

# DRAMATIC DISCOURSE IN POETRY

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## ABSTRACT

### DRAMATIC DISCOURSE IN POETRY

This thesis is a theoretical and philosophical discussion of the nature of poetic discourse, with a subsequent discussion of pedagogic practice arising from the views expressed, whose effectiveness is illustrated by a subjective selection of protocols. The central claim is that the peculiar nature of poetic discourse is inherently dramatic, since it internalizes 'voices'. Therefore, *to achieve a total experience of poetry the reader needs to engage his own schemata in their body/thought entirety*. This implies that he has not to limit himself to the 'sounding' of the 'voices' he achieves in the text just within his 'inward ear', but he has to 'embody' them, 'inhabit' them within a 'physical space of representation', letting them inter-act with other readers' embodiments. In so doing, the reader becomes an *Acting Reader*.

The contribution this thesis offers to research on Discourse Analysis and Literary Stylistics consists in recognizing the vocal, 'physical' dimension of poetic texts (a dimension which is often neglected) as a way of achieving a more thorough personal awareness of the poetic experience. Accordingly, I elaborate a principled pedagogic approach to poetic language through the reader's use of drama techniques with the aim to demonstrate how it can be relevant in the teaching of poetry to either L1 or L2 students at both High School and University levels.

So that in the theoretical part (Chapters 1-4) I place my rationale against a context of 'new-critic', semiotic, and deconstructionist approaches to literary theory and teaching methodology to demonstrate how they imply only a one-way communication of a pre-established interpretation (Chapters 1-2). Then I describe the first 'two phases' of the reader's activation of 'familiarizing' *top-down* and 'defamiliarizing' *bottom-up* strategies in his attempt to authenticate the peculiar structural and semantic arrangement of the poetic text (Chapter 3). Eventually, these two top-down/bottom-up phases come to merge during the final *interactive* phase (Chapter 4) in which I postulate a group of acting readers' multiple 'embodied' poetic discourses - controlled by the same poetic text - inter-acting in a representational 'physical' space to recreate selves, schemata, and iconic contexts.

This theory systematically informs the practical part of my research (Chapters 5-9) consisting in 'dialogic' classroom operationalizations of each of the three phases. I pragmatically demonstrate (through protocol analysis) that to be *conceptually* receptive to poetic language the student/acting-reader needs to be *physically* prepared to be receptive to it. Stylistics, thus, is meant as the analysis of the *acting reader's* own responses, not as the analysis of the text (Chapter 5). I first provide 'top-down' *affective* evidence that the nature of schemata is essentially 'bodily', as the body is the experiential way to conceptualization (Chapter 6). Then, I show students/acting-readers' 'bottom-up' *cognitive* embodiments of ideational/interpersonal 'voices' in both macro- and micro-communication (Chapter 7), to finally describe groups of acting readers' pragmatic achievements of 'interactive' dramatic embodiments of collective poetic discourses (Chapter 8). I conclude (Chapter 9) by indicating possible theoretical and pedagogic developments of my rationale.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Poetic discourse as a dramatic use of language: 'setting the scene'

#### 1.1.1. Research plan

Areas of enquiry. This research intends to elaborate a principled approach to poetic language through the reader's use of drama techniques based on physical and vocal improvisation and on creative-writing retextualizations. The aim is to demonstrate how such an approach can be relevant in the teaching of poetry to either L1 or L2 students at both High School and University levels.

The thesis seeks to locate a pedagogic problem of the teaching of poetry within current theories of Discourse Analysis, Applied Linguistics and Stylistics, Literary and Linguistic Description, Cognitive Psychology and Schema Theory, Applied Phenomenology, and Drama Methods.

Rationale. The rationale underlying this research is that to be conceptually receptive to poetic language the reader needs to be physically prepared to be receptive to it. For this purpose, he has to free himself from his customary silent position, by giving poetry a context in space and 'inhabiting' it physically as well as vocally. In so doing, the reader becomes an *Acting Reader*.

It follows that reading poetry involves two processes: acting it out and analyzing its effects. This implies that the *acting reader* creates his own dramatic discourse and its effects which are followed by his own reflection upon them. Stylistics, in this way, is meant as the analysis of the *acting reader's* own responses, not as the analysis of the text.

Thesis design. In the development of my argument I consider *three phases* which will be systematically analyzed and justified from both theoretical and practical perspectives:

1. The *acting reader* tries to overcome the initial sense of estrangement felt towards poetry by imposing 'his own voice' upon it through a *top-down*, deconstructive approach based on dramatic improvisation. In this way, he tries to familiarize with the unfamiliar linguistic mode of poetic expression.

2. The *acting reader* returns to the text for a close linguistic scrutiny, thus activating *bottom-up* reading strategies which allow him to discursively achieve 'dramatic voices within the text'. This estranges and distances him again from the metaphorical mode of poetic expression.

3. The *acting reader's* physical and emotional 'embodiment' of 'the voices he achieves in the text' - by having them *interact* with 'his own voice' - gradually enables him to reconcile the opposing sensations of intimacy and estrangement within his own self and to communicate his interpretative discourse to the other *acting readers* interacting with him.

In the context of these three phases, poetic language will be explored within the two genres of *lyric/dramatic poetry* and *poetic drama*, and always from the point of view of the reader, who has to cope with different degrees of textual contextualization (from the well-defined situation in poetic drama to the apparent lack of context in lyric poetry) as well as with the challenges poetic language poses to him.

The purpose of this approach is to allow the reader to make the poetic text his own through his own dramatic interpretation, and, in this way, to access, authenticate, and appreciate it better. Therefore, the crucial link I shall try to get across is between the concept of poetic discourse which presupposes in some sense the 'voice', and the way in which 'performance' is effectively managed and then designed to manage in class.

### 1.1.2. The structure

So the structure of my thesis is very straightforward:

A. In Part One on Theory (Chapters 2-4), I shall discuss the nature of literary discourse - and particularly the nature of poetic discourse - by focusing, above all, on the reader's place in relation to the poetic text, providing, at the same time, a survey of the relevant theoretical assumptions on this topic. Then, I shall postulate that poetic discourse is intrinsically dramatic in the sense that it deals with 'voices'. My notion of 'voice', in this theoretical context, is to be related neither to that concept of 'voice' typical of traditional theory of dramatization (meant as the sounding out of the words with 'appropriate' intonation, pronunciation, gesture etc.), nor to the more abstract concept of 'voice' common to literary commentary. My notion of 'voice', on the contrary, relies essentially on a continual, vital interaction between the *acting reader's* 'inner voice' which takes its origin from his own experience and personality (that is, from his own schemata), and the 'textual voices' he achieves within the text by dramatically accessing poetic language through his own 'inner voice' (1). This implies a *discoursal interplay* between two cognitive/affective strategies:

1. A *top-down* one, which presupposes the acknowledgement of only a low degree of textual constraint so as to allow the *acting reader* to impose his own 'voice' on the initial 'affective', dramatic discourse he achieves from the poetic text.

2. A *bottom-up* one, which takes into account textual constraints allowing the *acting reader* to 'cognitively' identify 'voices' within the text.

This leads him to the physical and emotional authentication of those 'textual voices' by means of 'his own voice'.

On the basis of these interactive assumptions, I then advocate the need for an *acting reader* who does not just look at the stylistic analysis of the text without any presupposition of

the performance. On the contrary, he has to 'internalize' poetry by 'acting it out' in order to sharpen his perception as to what the features are in the text which allow him to assume the ways he interprets it. Therefore, he first performs the poem by creating his own discourse and its effects - on himself and on his listeners/observers as well - and then he goes on reflecting on his own performance and analyzing those effects.

Of course, a poetry reading of this kind cannot be an activity carried out silently and in isolation; actually, it involves groups of acting readers who, together, set up a workshop where imaginative, emotional and physical energies, in relation to the poetic language they explore, are constantly communicated. One of the most suitable situations for realizing all this is certainly the classroom which, under such circumstances, rather resembles the rehearsal room.

