escaping "reality" or a way to distance oneself from their own world, as the perceptions that are established in a person's reality are often affected by the reading process as well. Thus it would be better to view reading as "the substitution of one kind of life or one kind of consciousness for

another" (Jackson 17). As I have stated, a reader approaches a text with the understanding that the world she is about to engage with is distinct from her own. Viewing the world of the text in this way connects it to the absolute or "fixed" perception the reader has of her own world and subjects it to being judged on its authenticity or how realistic it appears. Still, once the reading process begins the reader can see the potential the text possesses and she starts to construct a framework derived from her realistic understanding as well as what she is finding in the text. How this framework is formed is dependent on the circumstance surrounding the reader and in choosing to read aesthetically or efferently she is not deciding between whether a text is fact or fiction but rather what type of experience she wishes to achieve.

The fact that the reader has this choice is why setting the different perspectives provided by the text into motion is so important. Through this motion the world of the text is shifted into a virtual state which enables its perspectives to be further relativized by the reader in whatever manner she chooses to view them. Depending on how the reader is reading and how she is engaging with the text these different perspectives will seem closer or farther away from her world. Jackson says that everyone "to a greater or lesser degree is conditioned intellectually and emotionally by [their] environment" (Jackson 25). What this means is that the settings, plot, and characters of a text can become more or less realistic to the reader based on her perception of the reality in which she lives. Furthermore, how the reader views the world of the text as operating will inspire how she fills the gaps between the two. The reader communicates with the text by supplying what is missing in the piece, the blanks and negations Iser talks about, from the

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guidance of what is provided (the cues). Any indeterminacies or gaps that arise then are filled in using the reader's knowledge and expectations in an effort to make the world of the text more relatable or comprehendible. Every aspect of this interaction between text and reader is held together by its dialectic tension. One part of this three-part structure could not function or find its purpose without the other, so much so that the worlds of the reader and the text start to mesh in some aspects. It is in the course of this dialectical tension, where perceived reality and perceived fantasy meet, that the referential world is formed.

As the reader and the text communicate, or engage in their continuing dialogue with one another, the referential world takes shape as a means of translating what is transpiring. The referential world houses the entire interaction upon its extension outside of the world of the text and the world of the reader. However, the respective worlds still play their part in influencing how this referential world functions. Perceptions and expectations both impact what transpires in this new world and at the same time they can change or be formed by it as well. Whether an object or situation is realistic can be seen as an example of a construct from the referential world. The world of the reader is defined as her reality and in order for something to appear to be real or realistic it must closely match up with that world. A reader engages with the referential world as a means of comparing any subject to her past or present knowledge of what she comprehends as being "real." From there she will decide based on her expectations of what qualifies as being a part of her world and her perceptions of what is fantasy whether or not something can be considered realistic. Similar to this is the process that takes place while the reader

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is interacting or reading a text. The reader utilizes the referential world to access her past

reading experiences in order to both form the aesthetic and efferent framework of the text

and decide from that construct how she will need to fill the gaps to create its meaning. A

reader's referential world must also take on a virtual state, like the world of the text, but it

does not require her to set it into motion as it is continually in motion. Each time a reader

accesses this world she adds to the knowledge, memories, expectations, facts, and so

forth that make up its existence. What this means is that these aspects are constantly

changing or evolving with the reader and their understanding. The referential world needs

to be virtual in nature in order for it to be easy for the reader to be transitioned in and out

of by the experience.

