The polemics of Text and Readers in Hans Robert Jauss' and Wolfgang Iser's Reader- Oriented Critical Theories

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Abstract

This research attempts to highlight Wolfgang Iser's and Hans-Robert-Jauss' theories of reading, as for the reader's role in evaluating, enriching, adding, omitting or modifying on the already existent social and psychological assumptions of the literary text. Bestowing on the text novelty and constant innovation, this process helps the reader transcend what is traditionally prohibited in the text to reach new epistemological and ethical realms concordant with the reader's horizons of expectations.

Hence the theories of Jauss and Iser are held to be intellectually and philosophically important: they are chief among those theories which had attempted to overcome the deficiencies of other contemporary models/definitions of the reader, by promoting positive interaction between the text and the reader. But being heuristic by nature, we can conclude that hey inevitably simplify the complexity of the concept of the reader, in spite of their extensive illustration of the relationship between the elements involved in the process of reading and the dynamic nature of reading itself.

Although Iser's and Jauss' theories of reading have been held as controversial among other reception theories, it remains crucial to the understanding of the nature of literary readers. They do not only urge a constant re-examination of social and individual conventions of the text, but also they have greatly enriched our understanding of the literary reading, a contribution that can never be overestimated.

The article comes to the conclusion that in reading we discover not only alternate visions to explore, but also our own human thirst for freedom of action, ultimate understanding and wish to emancipate from all that hinders our developing human thinking.

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Reader-oriented criticism, as an approach to literary theory, originated initially from a structuralist approach to reading the written text: though the approach can hardly be distinguished from semiotics, the general science of signs, it has laid down new criteria against which the written literary text may be measured, namely, construing meaning from the text can be made by the reader at the cost of the death of the author, as Foucault makes it clear in his "What is an author?". This replacement of the role of the author by that of the reader paved the way remarkably for the introduction of the reader as a site of critical interest.[1] According to this understanding, the "Author God" is replaced by an inter-textual reader who is supposed to read the text "not as if it were some complete, objective process with each element given equal weight and consideration, but as a subjective, transient and pleasurable activity" (Keith Green: *Critical Theory and Practice*: 206-7). In this sense, reading a text is grounded in the reader as a perceiving subject rather than in the text as an authorial statement or self-contained autonomous body that has marked structuralism in its French version. This emphasis on communication and the scientific study of behavior is what distinguished structuralism from semiotics, and is what likely paved the way for a kind of critique of knowledge, and the subject that has marked reader-oriented criticism later.[2]

A similar trend found roots in deconstructive criticism that seeks to dismantle hierarchical oppositions that have structured Western thought: literal/metaphorical, speech/writing, presence/ absence, nature/culture etc. The reader may do the deconstruction by showing that it is not natural and inevitable, but rather reversible. In other words, the reader, in Barbara Johnson's terms, can produce meanings by "teasing out the warring forces of signification within the text itself", in order to define the boundaries of tension between modes of signification in the text (Translator's Introduction: *Dissemination*: xv).

This shift of emphasis from the text to the reader has created in the literary circles a kind of explosion in the literary critical standards against which to measure a text. This whirl came out first in the form of what has been known as phenomenological criticism in the work of the early twentieth century philosopher Edmund Husserl. Husserl argued for the necessity of bypassing the problem of separation between subject and object, consciousness and the world, as objects can hardly be separated from consciousness. This assumption has been developed later by George poulet and J. Hillis Miller, who found the world of an author's consciousness in the entire range of his or her works. But more important has been reader/audience oriented criticism; this type of criticism has been adopted by a wide range of contemporary critics, starting from Roland Barthes, David Bleich, and Gerald Prince down to Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss. These critics seem to share the view not only of what constituted

literature, but also of what readers can likely read about/into it, "though they had neither a shared methodology nor a clear pattern of growth", as Peter J. Rabinowitz argues (*Contemporary Literary Theory*: 82). In this regard, Iser's contribution to this assumption is remarkable in his essay "Interaction Between Text and Reader", where he charts the particular potential that the reading process is a dynamic process that goes beyond what is cognitively graspable in the text: reading can neither be predetermined by theoretical conventions nor open to infinite interpretations: he proposes that texts have gaps that need to be filled up by readers; thus, the text becomes a kind of fusion between the imagination of the reader and the text, as the virtual dimension of the text "is not the text itself, nor is it the imagination of the reader: it is the coming together of text and imagination" (Iser: The Reader in the Text: 215). He writes illustrating these views:

Whenever the reader bridges the gaps, communication begins. The gaps function as a kind of pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves. Hence, the structured blanks of the text stimulate the process of ideation to be performed by the reader on terms set by the text … Blanks and negations both control the process of communication in their own different ways: the blanks leave open the connection between textual perspectives, and so spur the reader into coordinating these perspectives and patterns- in other words, they induce the reader to perform basic operations within the text. (Iser*: The Reader in the Text*: 111-12)