B. In Part Two on Practice (Chapters 5-9), then, I shall illustrate how this discourse principle of poetry leads the teacher/researcher to certain activities which enable students to feel the voice and, therefore, to develop a sense of identity with the poetic texts - both lyric and dramatic ones - by creating their own interpretation, their own dramatic discourse, out of them. Moreover, I will also demonstrate, through the use of samples of protocols from my students, that, although students/acting-readers act within imaginary, virtual contexts, they share true feelings, thoughts, actions and re-actions to the poetic language: this is considered as an integral part of the communicative situations generated by the interaction between the students' imagination and the poetic text.

The pragmatic investigation will be carried out in an Italian High School (with intermediate/advanced students of English Language and Literature - age: sixteen/eighteen), and an Italian University (with advanced/proficient students from a Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature - age: early twenties), and it will be based on the exploration of how the same poetic text, informed by different physical, emotional and intellectual stances activated by the students/acting-readers, can produce different kinds of discourse interpretations.

The guidance given to students in interpreting poetry through voice and movement will be demonstrated through

activities involving physical-theatre methods, creative-writing retextualizations, and stylistic/discourse analysis.

The question which will be raised in this pragmatic part of my thesis concerns, above all, the imaginative relationship between poetic text and the reader's vocal, verbal and physical improvisation/response to it. Thus, the connection between words, sounds, physical expressions and meaning will be explored in order to enable analysis to confront the issue that the very nature of poetic discourse is necessarily dramatic since it internalises 'voices' and finds its realization in spatial dimensions. The student/acting-reader, then, in the process of creating his own discourse from the poetic text, can identify himself directly with the voice/s in the poem by appropriating and authenticating the text through dramatization: the emotional and the physical context in which he puts the text will influence his own interpretation.

Such a process of authentication can be explored through the analysis of the students' *protocols*, which are transcriptions of students' tape-recorded simultaneous/retrospective propositional verbalizations of their analogic experience of poetic dramatization.

The protocol analysis will especially focus on the vocal and physical qualities of the acting readers' interpretations in a relationship with the poetic text. The aim is to find out how the reader's cognitive/affective process of 'acting poetry out' can be influenced by:

a. *The text itself* (through the reader's activation of purely bottom-up reading strategies);

b. *The author's 'meanings'* (through the reader's prevailing attitude of 'submission' to what he believes the author's psycho-cultural schemata are);

c. *External factors:*

1. Different actual contexts and situations in which the reading takes place;



2. Virtual situations created by the group of students/acting-readers while interacting with the language of the text. (This can be a way to explore how that same poetic language would work in a context which is different from the one suggested in the text, thus creating parallel texts to the original one);

3. Actual and virtual contexts dependent on individual psycho-cultural schemata;

d. *External ideas* (through the acting reader's top-down 'public' activation of his cognitive/affective schemata while physically interacting with the poetic text as well as with the other acting readers' interpretation of it. In such collective context, his first/second/third-person positioning in relation to the dramatic representation of poetic language is crucial to the establishment of degrees of detachment and involvement in the stances he alternatively - or simultaneously - takes during the group interaction);

e. *Internal motivations of the acting reader* (the top-down 'private' physical/emotional/intellectual investment of his own individual personality).

In this context, a number of theoretical questions, such as the experiential relativity of the dramatic representation of poetry, as well as the non-arbitrariness of the sign in poetic language (to mention only two among the issues I shall explore here), will be systematically considered in the light of recent theories of language and interpretation. Then, they will be pragmatically operationalized and assessed.

## 1.2. Motivations and research operationalization

### 1.2.1. The work of art as an imaginative prompt - The poetic representation of 'virtual realities'

The main pedagogical motivation for the classroom approach to poetry I am suggesting here consists in giving students the possibility of creating their own 'sound virtual realities' (2). Very often, young people desire to evade, to escape a dull reality which obliges them to conform to precise social codes, by trying to find imaginary, parallel realities. A poetic representation of this yearning for escaping the clutches of a limiting and unimaginative real world, taking refuge into fantastic, virtual situations can be considered, for example, Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (3). Unfortunately, very rarely young people today are educated to use a work of art in the same way as Keats uses it, that is, as an imaginative 'prompt' to their own creative powers; very often, on the contrary, they prefer to escape by using alcohol, drugs, all means that, in the long run, far from stimulating their imaginative powers, dull and annihilate them.

The student-centred approach to poetry I am proposing here intends to help students believe in their own imagination and trust their own creative, fantastic - often unconscious - responses to the poetic language which, in itself, has got the power of encouraging divergency and imaginary flights (4). I shall demonstrate how poetry itself encourages the creation of imaginary contexts that cannot be located in the student's present situation, because they are only a *representation* of an event dislocated from the normal context of life, with no reference to any normal speech act. In this respect, Widdowson's (1992) distinction between *reference* (language dependent on external and actual context) and *representation* (the context being internal, taking shape in the verbal pattern of the poem) is crucial. Widdowson asserts that "the reading of a poem is itself the representation of a renewal of our own experience of the language, freed from the usual dulling effect of context"

(p.32); it also allows "the expression of apprehension beyond comprehension ... (it extends) awareness beyond the limits of accepted logic, ... it can free the individual from the constraints of conventional thinking." (Widdowson 1987, p.241).

Poetry, I believe, has got the same all-involving power as music: like music, it 'prompts' overt and subjective 'performances' which are, nevertheless, always relatable to a pre-determined frame (the text as a 'score').

### 1.2.2. Poetic dramatization in the classroom

Promoting poetic dramatization in the classroom will aim to favour students' total involvement in poetry, thus activating a sort of psychodrama which helps them create and experience worlds through words, virtual realities through poetry and - in the case with L2 students - through a new language which estranges and renews their own experience. By acting poetry out, the student frees it from the authority of its author, thus creating, in Blanchot's (1955) terms, a 'literary space' different from the empirical reality; a virtual space, we may add, where he can enact his conscious and unconscious fantasies in relation to the language in the poetic text. In fact, according to Blanchot, the poetic experience implies:

"the shift from a world where everything more or less has meaning, where there is darkness and light, to a realm where, literary speaking, nothing yet has meaning, toward which, nevertheless, everything that has meaning reaches back, as towards its origin." (p.260).

Nevertheless, I also agree with Sartre (1948) when he asserts that the author has not to be completely discarded by the reader, but, rather, the reader has to collaborate freely with the author in the production of the work of art (p.59). This interaction would allow the reader to broaden his understanding of situations he has never lived first-hand.

The educational purpose of all this is to enable students to live also real areas of experience with a richer and more

perceptive sensitivity.

The elaboration of a principled methodological approach to the study of poetry through the use of drama and creative writing techniques, then, intends, first of all, to focus on the investment of the students' vocal, physical and psychological personality in poetry; therefore this study will be about readers 'inhabiting' poetry, belonging to it, assuming roles in it, giving life to the words of the text in order to create their own interpretation, their own discourse on which it is possible to carry out the stylistic analysis. All this is based on the assumption that the text allows the readers a range of different discourses, so that they textualize in the manner in which they perform a particular discourse interpretation. The reader 'inhabits' the person into the poem, he speaks with the person's voice, and this is the contribution this study intends to bring to the debate on literary discourse and stylistic analysis.

Then I shall demonstrate how the pedagogical implications and the various activities as applied in the classroom will be consistent with the theoretical background based on some developments in Post-Structuralism and Reader-Response Theory. Students will be allowed possibilities of embodying the voice into the text. This, as I shall demonstrate, has parallels with theatrical performance and also, to a certain extent, with the process of translation as a rendering a particular interpretation.

I would argue that the customary practice of reading and analyzing poetic texts silently has eliminated the possibility of fully experiencing poetry, of turning a text into a poetic discourse truly meaningful to the reader at every level of perception. A sound, a rhythm, in fact, can evoke a meaning, an analogy, a metaphor, a particular gesture or movement to a certain reader who, then, transforms that poetic text into his own poetic discourse, thus involving both his psychological schemata and his background knowledge and culture (5).