Franco Moretti in his book *Graphs, Maps, Trees* (2005) discusses an anomaly that

he discovers in regards to textual genres and their popularity, an anomaly which

reinforces the existence of the referential world in literary history. Over the span of 160

years the theorist says that forty-four genres have been developed. These forty-four

genres did not occur "every four years or so, as a random distribution would have it"

instead "over two thirds of them cluster in just thirty years" (Moretti 18). What is

important about this trend is not just that the genres are clustering but what happens to

these clusters over a period of time. Moretti states that these genres are also prone to

disappear in their clusters as well:

> …with the exception of the turbulence of 1790-1810, a rather regular changing of
> the guard takes place, where half a dozen genres quickly leave the scene, as many
> move in, and then remain in place for twenty-five years or so. Instead of changing
> all the time and a little at a time, then, the system stands still for decades, and is

then 'punctuated' by brief bursts of invention: forms change rapidly once across the board, and then repeat themselves for two-three decades (Moretti 18).

This two-three decade period can be considered the lifespan of a text or the amount of time which it remains perpetually relevant. I am not saying that after this span of time a text is no longer relevant, just that once time passes the text becomes less relatable with the standards of a reader's reality; this is due in part to the constant change taking place in the referential world. Moretti even says that when a genre is replaced by another genre it is "reasonable to assume that the cause is internal to the two" but when multiple genres are disappearing together "the reason has to be different," it must be something "external" and "common to all: like a sudden, total change of their ecosystem" (Moretti 20). The reader adds new memories and expectations to her referential world which causes the way that she will perceive things to fluctuate because she develops a new understanding. For this reason the reader may become disinterested in a particular genre or perhaps she finds that she does not relate to the text as easily as she once did.

Moretti comes to a similar conclusion when he decides that the external force behind these clusters and their disappearance has to be the audience of the texts. He says that: "Books survive if they are read and disappear if they aren't: and when an entire generic system vanishes at once, the likeliest explanation is that its readers vanished at once" (Moretti 20). As readers simply do not just wake up one day and decide to stop reading, there has to be something to explain the reason behind this change. The ever-changing referential world causes a reader's ability to relate or communicate with a text to be altered based on how the reader's perceptions and knowledge have developed.

Beginning with their first reading experience a reader forms this referential world so it seems only logical that as she grows the referential world grows with her, otherwise she would be unable to connect with any future readings. The reader experiences new texts or genres that evoke new expectations and as a casualty of this some texts that she once found relatable become mundane. Yet, this is not to say that a reader will never be stimulated by these texts again. Sometimes all that is required is a bit of distance between a reader and a text, venturing off and reading other material, in order to give the reader a new perspective or understanding upon returning to the piece. As Jackson says: "Competent readers do not necessarily object to new methods or new ideas: they invariably return to old and familiar books because they alone create an illusion of permanence by stimulating recognition of things already known" (Jackson 30-31). The reader will eventually return to a familiar text because she wants to be reminded of that initial communication she once had with the piece. Sadly, that interaction will never be the same as the first time because that the original interaction has already left its imprint on the reader and her referential world. Re-reading still proves beneficial and enticing to a reader's imagination as the shifts that have occurred in her referential world from other readings will create new findings and possibly even new meanings in past texts. Therefore, the relevance of a text should not be seen as fading but instead its relatability exists on a cycle that is perpetuated by the referential world.

Moretti says that the audience's influence is not something he is "fond of" but it is the only logical explanation for the two to three decade lifespan (Moretti 21). It is clear that he wants to preserve the interpretative power for the critic and the text instead of the

reader but faced with his own findings Moretti has to unwillingly admit the reader has a

substantial amount of power in the making of meaning. While I do agree with a lot of the

concepts the theorist asserts, including his stance on literary history[40], Moretti's take on

the relationship between reader and text is questionable. In his book *Distant Reading*

(2013) Moretti states his belief that readers are the makers of the literary cannon which

he feels is responsible for the slaughtering of literature. The theorist says that readers