Iser' views above came as a reaction to fill in the void created by the collapse of the New Criticism's assumption that the literary text is a system that works and responds to its own internal laws without regard to its context or history: history and context should be considered as external to the system, so as to admit no influence on the workings of the text. On a more pragmatic level, these views were developed by Structuralism to reach or describe the grammar/syntax of literature, on the grounds that literature is structured like a language.[3] Exponents of this claim, including Saussure, Barthes, Genette, Levi-Strauss and Jameson, argue that structures are seen to be complete in themselves inside a larger framework of the literary text (Richard Harland: *Literary Theory from Plato to Barthes*: 135-136). Thus, a semantic analysis of a text would be an analysis of meaning, as description of the grammar/syntax of any particular text would be a description of the formal arrangement of the signs that go into the making of any text. Claude Lévi- Strauss in his *The Raw and the Cooked* contends that in a literature, what kind of text it might be, it can be compared to the grammatical system, in that it both generates and creates certain possibilities (20-45). Such views did not appeal to reader-oriented critics as they believed

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that these assumptions seem to have failed to cater for the demands and requirements of the growing interests in the literary text: the new approach to the literary text holds that the internal workings and structures of texts as things "internal", rather than "external" to the overall system that goes into the making of literature. Thus, the belief that meaning is context dependent came to light as a counter premise to the previous allegations of New Criticism that focused on such matters as authorial intention, historical, political or moral considerations, and audience response.

In Iser's view the critic's task can not be confined to reading the text as an object, but rather to find out how the text is likely to affect the reader; significantly, he does not analyze readings of texts, but rather proceeds from focusing on two types of readers: the "implied reader", and the "actual reader". The first stands for the reader when the text creates for itself, whether as gaps in the narrative or as "a network of response-inviting structures" which makes "each individual reader fills in the gaps in his own way" (*The Implied Reader*: 280). In the process of reading, however, the reader's conclusions or realizations of the structures of the text represent actualizations of its gaps. On the other hand, the "actual reader" would likely create his own mental images of the literary text by making use of the "existing stock of experience."[4] Hence**,** the interaction between reader and text results in allowing the reader to be involved "in a learning process of adjusting, correcting and overcoming mistakes", as Richard Harland puts it (*Literary Theory from Plato to Barthes*: 206). For Iser, thus, the text produces certain "blanks" that the reader should fill in: "the reader is drawn into the events and made to supply what is meant from what is not said" (Interaction between Text and Reader: 24). According to this argument, Iser encourages in the reader an active participation in a reading/learning process, which predisposes us to read in certain ways the words of the text which do not represent actual objects, but rather imaginary objects colored by human speech.

Discussing Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Iser argues that "Fielding presents two characters, Allworthy (the Perfect man) and Captain Blifill (the hypocrite). Our viewpoint about Allworthy is later adjusted and modified when Allworthy is taken in by Blifill feigned piety. Such modifications continue to take place in our mind, as we pass through the text. What we hold in our minds is only a series of changing viewpoints which are continually modified in the process of reading. In discussing Fielding's other novel, *Joseph Andrews*, Iser makes a similar argument proposing that "the problems thus aroused are necessary to entangle (the reader) in the configurative meaning he is producing; only when this happens can the effect of the novel really begin to work on the reader" (*The Implied Reader*: 44). In this sense, the text generates meaning for the reader in a virtual space created between reader and text. For Iser, nevertheless, this

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creation is problematic, because fiction proposes alternate virtual worlds, where "the actual and the possible can exist simultaneously, transcending thus the given constraints of human experience. According to this understanding reader-response theory fuses past experiences embodied in the text with interests of readers to produce the aesthetic response. This shift of emphasis towards the reader has also been adopted by Hans Robert Jauss, who relies in his theorizing considerably on Gadamer's "Hermeneutics", which focus on the reader's ultimate interest in the text in order to understand it. To understand, in Gadamer's hermeneutics, is to make sense, or an application of something in terms of our own concerns: "To understand a text always means to apply it to ourselves" (*Truth and Method*: 359). Jauss advocates a new type of literary theory in which the role of the critic may be defined as a mediator between how the text was perceived at different stages in history and how it is understood in the present. Thus, he seems to object to two recent trends in literary theory, namely, Formalism and Marxist criticism: formalist criticism with its emphasis on art as technique, and thus by playing down the historical dimension of literature, and Marxist criticism with its view that literature must be understood in relation to social and historical reality.[5]

Jauss does not differentiate between cultures however alien or strange they might be. For him, there are common aspects that make literature a universal phenomenon no matter from which culture they emanate. Thus, the critic's function will not be restricted to the perception of the fundamental differences that exist between past and present readings of literature, but also to overcome that difference. In his early endeavor to establish a dialogical relationship between the literary work and its readers, Jauss initiates his theory of the "horizon of expectations." He calls for a literary history of readers that concentrates on reception rather than production. In Jauss' view, it would be wrong to say that a work is universal, or it can establish its meaning in a final form, because readers at different stages of the history of the work would add, omit or modify on the already existent meanings; in his *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Ch. I), he reacts strongly against those who consider the literary text as a monumental object, or who view meaning as fixed for ever and open to all readers:[6]