### 1.2.3. Spoken discourse

Differently from the dramatic-discourse approach to poetry I am advocating here, Formalist literary-stylistic analysis generally considers discursal actualizations as beyond the text itself; for the Formalists, in fact, language is inherent in the text, and independent from its uses and contextual functions. In spite of this trend, my position is that discourse analysis is to be regarded as the analysis of language used in context. This essentially involves an interaction between written and spoken language and its realization as subjective discourse interpretations. Actually, there is a tendency among some scholars not to consider written and spoken discourse separately (see Edmonson 1981): so that most of them mainly develop an objectivist-oriented approach to the analysis of 'meanings' as they are generated directly by the semantic structures of the text. In so doing, however, they focus their attention on a kind of discourse realization which is almost exclusively written. Seen under this light, reading is not usually meant as an oral activity: Benton (1988), for instance, maintains that the reader's interaction with the written poetic text produces a "mental performance" (p.18), so that, "if we read well, we cannot stop ourselves *sounding the words in the head*" (p.21, my italics).

On the other hand, however, there is a number of scholars who maintain that discourse analysis is necessarily concerned with spoken discourse. I take this particular position as the basic theoretical principle which will support my argument that *the very nature of poetry requires discourse interpretations in the form of dramatic (physical as well as vocal) performance, and, consequently, reading poetry aloud, and acting it out in space is fundamental*. However, most of the scholars who share the line of enquiry concerning spoken discourse, restrict the scope of their argumentation by asserting that, particularly in literary discourse, analysis is made of an implicit, more or less covert dialogue: Fowler (1981), for instance, focuses on literature as an interpersonal discourse, an idea already expressed by Bakhtin (1981) who bases his analysis of the literary language on its peculiarly dialogic quality realized not

only in the interaction between characters, but also between real and implicit authors and their real and implicit readers, as well as between real and implicit authors/readers and the characters' voices they realize in the text.

My own position in this theoretical context is that I certainly agree with Bakhtin's general assumptions; nevertheless, the point I will make is that all these real and fictitious people interacting within the representational world created by the poetic language have to 'speak aloud' both their own conscious motivations and feelings (that is, those ones explicitly and denotatively achievable from the poetic language in the text - which the reader realizes by activating bottom-up reading strategies) as well as their own unconscious ones (their own most personal reactions, responses and connotations associated to the poetic text - which the reader realizes by activating top-down reading strategies. During the first phase of reading, this 'conscious/unconscious' interaction can be operationalized through the creation of parallel texts to the original one. Such parallel texts are meant as re-textualizations of the students' own discourse interpretations).

Therefore I maintain that it is the *acting reader*, through his own interpretation, the one who has to 'give voice and body' to different views, emotions and personalities as they emerge in the linguistic interaction. Such interpretation has to take place within a context which is the result of the interaction between the reader's, the poet's and the characters' psycho-physical and cultural schemata, thus it has to be necessarily subjective and many-sided. Foucault (1972) comes very close to this multiplicity of points of view when he argues against a single universal perspective on the world: for him, epistemic (knowledge), doxastic (belief), deontic (obligation) and boulomaic (want) stances take origin always from discourse interactions. Yet, he limits the scope of his argumentation when he excludes the whole psychological, individual, and 'bodily' area of the unconscious, of the creative expression (the oneiric and imaginative stances), by asserting that knowledge, beliefs, hopes, and actions are originated only by a particular socio-cultural and semiotic context which is propositionally reflected by the language we use.

#### 1.2.4. General objectives

With this research, therefore, I will try to demonstrate that:

a. The context in which the literary interpretation takes shape can also be an individual, emotional, highly elusive one, to the extent that it is almost impossible to be defined and controlled, but only explored.

b. The exploration of the emotional context produced by the interaction between the poetic text and the reader's psycho-physical and imaginative schemata brings to the creation of original metaphors - mental images (analogic *figures of thought* and their physical realizations in space) and their vocal, dramatic representations (propositional *figures of speech*) - which allow for fresh insight into the nature of poetic discourse. In this way, the reader can feel free to escape from the limitations and conventions of any actual context.

c. The conscious recognition and experience of the subjective effects produced by the poetic language gradually set the grounds for each individual discourse interpretation and stylistic analysis of a poetic text.

d. The use of voice and movement is a way of either thoroughly experiencing poetic discourse, or affecting and controlling its dramatic realization-in-progress.

#### 1.2.5. Summary

To sum up, the contribution this study intends to offer to the current research on Discourse Analysis and Literary Stylistics consists, therefore, in recognizing the vocal, 'physical' dimension of the poetic texts (a dimension which is

often neglected) as a way of achieving a more thorough personal awareness of the poetic experience. This acquires a further significance when it is seen in terms of classroom dramatic exploration of poetic texts.

The rationale behind this study is designed to focus on those techniques of physical theatre and creative writing as means in the hands of the students to realize the presence of a dramatic 'voice' within poetic discourse. This provides a further depth to their stylistic analysis. Students are to be given the opportunity of identifying directly with the voice in the poem, and not just in order to experience subjectively the poet's own journey within the poetic use of the language of his text, but first of all to find 'their own voice', their own poetic discourse. Getting the students to take a poem off the page, to give it a context in space and also to improvise on it, creating parallel texts out of it, allows them to perform it and then to reflect on their own performance. This is a fundamental precondition of their stylistic analysis.

This approach to the analysis of the poetic text aims, therefore, to bring together areas of enquiry which, so far, have been occasionally connected with one another, but not justified in any explicit and systematic way. These areas are: Literary Stylistics, Discourse Analysis, Cognitive Psychology and Semantics, Drama Techniques, and some recent developments in Literary Theory and Post-Modern philosophical enquiry. It will be demonstrated how theoretical assumptions will be relevant in poetry teaching.



### 1.3. Practical implications: Ambivalence in poetry-teaching programs and the 'new dramatic model'

#### 1.3.1. The target readership

As I have stated in the previous two sections of this introductory chapter, this study is designed for formulating a principled methodology of poetry teaching. It aims, therefore, at meeting the interests of High School and University teachers of English Literature (dealing with both native and non-native students), and also of Drama teachers (in Britain the two subjects are often linked together) who seek to avoid those traditional 'one-way' classroom approaches to the literary text.

Literature teachers may find that the principled methodology I propose essentially tries to overcome the purely mentalistic approach to poetry which 'stiffens' - rather than liberating - students' bodies and imagination, and, consequently, also their capability of developing independent critical thought and aesthetic sensitivity.

Drama teachers and students, on the other hand, may find in this study a solid theoretical basis which systematically justifies each methodological choice in the field of drama technique. A principled drama methodology of this kind - and also specifically applied to poetry - is actually lacking in this particular discipline, since almost every drama method (even the classical ones, i.e. Stanislavski, Chekhov etc.) is mainly grounded on a type of whole-person humanistic approach with very little theoretical rationale and a quite limited pragmatic enquiry into the cognitive/affective dynamics which lead to dramatic discourse actualizations.

### 1.3.2. Traditional trends in literature teaching

To justify the practical purpose of this research, I would like to consider the fact that not until quite recent times, literature teaching, especially in L2 classes, was an activity whose aim was supposed to be obvious. And, in many cases, this is still true: the study of certain classical, literary texts is considered as a 'conditio sine qua non' for the true cultural formation of the individual. In such cases, the classroom approach to the literary texts is often completely non-existent, because the text is read and considered simply as an 'illustration' either of the historical period which produced it, or of the life and thought of its author, who is, again, set in that same historical period. Apart from the traditional activity of translation which almost always corresponds to this traditional method, the literary text is no longer used for further linguistic and creative activities.

In more recent times, especially during the last fifteen years, the emphasis on the spoken, rather than on the written, language has strongly put under discussion the place of literature within the curriculum, especially in L2 contexts. During the eighties, however, the situation seemed to have changed, in fact literature gained a wider re-consideration also within the language-teaching context. Yet, the new approaches turned out to be deeply rooted into semiotic and structuralistic bases, so that, the didactics of literature ended up with being a simple identification of the figures of speech and thought used by the author. Therefore, in both the traditional and the semiotic approaches, there is only a one-way communication which is generally expressed through the conventional scene of the teacher who explains something students have to note down in order to memorize and then repeat.