"who read novel A (but not B, C, D, E, F, G, H…) and so keep A 'alive' into the next

generation" pass on the perceived importance of this text until "eventually A becomes

canonized" (Moretti 67). If this is the case and readers do establish the canon then the

only logical conclusion to Moretti's anti-canon theory would be to eliminate the influence

of the reader. For the most part that has already been the charge of critics yet, the canon

still seems to exist. From my point of view the canon's existence has little to do with the

reader and more to do with the critic. In their attempt to rid literature of the individuation

that is presumed to be brought on by the reader critics have placed a choke hold on how

they themselves are able to interact with a text. Jackson says that: "A critic is useful as an

individual, as point of view" (Jackson 55). There is nothing wrong with the idea of

criticism itself nor is there anything wrong with being a critic. Many great ideas are

inspired by or developed in response to the concepts written and expressed by critics,

which in turn creates more criticism. Nonetheless, as Jackson states, when a critic has

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[40] "Some genres are morphologically more significant, of course, or more popular, or both—and we must account for this: but not by pretending that they are the only ones that exist. And instead, all great theories of the novel have precisely reduced the novel to one basic form only…and if the reduction has given them their elegance and power, it has also erased nine tenths of literary history. Too much" (Moretti 30); *Graphs, Maps, Trees*.

their opinions accepted as "authoritative" and made "the nucleus of a school, a movement, or, worse, a fashion (fad)" then that creates a problem (Jackson 55). Readers then will start to accept what the critic has to say as fact and therefore see no need to look any further for a meaning of their own.

A text is not a self-sustaining entity and cannot establish its own meaning. So to dismiss the reader and text interaction, to remove the reader and her imagination from that process, is to take away the meaning of a text at its roots. The text needs the reader just as much as the reader needs the text. While acknowledging this relationship is certainly important to the process of reading it is also important to understand how it impacts the reader in her own world as well. Once formed the referential world is not exclusive to the reading process, it is not something that a reader hops in and out of either consciously or subconsciously. The realizations and perceptions formed in this world influence the reader's perception of reality just as much as they do any future engagements the reader will have with a text. For as previously stated, the referential world forms where reality and fantasy meet which can cause the two to mesh at times. There are certain texts that seem so realistic that the reader begins to believe what she is reading to be real. Wilde would say that it is in those pieces that one can start to see where life begins to imitate art. Rosenblatt mentions this as well when she says that distinguishing "between the real and the fictional" does nothing for the text itself as a work of art (Rosenblatt, *RTP* 31). She goes on to use the example of Sherlock Holmes as she states: "…whether the reader assumes that there was ever a person, Sherlock Holmes, who existed in the real world is of minor importance in answering the question as to

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whether Conan Doyle's text gives rise to a literary work of art" (Rosenblatt 31). While

this is true, that whether or not Holmes existed is of little consequence to the fact that

Arthur Conan Doyle did create the literary work, the power of Holmes as a referential or

"real" figure does pose as an interesting example of how the referential world impacts the

reader so much so that it enables her to perceive fiction as fact and vice versa.

The Fantasy and Reality of Sherlock Holmes

I begin with a quote from Watson, Sherlock Holmes's dutiful confidant, which

can be found in *A Study in Scarlet* (1994)[41]:

> As the weeks went by my interest in him and my curiosity as to his aims in life
> gradually deepened and increased. His very person and appearance were such as
> to strike the attention of the most casual observer…His eyes were sharp and
> piercing…and his thin, hawklike nose gave his whole expression an air of
> alertness and decision. His chin, too, had the prominence and squareness which
> mark the man of determination. His hands were invariably blotted with ink and
> stained with chemicals, yet he was possessed of extraordinary delicacy of touch
> (Doyle 14).

Here Watson is describing how he perceives Holmes after having just moved in together

to No. 221B Baker Street. My reason for citing this passage is two-fold: first, to show

how intricately Doyle describes both the manner and predominant features that are to be

associated with the character of Sherlock Holmes; and second, to reveal the eyes through

which the audience will be seeing the actual world of the text. The entirety of *A Study in*

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[41] *A Study in Scarlet* was originally published in 1887 and its title comes from a line given by Holmes:
"There's the scarlet thread of murder running through the colorless skein of life, and our duty is to unravel
it and isolate it and expose every inch of it" (Doyle 45).