A literary work is not an object that stands by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period. It is not a monument that monologically reveals its timeless essence. (*Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*: 21)

But according to Jauss, whose authority are we to accept? The interpretations made by the first reader, readings made by later readers, or judgments passed on the same work in the present? Jauss seems to derive his

answers to these questions from Gadamer's philosophical approach to "hermeneutics", who himself follows in the steps of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Heidegger believes that we come to consciousness in a world where everything is already predetermined by the whole of human history, human cares and interests that have come before us. Thus, he lays stress upon acts rather than upon consciousness, whereas Gadamer's assures that we have to show interest in the literary work in order to grasp the meanings implied in it. In Gadamer's hermeneutics, understanding a literary text implies an unconscious application of the text's meanings to our own concerns. From this perspective, understanding here becomes closely connected with our experience, or rather with our ability to perceive or recognize the implications of the literary text in terms of our own experience: "To understand a text always means to apply it to ourselves" (*Truth and Method*: 359). According to Gadamer, all interpretations of past literature arise from a dialogue between our cultural concerns and past perspectives which formulate the cultural heritage of the work. Put in this way, Gadamer's approach to establishing a knowledge of the past fuses knower and object, contrary to the assumptions of empirical science which relates "understanding" to a fusion between "knower" and "object".[7] Our present perspective is always determined by the socio-historical conditions of the past assumptions which can "only be grasped through the limited perspective of the present" (*A Reader's Guide*: 123). This means that the historical understanding of a work entails a process of reconstruction of the horizon of expectations already established by readers, or is still in process in the present. Hence, Gadamer's critical assumptions were taken up by Jauss, who, following Gadamer's, insists upon a further stage of production, in the dialogical relationship between the literary work and its readers. K. M. Newton in his *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory* summarizes this interaction between the literary text and the audience in the following words:

Jauss uses Gadamer's concept of a "fusion of horizons", in which a fusion takes place between the past experiences that are embodied in the text and the interests of its present-day readers, to discuss the relation between the original perception of a literary text and how it is perceived at different stages in history up until the present. (219)

In fact, in his concept of the history of readers, Jauss distinguishes between two types of works of art. Some works may be up to the expectations of the readers of their time; others may not be up to the horizon of expectations of the readers, and thus only becoming readable with the appearance of a new set of expectations. Moreover, some works may come up with a new set of norms, canons and assumptions which may affect the reader's mind directly when they come into contact with them: readers' already-established "prejudices,

adaptations and predicaments of a lived praxis" may change into something different (Jauss: *Towards an aesthetic of Reception*: 41). These new expectations are important insofar as they make room for the "socially formative function of literature"(Ibid: 40), when the writer selects and organizes his horizon of expectations. Thus, by reconstructing the horizon of expectations by readers and writers alike, the literary work achieves its aesthetic effect by gradually destroying these expectations, as time goes on.

Moreover, as these expectations vanish with the passage of time, readers who come later should reconstruct their own expectations to establish their own dialogical relationship with the work. Though Jauss accepts the readers' own reconstruction of their own horizons of expectations, he rejects "the historical objectivism" of the interpreter who raises "his own aesthetic preconceptions to an unacknowledged norm" (Ibid: 29). In his discussion of how Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* was received by the first readers, in France, for instance, Jauss recreates "the real readers" of that time: he points out that the novel was rejected by critics, for its negligence and denial of the accepted norms and canons of its time; thus, Flaubert's formal conventions were also held to be so far out of step as to be totally neutral and uninvolved. This argument brings us back to our assumption made earlier in this article that recreating the real readers of the time can not be achieved without the recreation of the historical readers of the work.

Iser doesn't seem to adopt the same notion about the horizon of expectations and of the real reader: he considers the process of recreation referred to by Jauss as problematic, because the reconstruction "naturally depends on the survival of contemporary documents", and so does that of the horizon of expectations (which depends on "both extrinsic and intrinsic data"(The Iserian Reader: 28). Jauss seems to follow slightly in the steps of the aesthetic critical theory of the new critics. In that he divides literature into great literature that affects readers intellectually/morally, and "culinary or entertainment art" that has little effect on the reader. Though Iser's attitude of literature's quality and power to affect the reader's intentions falls superficially in line with Jauss's assumption, Iser places that power in the text, that points to the "weakness of the prevailing system". On the other hand, literary works that confirm the social codes of the "prevailing systems" may be held as insignificant and secondary.[8] In this sense, texts set the terms, according to which the reader internalizes meanings, though the reader's "store of experience" will share in the process (*The Act of Reading:* 77-80). Thus the work will attain full existence only when readers have exhausted all possibilities of reconstruction of the implied meanings in the text.