In his work entitled *On the Future of our Educational Institutions*, Nietzsche (1964) describes the scene of the classroom in this way:

"As for the professor, he speaks to these listening students. Whatever else he may think or do is cut off from the students' perception by an immense gap. The professor often reads when he is speaking ... One speaking mouth, with many ears, and

half as many writing hands. There you have, to all appearances, the external academic apparatus; there you have the University culture machine in action. The proprietor of the one mouth is severed from and independent of the owners of the many ears; and this double autonomy is enthusiastically called 'academic freedom'." (p.27).

On the contrary, what should happen in the classroom - especially when dealing with poetry - is to allow a plurality of ears. If, in fact, the traditional approach to literature assumed a classroom situation focused on the authority of the teacher - or of the text of literary criticism - and the semiotic approach was centred on the authority of the text and its author - always filtered, however, through the teacher's view, or the critical text - recently the emphasis has shifted on the student's interpretation. In his essay *The Ear of the Other*, Derrida (1983) supports this position by asserting that the same words can be read from totally opposed views, depending on the plurality of the kind of relationship which is established between the empirical readers and, we may say, the 'voice' of the written text. In this way - as McDonald (1988) asserts in the Preface to an edition of Derrida's book - "the *autos*, the self as the subject of biography is displaced into the *otos*, the structure of the ear as perceiving organ" (p.ix). This implies that it is almost impossible for the text to be in total control of its discursal interpretations. However, I do not agree with McDonald when she asserts that "both the text and its interpretations remain plural", since the text is only one, an object which allows readers a plurality of interpretations that are - at least to a certain extent - controlled by its language.

### 1.3.3. The new dramatic model

This research intends, therefore, to place itself within the context of the student-centred, communicative approach to literature and to develop it further through the formulation of a new methodological model aimed to demonstrate that *the students' recognition and experience of the dramatic dimension*

of the poetic language in a text can enhance their subjective stylistic analysis.

I assert that students have to find out the speaker's role in poetry, or, rather, the different roles and psycho-physical/intellectual 'positionings' of the speaker: they have to trace evidence of who the speaker is and what, in their opinion, he is trying to communicate to them, and what sort of devices he is using to communicate this to the listener. This can produce different interpretations of the same poem, but each interpretation - both of the speaker and of the listener - adds a further depth to the poetic text. A poem, in normal circumstances, is an utterance coming from an Addresser and an Addressee which are contemporary, and even though a poem is decontextualized, nevertheless, it has got to be an assumption of the first person speaker: who is the first person speaker? And what evidence is there in the poem for identifying the first person speakers or, indeed, the second person hearers, or the shift from one person to another if there is an interaction within the poem? Or, rather, if we take the line that since poetry always has the implication of utterance, there is always an implied speaker and an implied hearer, so can students identify who these speakers are, who the first person is and how the first person role is enacted in the poem? there are, in fact, fairly clear clues within the text which make students identify a particular supposed Addresser whose voice is being represented in it.

However, there are two sides to this question: one is the identification of the roles within the poem, of the role of the Addresser or of the Addressee; secondly, how far can students perform a poem so as to impose a particular Addresser; there are poetic works, in fact, which do not allow for a free interpretation of what the voice is, as it happens, for instance, in poetic drama, even when it is presented under the form of excerpts.

In spite of this apparent limitation on the students' imaginative faculties, the concept of *authentication* - as it will be explored in Chapter 2 - can involve, in terms of classroom practice, the possibility of having verse-speaking characters put into different physical and psychological contexts by students, as some playwrights - such as Stoppard (1967) Bond (1978), and

Berkoff (1980) - do, in order to create new plays out of classical poetic drama (6). Students themselves can create parallel plays by deconstructing poetic dramas through improvisation, or by devising poems through creative writing, turning them into new plays by making, for instance, poetic voices present in different poems written in the same period (the Romantics, the Moderns) become characters of a new play: Stoppard's (1975) play *Travesties*, for example, could be considered an experiment of this kind (7). It is also possible to put them to music, as, for instance, in more recent times, Lloyd Webber (1980) did with T.S.Eliot's (1939b) poems (8); or, rather, they can also be seen in connection with other forms of visual art, as, for instance, Stoppard (1971) does in *After Magritte* (9). In this way, students can not only explore various kinds of theatre through creative writing and dramatic improvisation, but they can also reflect on how they come to those new scripts, and eventually to those performances, by carefully examining the poetic language of the original texts, what kind of 'voice' they employ, what kind of 'voice' is in the text they are interpreting, where the stresses will come in the sentence to give a certain emphasis to the discourse, what kind of gestures, postures and facial expressions will be more appropriate to render a particular interpretation, and so on.

In this context, therefore, the analysis of the language structures within the text will be in function of a particular discursal interpretation, so, for instance, looking at a structure that happens to be a passive and deciding why, in that text, there is a passive construction and not an active construction is a useful thing to do because it enables readers to respond more sensitively to the text, and at the same time, it helps them use their grammar in function of understanding and interpreting a certain 'voice' in the text.

And then, again, if in a poem students consider the viewpoint which could change all the time through the text, by staging the poem they have to create a deixis, and the speech and thought presentation has to be interpreted accordingly. This will make them more sensitive to features of the language which are important to the understanding of the Addressers' viewpoints.

Then they can re-textualize the play after some physical, as well as verbal and vocal improvisation has taken place. In

this way, students can find some kind of further depth to the text which, if it were just filtered through the mind, it could remain flat. Actually, students should try to achieve a metaphysical effect based - in Eliot's (1953a) words - on the union of 'sense and thought', by finding new metaphors (based on a semiotics which extends the written and oral language into the physical dimension) capable of creating and stimulating new sensibilities in the students/acting-readers as well as in the students/observers. In fact, the written text is constituted only by a series of signs; the point is to associate meanings to these signs by interpreting them through the voice and the body.

The important issue is to concentrate on the emotional linguistic choice: why it is that it has been chosen this way of saying it, rather than using another way of saying it, perhaps the issue active versus passive, or this synonym versus this other synonym, or, rather, this rhythmical actualization of the metre versus another one, all alternative possibilities the reader has to be allowed to experiment in improvisation sessions, to see how they can influence not only the poetic effect of the language on the reader, but also his own interpretation as well, and the way the listener receives the interpretation. It is also important that the student/acting-reader motivates his choices and is able to explain the reasons for his choosing a word rather than another with the same meaning, or a particular tone of voice, rather than another; which is the effect produced on him, and then also on the members of his 'audience'. I define a poetic-dramatization practice of this kind as a *physical hypertext*, in reference to those computer 'open works' where the readers can determine the point of view in a story through a series of choices he can develop creatively and originally, though always under the control of the text. Dramatic improvisation on poetry - if carried out in a 'hypertextually' controlled way - can even overcome the multimedial limits which confine the hypertextual experience to 'sight' and 'hearing' only, by adding also the contribution of the other senses.

(\* see p. 402)

#### 1.3.4. Summary

So that, what I have been argued so far implies a distinction between two different kinds of approach to literature:

1) a traditional approach which aims at supplying students with a critical metalanguage in order to enable them to speak and write 'about' literature, its semiotic conventions, its history and its authors. This approach represents what Nietzsche (1964) - in his already mentioned book on education - considers as 'a crime against life':

"The historical method has become so universal in our time, that even the living body of language is sacrificed to its anatomical study. But this is precisely where culture begins - namely, in understanding how to treat the living as living and it is here too that the mission of the master of culture begins: in suppressing 'historical interest' which tries to impose itself there where one must above all else act correctly rather than know correctly. Our mother tongue is a domain in which the pupil must learn to act correctly." (p.22).

2) An interactive approach - the one I am advocating here - which aims to help students, in Nietzsche's words, 'to act' upon literary texts, rather than 'to know them correctly'. This implies a methodological model that regards literature as a resource for the growth of the student's personality and for the enhancement of his imaginative power, with the purpose of developing in him a deeper sensitivity and awareness of himself, of the others, and of the world around him.