Scarlet, as well as all but four Sherlock Holmes stories[42], is told from the perspective of Watson. Presumably the confines of the text are all tales written in some journal which the good Dr. John Watson makes sure to keep up to date since his time in the war[43]. With the tale being told from this perspective the reader is taken along on a guided tour of the world of the text by an authoritative as well as genuinely likeable narrator. The purpose for this is because even though the piece is set in London, it is not the London the reader would know from her reality. Therefore, it stands to reason she would need a guide to help her along the way.

Holmes's London is described as a "great cesspool into which all loungers and idlers of the empire are irresistibly drained," essentially a great "wilderness" where one would consider themselves lucky to find a friendly face; especially if they are a "lonely man" as Watson claimed to be after arriving there (Doyle 4-5). Indeed this is a place of great mystery and intrigue which is the perfect atmosphere for the fictional stories of a detective. However, some will find it more difficult than others to distinguish between the London of the text and the London of their own reality. For those who have not been fortunate enough to be able to travel the London that Watson describes may be the only London they ever get to experience. It is for this reason that certain stereotypes or stigmas from multiple mediums of art have become attached to the land across the pond. Wilde referred to this very issue in "The Decay of Lying" when Vivian asks Cyril: "Where, if

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[42] Sherlock Holmes narrates two himself ("The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier" and "The Adventure of the Lion's Mane") while the other two are simply written in the third person ("The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone" and "His Last Bow").

[43] "(Being a reprint from the reminiscences of John H. Watson, M.D., late of the Army Medical Department)" (Doyle 1).

not from the Impressionists, do we get those wonderful brown fogs that come creeping down our streets, blurring the gas-lamps and changing the houses into monstrous shadows?" (Wilde 47). For Vivian the fact that fog is now synonymous with images of London has little to do with the natural occurrence itself but rather everything to do with the paintings that have been done depicting said occurrences. Watson even mentions this fog in *A Study in Scarlet* when he says: "It was a foggy, cloudy morning, and a dun-colored veil hung over the house-tops, looking like the reflection of the mud-colored streets beneath" (Doyle 27). These stereotypes are an example of how literary works, such as Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, can cause the reader to see things or make distinctions in her own world that perhaps she never would have thought of on her own.

Such a concept reflects Vivian's comment that: "Life imitates art far more than Art imitates life" (Wilde 38). Yet, how can this be so? How can one view "reality" as imitating fantasy? It is my assertion that through contact with the referential world a reader begins to utilize its abilities not only to make projections and assumptions about a text but also the world in which she is living. As I have discussed, the referential world is formed out of the reader's imagination. Based on Wilde's view of the imagination this would mean that the referential world should be seen as being a conglomeration of fact and fiction. Therefore, when the reader engages with this world she accesses knowledge and memories from both her own world as well as the worlds of past texts she has interacted with. Due to the cohabitation of these different perspectives the reader may come to see an experience with fiction as being more realistic than another. In turn this will lead her to assume the possibility that what she has been interacting with is more

than just fantasy and should be understood as a part of her reality. Sherlock Holmes is a prime example of this idea as the character has become as synonymous with London as the mysterious fog. The enigma of Baker Street has spawned countless movies, TV shows, plays, graphic novels, and so on. Although Arthur Conan Doyle is rather gifted with his ability to depict the scenes and characters within each of the Holmes stories, my focus will be geared towards the clues as the stimuli behind this connection with Holmes. For these clues act as a literal representation of the gaps which Iser says take place during the communication between text and reader.