This process of recreation would be implemented by the reader's temporal progression through the text, which he describes as "a moving viewpoint" that

involves drastic retrospective revisions for that "which it has to apprehend" (*The Act of Reading:* 109). In this sense, the reader's journey through the text becomes a continuous process of adjustments of viewpoints as the text progresses. We usually hold in our minds certain viewpoints about characters in a particular work of art, but these views are continually modified, as the text adopts certain norms, value systems or "world-views", and suspends their validity within its fictional world, forcing the reader to "actualize" a final evaluation by connecting the incongruent norms and values together. To take Iser's example, in *The Act of Reading*, Fielding's in *Tom Jones* presents two characters, Captain Blifil (the hypocrite), and Allworthy (the perfect man). The reader holds an imaginary idea about "Allworthy" as a perfect man; when Allworthy is deceived by the feigned gaiety of Blifil, we adjust our imaginary viewpoint about "the perfect man in the light of the new development about his character. The reader continues to make such adjustments as the text goes on. Moreover, the reader modifies his convictions about certain norms, value system, or "world-views" according to his/her past experience and "repertoire" of such norms.

Fielding does not tell us, for instance, that Tom lacks "prudence" and "circumspection", though he tells us that he has "A good nature"; we make, as readers, the complex moral judgment on Tom in order to fill "a gap" in the text which is left blank by the writer. We make our own judgment on Tom on the basis of received ideas, in addition to a schematized structure of norms/values presented by the author in the text. Thus, reading, to use Iser's words, "gives us the chance to formulate the unformulated" (*The Act of Reading*: 214-17). This somewhat uneasy division between passive and active reading is referred to by Iser in terms of a split reader: "the actual reader" receives mental images in the process of reading, and subjects them to a stock of experience that adds coloring to them; and the "Implied reader" whom the text creates for itself, and impels us to read in certain ways, amounts to Jauss' the real reader, who is drawn from the critic's social and historical knowledge of the text, or from the author's text. Thus reconstructing the horizon of expectations about a particular literary work requires a fusion between present and past interpretations of the text. Otherwise, the lack of the historical dimension means for Jauss that it will be difficult to establish "the objectifiable system of expectations" that arises for each work in the historical moment of its appearance" (*Question and Answer*: 22). This assumption leads to suggesting that the real reader becomes a hypothetical or an ideal reader.

Unlike the historical reader, the hypothetical reader is created by the critic to receive the work's first interpretations. Iser defines two types of hypothetical readers, namely, the ideal reader and the contemporary reader. He focuses

attention on the former type and rejects the latter one on the grounds that it is difficult to specify this reconsideration of the reader's position in relation to the text. His reconsideration of the reader's position in relation to the text, however, paves the way for a new understanding of the nature of the relationship between the reader and the text. At one extreme, Iser disapproves of the "ideal reader" contending that the existence of such a reader would be unthinkable in the light of the assumption that this reader has to exhaust in full the meaning potential of a literary work; at another extreme, as Iser argues, the total exhaustion of the potential meanings in the fictional text means that the text will cease to offer its readers anything new. Thus the text would lose its raison d' être as a fictional work having the ability to stand the test of time. Moreover, the total consumption of all meaning potential in the text is a ruinous act by itself for literature, as total exhaustion of all potential meaning would mean total relegation of literature itself to a dark footnote in history.[9]

As Jauss locates meaning of texts in the "real reader", who reconstructs the horizon of expectations by making use of available historical data, Norman Holland and Stanley Fish locate the meanings of a particular literary text in the mind of the reader (Holland locates the meaning in the unconscious, while Fish in the internalized personal competences). Fish makes a detailed analysis of his reader by emphasizing on the interpretative activity of the reader as a crucial device in the production of meaning. He gives his reader an identity in order to make the reading activity meaningful. Therefore, he allows his reader to project and sometimes correct his responses as he moves between the lines in his word for word processing of the text. According to this argument, the ideal reader does not exist as a virtual entity, to encompass all meaning potential in the text. Iser's reader "embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect- predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself" (*The Act of Reading:* 34). Such a reader has been defined as the "implied reader" whose "roots" are "firmly planted in the structure of the text" (Ibid: 34). Iser seems to adopt a new concept about the reader, overcoming the limitations of the concept of the real reader adopted by Jauss, or the concepts adopted by Stanley Fish and Norman Holland, who locate meaning of a text in the internalized competences or the unconscious mind of the reader. On the other hand, Jauss locates meaning in texts in the "real reader", who reconstructs the horizon of expectations by making use of available historical data. Holland gives a detailed account of how specific readers give different interpretations for Faulkner's "Rose for Emily", according to their individual predispositions in his *Reader's Reading* (1975); and Fish summarizes his major theory about the reader-text relationship in his *Is There a Text in this Class?: The Authority of Interpretative Communication* (1980), a position in which a text is the product of

the various forms of interpretations postulated by readers.[10] These ideas bring us to the conclusion that every literary theory is grounded on certain philosophical assumptions, every reading reflects a particular literary theory, and every reader a particular way of reading. Thus, we must admit that there are no theories that can be said to be perfect, as most theories come either to complete previous theories or to contradict/refute their assumptions.