Moreover, such an approach guarantees many opportunities to use the foreign language in L2 classes, since it is based on a kind of linguistic material - poetry - capable of generating great interest and involvement. In addition, the poetic text can be used as an excellent prompt for an oral and written creative work. An approach to poetry of this kind represents an advantage for the development of all the four fundamental skills for the foreign language acquisition. At the same time, the students learn either how to appreciate the richness and the variety of the poetic language, or to use it by themselves creatively and

in wholly personal ways.

Besides, the students' imaginative involvement with the poetic text will enable them to go beyond the mere structural aspect of the language: as a result, they will start inhabiting the text, feeling totally involved in it at an emotional as well as physical level, thus establishing a creative relationship with the text. The assumption, here, is that the poetic function of the language can be introduced in the L2 classroom very early, without waiting for a good level of proficiency in the foreign language. After all, students are already familiar with the effects of poetry in L1, even though they are still unaware as to how consciously personalize and authenticate them. To achieve this purpose, the 'ego-dynamic level' - according to Titone's (1985) definition - has to be privileged, because it pervades the communicative-relational sphere and, in our case, it can encourage an in-depth exploration of the students within themselves and the others through the poetic language.

The effect poetic language is expected to have on students 'internalizing' it, is one that resembles a 'process of estrangement' which allows a sort of displacing of the self - their voice becoming disembodied and then re-embodied - and makes them see words and their connotations as something new, allowing for the interpretations of new metaphors which are not just written, but also evoked by voice, sound, gesture etc. The peculiar effect of poetry is, in fact, a sense of bewilderment at the renewed sense of the language which becomes estranged and intimate at the same time.

#### **1.4. Research development - The Chapters**

The development of this research on a 'principled dramatic model' to be applied to the classroom approach to poetry will be organized according the following plan:

1. Part One will elaborate a theoretical statement - through the confrontation with other parallel critical positions - about the nature of poetic text which obviously internalizes



a 'performance'. This theory of poetic performance as poetic discourse will lead to the formulation of the theory of the *acting reader* assuming the voices within the poem as a way to realize the particular discourse potentials of the poetic text.

So that, Chapter 2 will survey current theories of literary discourse, particularly focusing on the roles of the reader and the writer in poetic text.

Chapter 3 starts an enquiry into the imaginative procedures employed by readers while dealing with poetry: it begins from the very first meeting between the reader and the text (marked by a sense of 'estrangement' towards the poetic mode of expression), to proceed to the achievement of an 'intimacy' with poetry during the first deconstructive 'top-down' phase, and 'estrangement' again, during the second, text-based 'bottom-up' phase.

Chapter 4 will then describe the third and final 'interactive' phase, which postulates the presence of a group of empirical *acting readers* imaginatively 'embodying' poetic language by inter-acting with both the poetic text and with their own diverse discursal interpretations of it. The theory of the *acting reader* will be supported by a background of philosophical enquiries into a phenomenology of the private 'self' and its public dramatization.

2. Part Two will propose a principled pedagogic approach for the achievement of a dramatic discourse in poetry, by proceeding from the previous establishment of the theoretical position.

So that Chapter 5 will focus on the pragmatic relevance of theory to classroom practice, particularly in the light of Bakhtin's notion of 'dialogism' applied to poetry dramatization. It will also state the research tools and procedures to be implemented in the dialogic poetry classroom, by advocating the use of a protocol analysis which takes into account a 'multi-angulation' of first/second/third-person perspectives, depending on the students/acting-readers' different positionings.

Then, Chapter 6 will deal with the pedagogic applications of the top-down phase by systematically justifying students' responses to classroom activities in reference to the peculiarly 'physical' nature of the cognitive, affective, and imaginative schemata they activate during this first 'deconstructive' phase

of poetic embodiment.

Chapter 7 will focus on the applications of the second 'reconstructive' bottom-up phase, by demonstrating how poetic language itself engages the acting reader's body/thought schemata while he imaginatively embodies both the Sender's and Receiver's roles in 'macro-communication' and the Addresser's and Addressee's roles in 'micro-communication'.

Finally, Chapter 8 will show how, in the last 'interactive' phase, students/acting-readers realize an inter-play between their own dramatic discourse (as pragmatically achieved from the poetic text during the previous two phases) and the other acting readers' dramatic discourses.

In conclusion, Chapter 9 will be devoted to a verification of the hypothesis on the basis of the theoretical rationale.

An Appendix will produce additional activities and protocol analysis aimed to provide more evidence of the pedagogic implementations of the theoretical grounds.

A final remark concerns my own use of the third-person pronoun 'he' throughout the whole work, especially in reference to acting readers, students, teachers, authors and 'poetic voices'. I use 'he' - instead of 'she', or the awkward 's/he' - because, although mine is a 'female writing', I would like to emphasize the universality of the 'body/thought' aesthetic experience of poetry I am advocating. My intent is that of making male readers identify at a first-person level also with the 'Dyonisian', emotional side of my argument and its pragmatic applications. This is a side which, differently from the 'Apollonian', purely rational one - to use Nietzsche's (1956) dichotomy and definitions - has often been conventionally identified only with the 'feminine' sphere.

**PART ONE: THEORY - POETIC DISCOURSE**

## CHAPTER 2: THE READER IN RELATION TO THE TEXT

### 2.1. Introduction

The question of the *accessibility* of the poetic text (also to second/foreign-language readers with an intermediate/advanced knowledge of the English language) will be discussed here, in relation to the theoretical foundations which will underlie my research. Such foundations will be, in their turn, systematically related to some particular lines of enquiry in Applied Linguistics, Schema Theory and Literary Theory. A review of the literature concerning some relevant theoretical positions will be also provided.

In this chapter I intend essentially to explore the notion that reading is not a passive process, but an active one, since it involves the empirical reader in a continuous communicative interaction with the text. I shall raise the point of the necessary complexity of the literary text, and, in particular, of the poetic text which, in order to elicit variable effects on different readers, should not be so immediately accessible as it is any other 'transactional' text - where the referential, 'shared' value of its content is crucial. The poetic text, as it were, challenges the reader to return to it, to reconsider its language, and to re-filter it through his own schemata over and over again in order to achieve his own personal meaning(s) from it. This, however, may sound as if there is a built-in motivation to recurrence 'in the text itself'. I shall maintain, instead, that the interpretation of a poem is determined neither exclusively by the text, nor by the writer. It is the reader who, by accepting the writer's challenge, returns to the poetic text and achieves his own multiple discursal interpretations by continually interacting with its language.

The approach I propose, therefore, is essentially *stylistic* (Widdowson 1975) not only because it inter-connects the theoretical *disciplines* of Linguistics and Literary Criticism with the *pragmatic subjects* of English Language and English Literature, but also because it regards poetry neither in terms

of texts to be analyzed and appreciated, nor of *messages* to be retrieved: poetry is considered, instead, as a form of communication, that is, as a *discourse* to be pragmatically achieved from the text and then stylistically analyzed.

## **2.2. Literature as a 'social discourse': Communication limits**

### **2.2.1. The establishment of a socio-cultural identity**

The reader's communicative interaction with the text, however, can be rendered sometimes rather problematic. Reading an English poetic text, in fact, often turns out to be - especially for L2 readers - a question concerning the establishment of a social and cultural identity through language, so that many of the efforts of traditional critical theory as well as teaching methods to make *meaning* clear usually imply a more direct way of getting across people to make the *message* clear. Following this line, Easthope (1982), for example, asserts that "what we have as the poem is the *message* itself." (p.141, my italics). Therefore, this kind of approach to language, which at first appears honest, clear and precise, is actually a matter of establishing an identity: a 'British' identity, for example - as Whorf (1956) would argue, by recognizing the existence of "an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language" (p.215) - or, rather, an ideological, social, cultural identity - as Carter and Simpson (1989) maintain, by stating that discourse analysis goes "beyond the traditional concern of stylistics with aesthetic values towards concern with the social and political ideologies encoded in texts." (p.16). Carter, in his Introduction to Birch's book *Language, Literature and Critical Practice* (1989) makes this critical position even more overt, thus establishing the role of the critic as endowed with the authority to interpret literature, "for the socio-cultural positioning of the analyst will mean that the description is unavoidably political". And then he adds:

"It is also important to stress how the term 'literature' itself is historically variable and how different social and cultural assumptions can condition what is regarded as literature. In this respect the role of linguistic and literary theory is vital." (p.xiii).