Moretti assumes that the success of Doyle's detective fiction over that of his "rivals" can be primarily attributed to the author's use of clues. According to the theorist the fact that other novels written in the genre of detective fiction that do not contain clues have become "forgotten" is an example of how the literary market is a "ruthless competition" (Moretti 72). Of course, as discussed in the previous section, Moretti feels that this is the fault of the reader and her level of enchantment with certain texts. For him it becomes a matter of a reader finding a device that she likes in a piece and "if a story doesn't seem to include it, [she simply doesn't] read it (and the story becomes extinct)" (Moretti 72). It is because of this that the theorist also asserts that other authors "realized the clues were popular and tried to smuggle them into their stories—but hadn't really understood how clues worked, and so didn't use them very well" (Moretti 72). The life span of a text should not be seen as a popularity contest but rather as a representation of how the reader's referential world is changing and reshaping from the experiences that come from both textual and contextual engagements. Therefore, the success of a text or

an author does not hinge on its use of one device or another. Instead, what truly makes a text successful is how it stimulates the reader's imagination and meshes with her referential world. As Holbrook Jackson says: "A great book never loses this power to revive, restore, or stimulate consciousness. Its resources are inexhaustible" (Jackson 30). Narrowing down Arthur Conan Doyle's success, as well as the success of all Sherlock Holmes texts, to the popularity of clues is a bit insulting to the author. In no way do I dispute that clues played a large role in the character development of Doyle's stories nor do I assert that his texts were not popular. As a matter of fact that is the key objective of this section, to analyze the popularity of these novels in conjunction with the referential world. The issue at hand is whether or not the clues and Doyle's superior usage of them are what caused Sherlock Holmes to become the enigma that the character is and on that note I do not whole heartedly agree with Moretti.

It is my contention that looking at the clues as a device is not what makes the text so engaging. Moretti says there were other authors who were trying to use clues because they realized that they were popular but the reason their texts are forgotten is because they were not able to use them effectively. As I see it the clues are representative of the gaps that Iser talks about being formed between what is implicit and what is explicit in a text. There are some authors who will, at times, try to fill in these gaps for the reader instead of allowing her the opportunity to fill them for herself. What keeps a reader engaged with a text is the communication that occurs between the two and if that is taken away (by the author filling the gaps) then the reader can only choose to accept what she is reading and move on. Doyle's success was not in the device of the clues and their

popularity, but in the author's ability to craft a story which incorporated those clues in a way that would make it open to communication with the reader. In other words, the author is creating a world that the reader can imagine and project upon through the empty space the clues leave behind. Just as Doyle says in *Memories and Adventures* (1924):

> Considering these various journals with their disconnected stories it had struck me that a single character running through the series, if it only engaged the attention of the reader, would bind the reader to that particular magazine…Clearly the ideal compromise [between a serialized novel and disconnected short stories] was a character which carried through, and yet installments which were each complete in themselves, so that the purchaser was always sure he could relish the whole contents of the magazine (Doyle 90).

Methodically, almost like Holmes, Doyle gives the reader cues to follow which she may or may not pick up on. In turn this spurs the reader to continue reading, partly hoping for her expectations to be met as well as partly hoping to be surprised by the outcome. However, if Doyle were to have filled those gaps all at once for his reader then he may have found himself as one of the forgotten texts Moretti talks about.

I will partially agree with Moretti that in the time since Doyle wrote the stories of Sherlock Holmes clues have become a popular part of how authors construct detective fiction. While I maintain my belief that they are not the sole reason for the author's success, it is hard to deny the waves that have been made in the genre with stories similar to that of Holmes becoming a mainstay. Ellen Harrington discusses in her article "Nation, identity and the fascination with forensic science in Sherlock Holmes and CSI" (2007) how the adventures of Holmes have inspired main stream media to adopt story arcs similar to that of Doyle's. Harrington says that: "Sherlock Holmes has been incorporated

into American culture, remaining a signifier for the bloodhound detective more than a hundred years after he was created" (Harrington 368). In just looking at the popular shows on modern television networks one would have to agree that the plethora of detective based crime dramas is certainly an indication of society's fascination with the genre. There are countless CSI, Law and Order, and NCIS based shows and spinoffs that survive either in syndication or through re-runs. Harrington says that these stories with their "model character branding" inspire "the cult-like status of the series with gradually developing characterizations and a community of readers avid for the next episode" (Harrington 369). While it is the author's use of the clues (gaps) in constructing the text that draws the reader in what keeps her engaged is that the world it represents hinges on the edge of her own but offers her something that her reality does not, in this case suspense and fear that can be resolved.