The major difference thus between Iser and Fish or Holland lies in the way the desired effects and responses are produced or elicited from readers: Iser contends that these effects are brought about not by internalized competences or personal desires, but rather by the very structure of the text. Here "instead of asking what the text means, Iser asks what the text does to the reader", because he believes that there is a continuous interaction between the reader and the text, a process that would help shape the aesthetic experience of the reader (David Albertson: Presidential Lectures: 2). Consequently, literary communication, which is effected through a reconstruction of the dialogical relationship between the text and its first readers, for Jauss, comes to life for Iser through the interaction between text and reader (*Question and Answer*: 24).

Iser defines two roles for the reader concordant with the predispositions preset by the text and the actualizations brought about by the reader: in the former example, he defines "the reader's role as a textual structure", while in the latter case, he defines "the reader's role as structured acts" (*The Act of Reading*: 30-35)). In a fictional work, for instance, the author's views are expressed by selecting certain norms, "world views" or value systems that stand for the real world. Thus, the reader would be able to gain access to this "repertoire" of norms, canons and values from an external vantage point that help the reader make sense of the meaning potential in the text. In Fielding's *Tom Jones*, for example, we have different characters standing for different norms: Allworthy enacts (benevolence), Captain Blifil embodies (hypocricy), and Squire Western represents (the ruling passion). As readers, we look for that complex structure which goes into the making of the various viewpoints expressed in the text. We attempt to pass our moral judgments on Tom's good nature, only in the light of the restrictive norms of other characters: we insert certain received ideas into the interpretation of each character in order to actualize these norms to represent certain world-views we had adopted before.[11] Actualization of norms, value-systems or "world views", for Jauss, can be made through a historical reconstruction of the horizon of expectations for both the audience and the various interpretations of the literary text. Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, for instance, was rejected by official criticism of the time at the one hand, and by its first readers, on the other, for being too romantic and inconcordant with the norms, value systems or world view of the time. Jauss argues that reconstruction

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of the horizon of expectation of *Madame Bovary*'s first readers means the recreation of the real readers of the day (*Question and Answer*: 26-30). In this sense, the literary text is conceived of "as a structure", for both Jauss and Iser, "that elicits aesthetic responses by opening up her or his habitual world view. At the same time, this groundbreaking concern with what a literary text does to its readers "enables the anthropological interest already recognizable in Iser's early writing to come to fruition", as Tom Van Imschoot puts it (*literary Encyclopedia*: 2).

Holding the text as a textual structure, Iser opens up new horizons for the process of reading; he assigns a new potential for reading by shifting the function of reading from interpretation to text processing, in order to provide an aesthetic effect. This radical switch makes Iser himself assume, when commenting on Joyce's *Ulysses*, that the emergence of reception theory was meant first and foremost to replace "the author-oriented perspective by one that is reader-oriented" (*Prospecting*: 136). Thus the author will lose the vantage position as a final absolute authority in the interest of the interpreter who "will no longer fall into the final trap of trying to impose one meaning on his reader, as if that were the right or at least the best, interpretation" (The Act of Reading: 18). The emergence of the aesthetics of the reader, thus, contributes to the assumption that modernist literature can be held as an effective medium for eliciting responses from readers, as is the case with a wide range of modernist novelists' works, including the works of Beckett, Joyce and Faulkner. Iser himself defines his aesthetics of reception as a modernist project; he initiates this assumption by "a programmatic essay on *Ulysses* with a reference to the close relation, since the Romantic era, between new forms of literature and new literary theories which grow out of the literature they seek to understand", as Winfried Fluck argues ("The Search for Distance: Negation and Negativity in Wolfgang Iser's Literary Theory": 17). Here Iser comes close to Jauss, who views literature as a communicative productive means for the description of aesthetic reception experience; but in contrast to Jauss, he does not refer to a variety of alternate modes of aesthetic experience that is articulated by something inaccessible or absent. Iser elaborates this idea remarkably in the final chapter of *the Implied Reader*, "Phenomenology of Reading", where he defines the aesthetic experience of reception as "the realization accomplished by the reader, and the text as an artistic act created by the author (274).

Therefore, the process of reading, for Iser, is a kind of a mutual interaction between the text and the reader. This argument brings us back again to our assumption in this article that the reader and a text are interrelated, not as autonomous objects, but rather as separate entities. Iser seems to be aware of the separation between the text and the reader, especially when he talks about the

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implied reader as a phenomenological construct of two poles: as a network of textual structures and as a textual schemata, to borrow Ingarden's term, of structured acts.[12] In this sense, structured acts are realized by the artistic structures created by the author, and the textual structures elicited by the implied reader's continuous interaction with the text. This is a clear indication of the reader playing a role in the interpretative process of the text, and helping to reveal the nature of the literary reading as a process-like experience in the same way Jauss' historical reader shows. This means that Iser's implied reader actively participates in creating the fictional world of the text, in a way, that Jauss historical reader does not.[13]

Jauss contends that the literary work has ongoing, developing meanings that are constructed by the historical reader, because literature "in the fullness of its forms, it allows itself to be referred back only in part and not in any exact manner" (*Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*: 12). The reader should have complete knowledge of the historical norms and full command of the literary conventions to bring about an-aesthetic experience. This is so, because historical knowledge and literary competence are in fact essentials to be possessed by Jauss' idealist historical reader, whose main task is to "deepen the aesthetic impression" of those readers who consider the literary text for pleasure purposes, or refer back to its structure of effect often (*Question and Answer*: 144).