A critical position like this - largely shared by Literary Criticism - can be subject to very dangerous distortions because it could suggest, first of all, the idea of an ordering, authoritative role of Theory, and then the view that language determines the expression of a shared socio-cultural schemata. (In reality, the implication of all this can be even more serious insofar as it covertly asserts the opposite, that is: Theory controls and manipulates the social expression of ideology by precise, pre-determined discoursal patterns). As a consequence, the psycho/physical-imaginative schemata are considered as a minor aspect, as something derived from the socio-cultural background and, therefore, regarded more as a collective rather than as an individual expression. This is, in fact, what is implied in Fowler's (1981) *Literature as a Social Discourse*:

"There is a dialectical interrelationship between language and social structure: the varieties of linguistic usage are both *products* of socio-economical forces and institutions - reflexes of such factors as power relations, occupational roles, social stratifications, etc., and *practices* which are instrumental in forming and legitimating these same social forces and institutions. ... (A) sociolinguistic theory ... will show that all discourse ('literature' included) is part of a social structure and enters into ... effected and effecting relationships. (p.21, more extensively quoted in Widdowson 1992, p.104).

As I shall soon demonstrate, I claim a different theoretical line of enquiry.

### 2.2.2. Pragmatic issues in interpretation

Contrary to the theory of 'literature as a social discourse', I argue, first of all, that it is impossible to disregard the way other people approach the English language. The concept of a language - and especially of a literary language - which is true to what native people, or some particular group, want to say within their community makes it difficult to be

accessed by others, thus preserving the group integrity but, at the same time, preventing any kind of communication outside the group. Considered in this way, literary language could appear an obscure and elitistic linguistic code which, if on the one hand preserves the meanings, values and identity of the group, on the other it is extremely difficult to be accessed by others, unless after a long, initiatory, critical training which ultimately implies, paradoxically, the acritical acceptance of a unique, shared and wholly orthodox interpretation. As far as the community is small and the network active, full communication becomes possible even under such limited and limiting conditions. But, if the network is strengthened and extended, accessibility will be enlarged. This operation, however, requires the recognition of a concept of accessibility which includes both the Addresser's possible conditions of intentions in writing the text, as well as the Receiver's conditions of interpretations which involve the Receiver's whole personality. The reader's inferring what the *intentionality* probably is, and what *interpretations* the text may allow stimulates a pragmatical issue. Interpreting, in fact, means creating one's own *discourse*, but there must be evidence in the text to allow such interpretations.

However, a reader can read things in the text according to what his experiences are, what his *schemata* are. A text can appear difficult because it does not seem to conform to particular schemata, so the reader cannot identify what sort of schema it is conformed to. This usually happens when he is confronted with a poetic text which seems to violate the customary conventions of interaction the reader wants to make it conform to. Considered in this way, the reader does not know what the conventions are and the text becomes difficult to him. A shared schematic knowledge, on the contrary, would enable him to focus less on the language for expectation. But poetry, however, is in itself a violation of a pattern of expectation, so that it cannot be confined within the limits of social conventions.

To make this cognitive process clear, I intend to focus now on the notion of schemata: my intention is to demonstrate how Schema Theory is crucial to the theory of poetry-reading I am advocating in this thesis.

### 2.3. Poetry reading and schema theory

#### 2.3.1. The ordering function of schemata on memory

Background knowledge, or knowledge already stored in mind, is what is generally defined as the reader's *schemata*. In the process of reading and interpreting a text, new information is allowed to interact and then to accommodate within schemata.

Schema theory derives in many ways from the Gestalt psychology of the early 1910s, which is later applied to visual perception by Wulf (1938) who notices how perception is at first *sharpened* and emphasized by a salient feature present in an image, but, then, the mind tends to normalize, to *level* it by adjusting new information to the type of schema already present in the viewer's mind. In this way, he assumes that schemata influence the data on which the subject constructs his responses.

In the case with poetry, therefore, the reader's normalizing function of the schema prevails on the visual aspect of the poem, represented by its graphical signals and arrangement.

In Bartlett's (1932) concept of *remembering*, the term *schema* means "an active organization of past reactions, or past experience" (p.201) in reference to the text, therefore we could say that, also in this case, the reader's schema has got an ordering function on the poetic representation. This is, therefore, a *top-down* process (knowledge-based/conceptually driven) which, quite surprisingly, resembles certain Romantic theories concerning the process of making poetry. Viewed from this perspective, the reader's journey through the poetic language resembles the very creative journey of the poet.

According to what Wordsworth (1965) asserts in his famous *Preface* to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, for example, poetry is produced by a particular cognitive process based on the activation of memory, in fact, in his own words, poetry "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity": the moment of perception produces an emotion which, remembered later, produces poetry.



The capability of the poet to recollect, reassemble and reorganize "past reactions and past experiences" into his own personal poetic discourse is defined by Coleridge (1983), in his *Biographia Literaria*, as *fancy* which, in many ways, has the functions of Bartlett's *schema*. *Fancy* has the mechanical task of remembering past perceptions and emotions, nevertheless it is extremely important insofar as it constitutes the basis on which the true creative principle of *Imagination* combines reality with memory and builds poetry. This view is also shared by Spender (1952):

"(M)emory is the faculty of poetry, because the imagination itself is an exercise of memory. There is nothing we imagine which we do not already know. And our ability to imagine is our ability to remember what we have already once experienced and to apply it to some different situation." (p.121).

The "misleading effects" caused by memory during poetry reading are condemned by Richards (1929) as "mnemonic irrelevances" (p.15) because they make readers stray from the "relevant" meaning of the poetic text. In this way, Richards advocates a true *bottom-up* reading strategy (text-based, data driven) totally dismissing the reader's "fantasizing" responses as well as his mental imagery and associations since the poetic meaning can be retrieved only in the text. In his "re-reading Richards", Benton (1988) stresses the importance of the "'assimilative comprehension' where readers often parallel events in their own lives or instances in other literature with the ones depicted in the poem." (p.6). And this interaction is surely a way of authenticating and personalizing poetry.

The reader, in fact, differently from what the poet usually does, does not find his creativity only on the recollection of past experiences of the reality in which he lives and has lived (schemata), but also on the text itself and the probably different schemata on which it was built. That is why the reader's creative use of imagination in interpreting a text (and particularly a poetic text) must be grounded on the interaction between *top-down* and *bottom-up* processes, and that is why the discourse interpretation the reader produces cannot but be individual and subjective.

Horn (1937) points out the reader's active participation to the meaning-retrieving process when he asserts that the author



"does not really convey ideas to the reader; he merely stimulates him to construct them out of his own experience" (p.154). However, what makes Horn's theory still bound to the period in which it was formulated is the emphasis Horn puts on the "process of construction" which "more nearly approaches problem solving than simple association" (p.154). Again, this is more a matter of decoding, rather than of interpreting.

### 2.3.2. Poetry as schema-activator

The latest developments of schema theory, however, attempt to reproduce the reader's creative processes by trying to define the substantial and formal characteristics of schemata and the way cognitive processes are activated (1).

In poetry reading, for example, schemata can be activated by particularly *salient* words, and effects can be produced by *divergent* words, sentences and also whole parts, called *slots*, *variables* or *nodes*, which are not consistent with the event represented in the poem, since they are stored within different schematic circumstances (2). This, in the process of interpretation, stimulates in the reader the subjective creation of mental imagery.

The representation of a schema with some divergent component makes meaning inferencing quite difficult, therefore the reader doubts that it is that schema he predicted and expected the one which is really represented (3). As a result, he can either modify his schema to accommodate new information, or he can reject such inconsistent information.