The stories of Sherlock Holmes serve as an example of later Victorian works, displaying a story which values physical and mental prowess rather than relying on mystical or fantastical tropes. For Harrington it is in texts such as Doyle's that scientific method and rational thought "are glorified in the controlled medium of fiction, which appealingly reiterates the focus on trace clues and bodily detail in forming a coherent narrative of identity" (Harrington 370). A reader's desire to understand the clues and solve the mystery that lies behind them displays her desire to define the unknown. It is this desire that causes generalizations to be made in regards to the imagination as it is an entity that cannot be defined absolutely. So in order to make sense of the imagination it has become common place to associate it with fiction and by extension fantasy. Yet, what

happens when the fictional/fantasy world appears to be similar to the world the reader understands as her own? R.R. Thomas is cited by Harrington as saying that Doyle's Sherlock Holmes "linked questions of personal identity and physiology with national identity in ways that redefined the relation of an individual's body with the body politic" (Harrington 377). Tying these stories to events that are occurring in the world of the reader, for example Jack the Ripper, plays on the emotion of the audience as a means of invoking their imagination. It is the reader's reality based fear of crime and murder that causes her to connect with the events taking place in the stories of Holmes and thus connects her world with the world of the text. Based on this interplay between perceived reality and perceived fantasy the reader starts to view a character such as Sherlock Holmes as being real or realistic. Furthermore, the character can be cast as the stereotype for the reality to which they are being tied. In the case of Holmes, he is of course seen as the epitome of how all detectives should behave.

Based on the reader's level of engagement and the attachment they develop to the text, the referential world she uses will become significantly altered. Such an occurrence is common and should be expected as the reader experiences different texts and different worlds that will undoubtedly play off of and change how she views her own world. Based on this the reader's perception of what is real and what is fantasy tend to blend at times. One might ask the question, what sort of impact does this blending have on the reader and on her use of the referential world? The answer to this question can be found in the understanding that, as Harrington notes, Sherlock Holmes has become a part of the reader's culture. In fact, the popularity of Holmes and his stories have become so great

that a subculture has formed in response to the world that Doyle has created. Vera Tobin

takes a closer look at this subculture, who are called Sherlockians, as well as those who

have simply read the stories of Holmes as non-fiction within her article "Ways of reading

Sherlock Holmes: the entrenchment of discourse blends"(2006). Tobin says that the key

difference between those who read Holmes as non-fiction and those who are considered

Sherlockians is that the latter have consciously chosen to "write scholarly articles, squibs,

and entire books under the conceit that Holmes and Watson were real people" (Tobin 74).

On the other hand, those who read the stories as non-fiction have come to accept it as

reality because it feels or reads entirely too realistic for them to be considered fiction.

What Tobin is trying to do by analyzing these two sets of readers is to develop a

"historical view of the conceptual blends involved in a range of different non-canonical

interpretations" (Tobin 75). These blends essentially come from perceptions and

expectations the reader makes when accessing the knowledge in the referential world or

from her "discourse situations" as Tobin says:

> These elements of discourse situations exist in the physical world, outside of the
> minds of the participants—both the physical and the cultural circumstances of a
> discourse setting are vital components of the participants' experience—but it is
> the participants' conceptualizations of those circumstances that they are
> meaningful situations, and, as with any conceptual content, discourse situations
> can be framed in a variety of ways (Tobin 76).