Moreover, Jauss attaches a special significance to the historical reader, as he shifts the priorities of reading from interpretation to understanding in his "The Poetic Text within the Change of Horizons of Reading (1980). The shift of emphasis arises from Jauss' continuous complaint that recent literary theorists have reduced the process of the literary interpretation into mere textual analysis. Here Jauss follows in the steps of Gadamer, who divides reading into three steps: understanding, interpretation, and application in terms of one's own experience: "To understand a text always means to apply it to ourselves" (Gadamer: *Truth and Method*: 359). Gadamer's case is that in order to understand we have to discover an application to our interests, because understanding is a kind of an aesthetic perception of a work. Gadamer's categorical division of aesthetic perception into three levels is meant to help the reader respond to the effects of the text, and play a role in the process of its interpretation. Jauss, following Gadamer, asserts that the three readings are categorically divided only to enter into a genuine dialogue, a free play of question and answer with "a text of aesthetic character" (*Question and Answer:* 144).

The aesthetic experience, thus, results from the "question- and- answer" process, or from the persistent interaction between the text and the reader. In this

sense, the reader becomes internal to the text rather than external as it was previously believed to be, and meaning becomes the result of the subjective experience of the reader rather than the objective intentions of the author. Poulet expresses this new relation by stressing that the text is no more outside or inside the reader, but rather the text is inside the reader and the reader is inside the text (Phenomenology of Reading: 54-55). Each of these two dimensions participates in the process of meaning at a moment of fusion between reader and text. This is particularly relevant in the case of Iser, who, like Jauss, wants to draw attention to the creative process as an ongoing interactive participation of the reader in the production of meaning/s potential in the text. Through this process, the reader will reconstruct the world of the literary text by relating images, ideas, and sentences in the text to their consciousness to actualize the maximum potential meaning in the text.

Reader-oriented theory, thus, focuses upon reception rather than production, interaction that takes place between work and audience, the process of creation that is constituted by readers, and the active participation of the text's "addressees", as Jauss puts it, rather than the original intentions of the author (*Toward an aesthetic of Reception*: 19). Approaching the question of the reader from this perspective enables us to perceive readings as a communicative process, or as an aesthetic experience of the reader down time, as Iser and Jauss argue respectively. The oscillation of the interpretative process, between these two extremes ensures that reader-oriented criticism is not a theory of meaning only, but also a theory of aesthetic reception and experience. As a logical consequence to this new understanding of the relationship between the text and the reader, Jauss' and Iser's theories seem to provide a network of textual perspectives that function as a background against which the process of actualization of meanings would be measured. Thus Iser and Jauss' contribution to literary criticism seems to be immense: they have laid down solid grounds for the analysis, understanding, and evaluation of literature as a reflection of the human experience; instead of asking what the text means they question the text about what it can do to the reader.

From this perspective, Iser's theory of response complements Jauss' theory of reception, as both theories have since set the course for social and communication theories, starting from Gerald Prince's the Zero-Degree Narrattee and Riffaterre's the Super-reader down to W. Gibson's the Mock Reader, Culler's the Ideal Reader and W. C. Booth's the Implied Reader. Prince's reader is someone who possesses certain faculties of reasoning, some basic knowledge, and certain linguistic competence that enables him/her to interpret and understand the plot of and language of the story, but not meanings implied in the story: he depends completely on the narrator for providing all the

information necessary for the interpretation and understanding of the story. On the other hand, Gibson's reader is a fictitious speaker within the text who may replace the real author as an unimportant textual phenomenon. Here Gibson' reader differs from Riffaterre's or Prince's readers, and meets with the formalist argument of the "intentional fallacy" in the text ("literature and Biography": Wellek and Warren: 75). Riffaterre's main contention about "The Superreader" lies in his proposal that we should shift our attention from the study of the language of the text to the study of its effect on the reader, following in that Culler's argument in this concern. The superreader, for Riffaterre, is a kind of synthesis of a whole group of "informants", namely, the author, the translators, the critics and even the footnotes made by the critics of a particular poem. Riffaterre's exposition of the reading process as a temporal movement involving interaction between the text and the reader brings him close to Iser, who brings the reader to critical attention by similarly emphasizing on the interactive relationship between the reader and the text. Hence contemporary reader-oriented criticism including that of Iser and Jauss seems to be of a great significance to the understanding of the interactive relationship between the text and the reader: the new theory attempts not only to overcome the deficiencies of other contemporary models of the reader, but also sets the course for a systematic understanding of the relationship between the elements that go into the making of the dynamic process of reading. A major consequence of all this, for Jauss, is the rewriting of the canon, in a revolutionary way, namely, assigning a new function to the literary history refocused on the reader: it has raised it to the level of "other arts and social forces in the emancipation of mankind" from those taboos or social bonds that are imposed on reading by the ruling morals ("Literary History": *Twentieth Century Literary Theory*: 226).