In the case with poetry, however, the reader finds a sort of compromise in accepting new information within his schema by activating a 'willing suspension of disbelief'. This interaction, according to Widdowson (1979: p.171-183, 1984b), if on the one hand allows the activation of stored knowledge in the reader's mind, on the other, it contributes to enlarge the reader's schemata by accommodating the new information extracted from the text. Also Kant (1963) asserts that new information acquires a meaning only when it is accommodated within the individual's

background knowledge.

To access a literary text, an EFL/ESL reader can activate certain processes of simplification towards the referential aspect of the text to accommodate it to his own schemata. In this way, the text will have a more referential meaning to him, but the effect-equivalence is difficult, if not impossible to be achieved since, as the result of his operation, the reader has to cope with a totally different text. To simplify a poem by, for instance, paraphrasing it, a reader tries to reproduce the effect that that text produces on him.

A similar process could be considered in translation: as we translate, we translate the effects that text has on us, so that we have substantially to change the words, thus producing a totally different text which is nothing but the re-textualization of our discourse interpretation of the original text.

This implies the assumption that there exists a plurality of discourses in poetry, so that the reader can make the text accessible to a series of discourse interpretations, according to his degree of involvement in his response to it, and to the way he chooses to redistribute the meaning he achieves from the text into different semiotic means.

If he chooses, as I am proposing in this thesis, a semiotics based on drama (which involves voice and movement), his discursal response to the text will acquire a further dimension in space and further degrees of ambiguity too, which is not simply conveyed by the different effects language can have on readers' schemata, but also by the different effects the visual scene can have on viewers who also see the scene from different perspectives (4), and by the different effects voice can provoke on readers themselves and on listeners.

Therefore an approach to a poetry interpretation of this kind requires the adoption of *interactive* reading strategies. This is what Widdowson (1992) asserts:

"Engagement with a poem, as with any text, is an interactive process. There is always the implication of reaction: what do you mean? Why so? So what? Poems in this way stimulate the pragmatic process: the text activates the discourse in this sense." (p.113)

Such interactive process thus includes both bottom-up (text-

based/data-driven) and top-down (knowledge-based/conceptually driven) interpretation processing.

## 2.4. The interactive approach to poetry reading

### 2.4.1. From 'decoding' to 'interacting'

What I am going to argue now is that poetry reading does not just put the reader in the position of decoding the text, thus assuming a rather passive role. In this way, reading would simply consist in the mere activation of the reader's bottom-up processes of reconstructing the author's intended meaning by recognizing the phoneme-grapheme relationships in the text (this is typical of the Structuralist approach by Fries (1963) and Lado (1964), and of the process of decoding the sound/symbol connections in the reading-aloud (Rivers (1968))).

Goodman's (1971) and Smith's (1971) psycholinguistic model of reading, on the contrary, can be said to come very close to the kind of process activated by the reader in his approach to the poetic text I am going to discuss here. According to this view, the reader interprets the meanings according to his background knowledge (schemata), including both psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of reading. This has already been defined as a *top-down* cognitive procedure involving both *content* schemata as well as *formal*, rhetorical schemata (Carrell 1983a, b, c, 1984a, b, c, 1985; Carrell and Eisterhold 1983; Carrell and Wallace 1983).

This should be considered quite a revolution in the field of research on reading processes; suffice it to say that in his book *Practical Criticism*, Richards (1929) warns against what he defines as "stock responses", that is: "views and emotions already fully prepared in the reader's mind, so that what happens appears to be more of the reader's doing than the poet's." (p.15). Richards' *bottom-up* view actually implies a shift from the reader's mind to the text itself as the place where the exact

meaning of the poem resides.

The way in which I am going to consider the reader's approach to the poetic text, however, implies first of all the assumption that meaning in poetry turns out to be a pragmatic negotiation leading to various degrees of approximation to the purpose the text is designed for. This is not, therefore, just a 'psychological guessing game', as Goodman would define it, because, though the reader is set in the position of the protagonist of the discourse, the cognitive processing involved are not only of a *top-down* kind. Widdowson (1978, 1979: p.70, 1983), for example, maintains that the reader is, on the one hand, an active information processor who does not use all the textual cues to make and confirm *top-down* predictions; on the other hand, however, the reader has to recognize the fact that the text itself was designed with the intention of achieving certain *reference, force and effects* which require from him the activation of *bottom-up* strategies as well.

In the debate centred on reading processes, also Rumelhart (1977, 1980), Sanford and Garrod (1981), Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) move on the line that effective first or second language reading involves the *interaction* of both *top-down* and *bottom-up* strategies.

What is interesting to consider at this point is the way in which the question of how the reader is placed in relation to the text has been approached during the last decades so far.

Slatoff (1970), for instance, points out that, before the seventies, no serious attempt to understand the process of reading and the interaction between the reader and the text can be found: literary critics such as Richards (1929), Empson (1961), and Lewis (1961) do not focus on the process of reading as such, being more concerned with a critical appreciation and evaluation of the 'objective' text.

Yet Rosenblatt (1937) is one of the few scholars who is interested in exploring the reader/text interaction. She asserts that:

"What, then happens in the reading of a literary work? Through the medium of words, the text brings into the reader's consciousness certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, certain images of things, people, actions, scenes. The special meanings and, more particularly, the submerged associations that

these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be duplicated combination determine his response to the particular contribution of the text." (pp.30-31).

Rosenblatt's view, therefore, is that "the literary experience must be phrased as a *transaction* between the reader and the text" (p.35), although it is clear that a special emphasis is laid on the reader's *top-down* reading process as a way of *experiencing* literature; in fact she says: "Literature provides a *living-through*, not simply *knowledge about*." (p.38).

The limits of Rosenblatt's theory of literature reading are evident: by considering the text in itself as subordinate to the reader, she is actually using it as a *stimulus* (1978) to activate the reader's experience in relation to his real life, and not particularly in relation to the virtual, imaginative life the poetic language in the text could suggest.

Also Goodman (1970), when he talks about reading procedures, describes how the reader uses prevalently a *top-down* processing in order to predict the meaning of the text; he relies, in fact, more on his background of syntactic and semantic knowledge, rather than on his graphophonemic knowledge which would allow him to focus on the graphic signals associating sounds with graphemes in the text. This aspect of his theory makes him differ from others' use of the term *decoding* which generally indicates the reader's process of translating a graphemic level into a phonemic level. Goodman, on the contrary, uses this term to describe how the reader translates both the graphemic and the phonemic levels (inputs) into meaning. Such process can be either direct - that is, from graphemes to meaning - or mediated - that is, from graphemes to phonemes to meaning (Samuels and Kamil, 1984). This implies that the emphasis on the phonetical level of the text is almost limited, therefore, in this particular respect, the model does not suit very much the reader's process of interpretation of poetic texts, where specific ortographic and phonetic associations are fundamental for the effect they provoke on the reader's exploration of meaning.

Smith's (1971) model, on the other hand, is based on the idea of *decoding* and *identifying* the meaning *encoded* in the text,

rather than on its interpretation, by focusing on the distinction between meaning retrieval mediated by sound, and achieved directly from the printed text.

#### 2.4.2. Linear models and PDP models

Gough (1972) elaborated a model which, differently from the previous two, can, in many ways, be applied to the process of poetry reading since it takes into account the reader's processing the visual aspect of a text (a fundamental aspect in the interpretation of poetry) before assigning a precise meaning to each word or group of words. The visual, graphical level of the printed text must not be taken, in this case, as a sort of 'behaviouristic' stimulus for associating word-recognition responses. However, the Gough model still remains within the tradition of the early 1970s cognitive psychology which tended to process information in a linear way.

According to Rumelhart (1977), the limits of the serial, linear models consist mainly in the fact that they process information only following a unique direction which does not permit the interactive influence and feedback among the various stages of the processing. The interactive model, on the other hand, is more realistic in its description of the reader's reading strategies: Rumelhart, in fact, points out how semantic, lexical, syntactic and orthographic signals, and their possible deviations, influence the reader's perception first, and then his final interpretation of the text, since these two stages interact throughout the whole process of reading. Such a model, therefore, is useful when applied to poetry, where deviation from the norm provokes particular effects on the readers.