A reader develops the discourse situations as a framework that will be placed on a certain

type of text in order to arrive at a generic understanding. Tobin's concept here is reflexive

of the tentative framework which Rosenblatt discusses as being formed from the cues

within the text. However, Tobin does not just see the reader as developing a frame for a

text but also for how she reads the text, for whatever type of genre she is dealing with as a whole, as well as a frame for herself and other potential participants in that discourse situation. Such a multilayered cognitive structure can at times cause blends to occur, a concept which Tobin explains using the example of the stage. While a person is on the stage they are "a blend of one person, the actor, and another, the character who is being portrayed" (Tobin 77-78). In the moment the audience does not differentiate between the actor and the character, thus the actor to them is that character. The same often occurs in reading where, as is the case with Holmes, many perceive the 'I' in the text as being the narrator (Watson) speaking directly to the audience rather than it being the author (Doyle) speaking through the character.

Because of this perception and because the majority of those who read Holmes' stories as non-fiction happened to be the British working classes, Tobin is led to assert that it is possibly an issue of literacy and literary training that caused this understanding of the character. She says that the "literary training that many of these readers received failed to outfit them with all or even many of the conventions of fiction" (Tobin 81). While part of what is occurring here may be due to education the reader may or may not have received, it is my belief that what is happening in the bigger picture is the way in which the stories of Holmes cause the reader to engage her referential world. When the reader becomes attached to the text and returns to the world it presents over and over again she begins to subtly pick up understandings and expectations. It is what the reader picks up that will influence the projections she makes onto other textual worlds as well as her own reality. All of this occurs because of the referential world and how it changes

according to the information the reader places into its framework (how they read the text, how they view the text, how they view their own world or reality, memories, experiences, etc.). Therefore in the case of Sherlockians, who make a conscious decision to see Doyle's characters as real and to write about them in a way that promotes this view, they are utilizing the information contained in the referential world as a means of relating Holmes to their personal reality in a non-serious sort of way. Due to the longstanding existence of the Sherlockian subculture the situation has now become that many are referencing and understanding the previous works as a proper discourse and have thus lost what may have once been the overtly satirical purpose of their criticism.

Although both of these approaches to the text express the belief that Holmes is indeed a real person and the events accounted by Doyle through Watson are true, one should not disregard the fact that even a reader who is approaching the text as purely fictional will still be influenced by the piece. Tobin asserts that the normal reader who understands the piece as being created by the author "will still allow many kinds of projection from the fictional blend backwards into her conceptions of the world in which it was written and in which it is read" (Tobin 80). At times a reader will accept many of the assumed facts or technicalities a text presents as truth. Science within stories such as those of Holmes is seen as realistic when compared to the likes of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* despite being just as fictional. The reason it seems more realistic is due to how the science in the text stimulates the reader's use of the referential world. Sherlock Holmes is depicted an eccentric genius with a mind that is beyond that of the everyman

but there is still an attachment to him as being the line of defense against the real crime the audience fears. It can be argued that the reader's fear, as her tie to reality, is what compels her to assume that the science and understanding this man possesses is real. Furthermore, this fear drives them to believe that the crimes that are committed in the adventures can truly happen no matter how absurd. The invocation of such emotion stems from the reader's imaginative capacity to be able to take in what the text is presenting to her as fiction and (through a comparison with her own world) convince herself that it could realistically happen.

Regardless of how a reader chooses to read the text, whether accepting it as a purely aesthetic piece and looking to escape in its world or if she has an efferent/ethical reason driving her reading, there will always be some sort of impact on her referential world. The adventures of Sherlock Holmes owe their longevity in regards to readership to this impact as the stories continue to offer the reader an interactive framework which enables her to make projections upon its contents. Doyle's use of clues aided him in crafting a textual world that drew the reader in and maintained her engagement by playing on her real life emotions and understanding. In turn this has led to Holmes not only becoming accepted as the ultimate "bloodhound detective" (Harrington 368), the line of defense against dangerous criminals lurking in the shadows, but also as a real person who stood as an enemy of crime. Much like super heroes in comic books have served to provide ease of mind to young children, Sherlock Holmes provides reader's with a figure to ease her fears of the dangers around her. Through the character's continued association with this role as well as this association's establishment in popular