In this sense, literature's function, as well, can be reconsidered in the light of this new assumption of Jauss, namely, to reflect not only "actual experiences", but also to anticipate "unrealized possibility", and to broaden the "limited space of social behavior"(*Twentieth Century Literay Theory*: 226). Isr seems to be very much aware of the hopes Jauss is putting on literature as the ultimate value of man's existence. Iser and Jauss' surprising comments on the function of literature and the reader serve to highlight the function and aesthetic effects of the literary work the readers are interpreting. Art thus can be seen as "an intermediate realm, situated between an experiential and an intangible reality in history" (Iser: Pater: 69). Here Iser meets with Jauss, as both attach a special significance to the transitional periods in history that invalidate "existing norms" in literature "without replacing them with others" (Pater: 81). In this sense, the relation of art to periods of transition in history makes it possible for literature to embody a kind of in-between world that draws "its tangibility and its legitimation from history" (Pater: 81). In this position lies the revolutionary aspect of Jauss'

attitude, "for his approach", like that of Walter Pater, as Iser puts it, "breaks up existing, solidified forms of life" (pater: 168). Iser's concept of aesthetic innovation above emphasizes the power of art to form the unformulated and to articulate the emergence of the new, in a way to transform the modernist project of reading into a theory of reading known as the reader-response or reception theory. In this way, aesthetic innovation can be seen as a historical exercise for the literary historian, who must determine the nature of the new, and its impact on the reader. Here, according to Jauss, in particular, the diachronic dimension meets with the synchronic cross-sections to assert that literature at any moment in history is virtually a mixture of "a heterogeneous multiplicity" of the present horizon of expectations and of the newly-emergent ("Literary History": *Twentieth Century Literary Theory:* 223).

In conclusion, the paper has discussed the various models of the reader in the context of the reader-oriented criticism, including their strengths and weaknesses, their characteristics in comparison with the Iserian concept of the implied reader and Jauss' concept of the historical reader. It also has shown that the Iserian concept of the implied reader contains within itself two mechanisms: the response-inviting structure of the text and the response-projection mechanism of the reader, in order to make interaction between the text and the reader possible. This assumption has led us to conclude that the approach attempts to simplify the complex concept of the reader by highlighting the relationship between the elements involved in reading itself as a dynamic process. On the other hand, arriving at such a conclusion may allow us to suggest that though Jauss' theory of the historical reader and Iser's theory of the implied reader differ in many respects as pointed out throughout this research, they still have many things in common: both theorists consider the literary reading as an eventful and process-like experience, with the reader dealing with the effect of the literary work and the reader's response to it. Moreover, this research has attempted an investigation of the various models of readers to reveal the similarities and differences between them, shedding light on the respective ways of reading and the philosophical assumptions underlying these models. Although Jauss and Iser's theories of reading have been held as "the most controversial" among other reception theories, it remains crucial to the understanding of the nature of literary reading;[14] they do not only urge a constant re-examination of social and individual conventions of the text, but also they explore "the broader implications of reading for human experience and constitution", as David Allertson contends (Presidential Lectures: 4). It is true that these two theories have their imperfections, but it is equally important to admit their major contribution to the aesthetics of reader-oriented criticism as a whole.

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جدلية النص والقرّاء في نظريتي جاوش وآيزر النقديتين

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ملخص

يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على نظريتي اوش وآيزر في القراءة، وخاصة دور القارئ في تقويم النص الأدبي، وإغنائه بالأفكار، والتصورات، والفرضيات الاجتماعية والنفسية، والفكرية التي تضفي على النص نوعاً من التجدد الدائم، والتطور المستمر، الأمر الذي يساعد على تغيير معايير ما هو محظور من الناحية الأخلاقية تقليدياً على القارئ، وذلك بطرح معايير وأسس معرفية وأخلاقية جديدة تتناسب وآفاق توقعات القارئ.

من هذا المنطلق يمكن اعتبار نظريتي آيزر وجاوش مهمتين من الناحية الفكرية والفلسفية، لكونهما من أهم المحاولات النقدية التي أسهمت في تجاوز الثغرات التي اعترت النظريات الأخرى، في تعريفها لماهية القارئ، وذلك من خلال تحفيزهما للتفاعل الإيجابي بين القارئ والنص الأدبي. علاوة على ذلك، وبما أن هاتين النظريتين تركزان على إرشاد القارئ في القراءة، فإن هذا يعني أنهما يبسطان مفهوم القارئ، على الرغم من تطرقهما لشرح العلاقة التي تربط بين جميع مكونات القراءة وطبيعتها الديناميكية.

وعلى الرغم من أن الكثير من النقاد يعتبرون نظريتي اوش وآيزر النقديتين من أكثر النظريات إثارة للجدل، إلا أنهم لا ينكرون أهميتهما في فهم وتحليل طبيعة القرّاء والنص الأدبي على حد سواء، فأهميتهما لا تقتصر على حث القراء على إعادة تمحيص المكونات الذاتية والاجتماعية للنص الأدبي وحسب، وإنما تتعديان ذلك إلى مساهمة لا يمكن إغفال أهميتها في فهمنا للقراءة الأدبية.

يخلص البحث إلى نتيجة مفادها أن النظريتين قد أسهمتا في اكتشاف معالم جديدة في النص، وتشكيل رؤى بديلة، وساعدتا أيضاً على إرواء ظمأنا كقرّاء للعمل من دون قيود، والتفكير اللامحدود، والتحرر مما يعيق تطورنا الفكري كبشر.

End Notes:

1. The concept of the death of the author has been discussed in depth by Barthes in his infamous article "Death of the Author" (1968), in R. Barthes. ***Image/ Music/ Text***. Trans. S. Heath. London: Fontana, 1977. Passim. Similar ideas are also raised by Michael Foucault in his "What is an author?" Twentieth-Century Literary Theory. Ed. Vassilis Lambropoulos and David Neal Miller. Albany: State University Press of New York. 124-42. In this article, though Foucault accepts that the author is dead and the text is merely a game of language, he designates the author as a function of discourse itself.

2. For further details about the concept of the reader as appeared in the theories of Deconstruction, Semiotics, Phenomenology, Structuralism and Reception, see Robert Con Davis and Roland Schleifer. *Contemporary Literary Theory*. London: Longman, 1998. passim; and also see Terry Eagleton. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Minnepolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.The book includes an evaluation of several schools of literary theory, in addition to a separate section on deconstruction.

3. For further details about New Criticism, see K. M. Newton's *Twentieth Century Literary Theory*. London: Macmillan, 1988. 39-45; for more ideas about New Historicism, see Keith Green and Jill Lebihan. *Critical Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 1996. 111-16. For more details about Deconstruction, See Christopher Norris. *Deconstruction*. London: Routledge, 1982. passim.

4. For a detailed discussion of Iser's viewpoint about "the implied reader" and "the actual reader", see ***The Implied Reader***. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. pp. 44, 278-90.

5. The Marxist critical views towards literature can be considerably traced in Christopher Caudwell's "English poets: the Decline of Capitalism", George Lukâcs "Critical Realism and Socialist Realism", and Walter Benjamin's "The Author as Producer", while the formalist views can be clearly seen in Victor Shklovsky's "Art as Technique", Medvedev's "The object, Tasks, and Methods of Literary History" and Jan Mukarôvsky's "Aesthetic Function, Norm, and Values as Social Facts". For a detailed discussion of these articles, see K. M. Newton Ed. *Twentieth Century Literary Theory*. London: Macmillan, 1988. 21-39/ 85-98.

6. For further illustration of the views of reader-response critics concerning the meaning of a text, see "Reception Theory and Reader-Response Criticism" in K. M. Newton Ed. *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory*. London: Macmillan, 1988. pp. 219-35. For more details about the concept of New Criticism on "Text and Readers", see the same reference, pp. 39-53.

7. Gadamer's views about the process of reading and his major influence on Jauss can be traced in Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, op. cit, pp. 320-360.

8. Peter J. Rabinowitz discusses the same idea in his "Whirl Without End: Audience Oriented Criticism" in G. Douglas Atkins and Laura Morrow Ed. *Contemporary Literary Theory*. London: Macmillan, 1989. pp. 92-93.

9. For a detailed study of Iser's views about the concept of "the implied reader", see Iser's *The Act of Reading*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978. pp. 25-31.

10. For a detailed discussion of these views see, Holland's *Reader's Reading*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975. passim.; and see Fish's *Is There a Text in this Class?: The Authority of Interpretative Communication*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980. passim. In the above work Holland gives a detailed account of how specific readers give different interpretations for Faulkner's "Rose for Emily" according to their individual predispositions; and Fish summarizes his major theory about the reader-text relationship.

11. For a detailed account of Iser's postulation in this concern, see *The Act of Reading*, pp. 20-45.

12. For further illustration of Roman Ingarden's concept about "texual schemata", See Ingarden's *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*. Trans. Ruth Ann Croncey and Kenneth Rolson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973. pp. 50-60.

13. Iser's model of **the implied reader** differs from other models in that it both embodies the presence of the real reader and successfully avoids the problem of the ideal reader. Iser's reader is a kind of a structure that stands for the activities of all readers in that it shifts the attention from the definition of the reader to the interaction between the text and the reader. On the other hand, the **"the ideal reader"** is a heuristic model invented by Culler. He is someone who has internalized the literary conventions in a way that enables him/her to read and interpret literature in a convincing way. Culler believes that the internalized grammar of literature is similar to linguistic competence in that speakers of a particular language bring to the act of communication an implicit knowledge of language that makes communication possible. Similarly, the mastery of literary conventions would enable the reader to perform acceptable reading and interpretation of literary works, for such conventions form the underlying structure of literature itself. As for the concepts about "the historical reader", "the super reader", or "the Zero-degree Narratee" of G. Prince, enough discussion has been made in this concern in the article itself.

14. For further details of this point, see Robert C. Holub's *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Methuen, 1984. p. 84-6.

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