culture Holmes has become a stereotype within the genre of detective fiction. Regardless of the story and the medium in which it is being presented or whether it is perceived as fiction or non-fiction, the character of Sherlock Holmes has made an impact on the reader and her referential world.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Reading is a fundamental aspect in just about every learning process. It is rooted in the foundations of our culture from its years of being the premiere medium for mass communication and entertainment. While we have shifted into more modern means of achieving these feats, with the invention of both television and the internet, reading still plays a crucial part in the overall process. For this reason no one should be able to find any reason to deny the importance of literature as well as literary studies. However, there are naysayers who attempt to discredit those who pursue a continued study in literature. What more is there to say about Shakespeare and those other old texts that has not already been said? Can you really just sit around and continue to find things to talk about in one book? These people choose to question the validity of literary studies and literary criticism all the while operating under the assumption that everything to be known about a text can be taught to oneself by simply reading it one time or finding a synopsis online. Such a belief is painful to hear for those who have opened themselves up to the communication that can occur with a text. Those who do know what a text is capable of and read for pleasure or purpose are able to see things and connect dots that they would have missed if they had chosen to disregard the importance of literature. On the other hand, is this not similar to what is happening within the field of literary criticism itself?

Among those who accept the value of literature there is dissention as to what viewpoints or responses are to be seen as valid. The disregard of the reader and her importance in the understanding of a text's meaning mirrors that of the disregard by many of literature itself. Through this paper I have sought to highlight some of the back and forth that has taken place between reader-response and New Criticism as way of looking at where the reader stands now. Even though the works of theorists such as Rosenblatt and Iser have done a lot for the promotion of reader-response theory the ideas set forth by those who choose to distance the reader from the process of attributing meaning are the ones who seem to have the loudest voices. Part of this is due to the self-promotion of some critics and the misconception of their word as fact, while in other cases it is the adherence to perceived academic dogma that blinds all parties to what is happening. Oscar Wilde said it best in *Intentions* (1944) when he wrote:

> The meaning of any beautiful created thing is at least as much in the soul of him who looks at it, as it was in his soul who wrought it. Nay, it is rather the beholder who lends to the beautiful thing its myriad meanings and makes it marvelous for us, and sets it in some new relation to the age, so that it becomes a vital portion of our lives, and a symbol of what we pray for, or perhaps, of what, having prayed for, we fear that we may receive.

Without the reader a text means nothing. No matter how a person chooses to look at the interaction or how they view it as taking place between them, a text cannot find its meaning unless it is read. Anyone who feels the need then to separate the reader from the criticism of a text has forgotten the fact that they themselves are a reader as well and to do so would negate their own assertions.

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It has not been my aim with this piece to bash criticism or those of the New Criticism movement. Just like others in the field of literature and academia I value an approach which promotes focusing on a text and understanding its many parts. Yet, when talk shifts to disregarding the reader from the process of understanding the text then I take an exception. By using the works of Rosenblatt and Iser in conjunction with Wilde's assertions on the importance of the imagination I wanted to piece together a way to comprehend just how impactful the communication between text and reader is in the process of making meaning. These three theories feed into the referential world, which actively changes and alters along with the reader as it serves to aid in her perceptions of future texts, other mediums of entertainment and even her own world. Much like Wilde, I see the imagination as being a key component to not only the understanding of aesthetic experiences but to all experiences. For it is through the referential world that all of these experiences meet and form our understanding of both what we perceive as a collective reader/person and as an individual. Reading is truly a fundamental aspect in almost every learning process, but it is also a fundamental part of a person's culture and their cognitive processes as well.

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