McClelland and Rumelhart's (1986) further development of this model into the *PDP model* is even more useful in the understanding of the reading process applied to poetry reading (5). In the *parallel distributed processing*, the activation of language recognition does not occur in a gradual and systematic way, but through cataphoric and metaphoric processes, through discontinuity, associations, and pluridimensional interactions

which make the process of reading itself as linguistically creative and psychologically imaginative as the very process of making poetry is.

This creative aspect of poetry reading is also suggested by Widdowson's (1992) restatement of Grice's *co-operative principle* which implies that, if the reader cannot discover the (con)textual connections in interpreting a poem, he will *invent* them:

"(T)hese poetic effects arise as a result of contextual dislocation, when the hearer/reader cannot recover or discover the context of the speaker/writer and so has to create his own." (p.200).

Also the Stanovich *interactive-compensatory model* (1980) shows how any stage of the reading process can interact with another stage on a different level, so that to achieve understanding, the reader can rely on both *bottom-up* strategies (from incoming, printed, textual data, to higher mental encodings) as well as *top-down* strategies (from hypothesis and predictions to their verification by working down the printed data). In this way the reader can compensate for possible shortcomings in his contextual and socio-cultural background knowledge and linguistic background knowledge respectively.

So far, then, I have reviewed some aspects of Schema Theory relevant to my argument, and the related notion of *top-down* and *bottom-up* reading strategies which come to interact in the reader's process of achieving his own discourse from a poetic text. This clears the way for the definition of the nature of poetic discourse.



## 2.5. Poetic discourse

### 2.5.1. Poetic text and its discorsal accessibility

To support the argument I have just stated - concerning the necessary top-down/bottom-up interaction between the reader's schemata and the poetic text in the creation of his own poetic discourse - a clear distinction between the concepts of *text* and *discourse* is necessary.

So that, one can talk quite reasonably about a text as an actual object; it consists of token of words, it manifests certain syntactic rules in English, it is organized in a certain way but, nevertheless, it is an inert object, so that a reader needs to engage with it in order to achieve meaning in reference to it, and it is the activity of achieving meaning in reference to that text that will be here referred to as *discourse*. *Discourse is, in this light, the pragmatic achievement of meaning in reference to the text*, so there are many different discourses of the same text (6).

Now, as far as *accessibility* is concerned, connected to the idea of simplification, I think it is important to point out that traditionally people have a sort of difficulty in accessing meanings, especially in poetry. Such a difficulty becomes even more stressed if we consider non-natives dealing with foreign poetry. So, if people cannot derive an appropriate understanding from the text in general, and from the poetic text in particular, it could be argued that it is because the text itself needs to be changed. Therefore if the reader changes the text (by simplifying it, paraphrasing it, transforming or parodying it, creating, in this way, parallel texts to the original one) he will achieve a higher degree of understanding.

This view can be simply contrasted by stating that it is possible to change the text but still not provide for an adequate discourse response from the part of the reader.

This can happen because the reader is often unable to return to the original text to reflect on how its peculiar organization changes or challenges his responses, making them diverge from

those ones provoked by his 'derived versions', adjusted on his own schemata, and rendered wholly familiar to him. Widdowson (1992) provides for a series of examples of this kind in *Practical Stylistics*, but he also suggests how responses from the readers can be elicited.

The reader, therefore, has to look at what the discourse or consequences of the text he changes are, that is to say, he has to accept that there is in principle a difference between the organization of the text and his reaction to it, which could imply - especially in the case with a foreign reader - a realization of the complexity of the text (linguistically as well as conceptually speaking).

This realization could bring the reader to attempt a change in the linguistic features of the text in order to be 'assertive' upon it and to authenticate it as an appropriate discourse. The exploration of parallel derived versions created by the reader in connection with the original text will allow him first to operate a comparison and then to understand and respond to the language organization of the original. In this way, it is possible in some sense to talk about the illusion of the reader participating in producing the text, while, in reality, it is necessary to consider both the intentions in producing the text and the interpretations in receiving the text as two processes which interact producing a discourse interpretation. So, in a way, the notion of accessibility is part of this process, since it does not simply mean accessing meaning in relation to the text.

### 2.5.2. Authentications by estrangement

Accessing and interpreting poetry could imply precisely a variable response which would challenge the reader's normal response to texts. In poetry, what at first sight may appear quite normal and common, actually requires from the reader a real 'process of estrangement', a distancing from the poetic subject in order to consider it from a fresh point of view.

This *estrangement*, however, suddenly brings the reader to

realize that he can no longer converge on an only 'normal' interpretation: he cannot actually reduce the range of discourse interpretations, so that the text challenges him to diverge to other possible meanings of this poetic text.

Of course it could be argued that there are different text-types which imply variable interpretations, and these are more or less divergent-convergent. So, even among poetic texts, there are clearly some where a consensus would be easily reached, though there are still possibilities of differences in terms of effect.

So, for example, it could happen that, in reading a poem, a person can transcend the immediate experience communicated by the words in the text and then associate it to his own personal experiences, thus authenticating the text, creating, so to speak, extra-effects in terms of *affective* reactions, associative meanings and so on, and re-semanticizing the symbols and metaphors in the poetic language by personalizing them.

Indeed, we could not say that the conventions by which one establishes the different text-types are in a sense instructions as to how to read different texts. Especially when we read poetry which at first appears to conform to a certain expected pattern (that is, to a formal schema which we recognize, and which constrains the range of possible interpretations we might otherwise wish to impose upon it, making us conform to that convention), even just because of its peculiar organization of language, poetry breaks the conventions, which are no longer stereotyped, and this increases the reader's possibilities of different discourse reactions allowed by the effects the poetic language creates.

Poetry, in fact, can never produce a 'normal' effect because it just never refers to things in a 'normal' way; poetic language never produces the 'normal' illocutionary act, and because the reference in the *force* of its language is different, the *effect* is different. Also Coleridge (1983), in his *Biographia Literaria*, asserts that the language of poetry cannot be a normal, ordinary one, but it has to be the product of a variation, a divergency from the ordinary language. Seen under this light, metre is not - as Wordsworth maintains - something superimposed on poetry and obscuring it, since metre, when it is discursively actualized as rhythm, emphasizes the content, creating new, suggestive effects

on the reader and contributing to stress in him that "willing suspension of disbelief" which encourages him to believe in that world represented in poetry.

What I am saying is that a text which exhibits a conformity to certain established ways of thinking expressed through the actual language, calls up a standard schema, so that the text will create, as it were, a consensus response (we all know what that is, we all know we have to engage with this standard knowledge which all of us share). In that circumstance, the range of discourse interpretations is narrowed.

If, on the other hand, the reader deals with a text which does not allow him to engage a standard schema in order to access it and to authenticate it, and he realizes that the text is going to be incoherent to that schema, then, he has got to find something which can make sense of the text, but that might actually be very different from what another person might call up to make sense of the text, and in that respect the reader opens up the possibility of diverging in the response.

### 2.5.3. Poetic divergencies and transactional texts

The classical example of text which allows various responses from the readers is, of course, the literary text where divergency is in the manner of things, and in this it differs from the *transactional* text which, for its effectiveness, requires that people should converge; so, whatever it communicates, there is an assumption that there will be at least some attempt to recognize conventions and to control them. Literary texts, on the contrary, deliberately provoke, I would say, *divergency*, and this is true especially with poetry.

In dealing with poetry, readers realize that they have to cope with a discourse different from others, framed by paper, organized like a list, a piece of language aligned vertically, a manner of presentation requiring them to read in a particular way, which makes a poem different in meaning from other uses of language. Because of its being dissociated from the normal implications of the language, a poem poses a challenge to the

reader who has to invent a writing reason, since connections are not explicit. The reader, in other words, has to infer the relationships which produce the poetic effect, creating, in this way, his own conditions for meaning by using the written signs (see Widdowson 1987, pp.243-4).

This is actually what is wonderful about verbal art: in the most of our lives there is the constraint upon us to converge. We are bound within by transactional texts which we have to conform to, and this happens even when dealing with literary texts in schools and universities where people are required to converge on an interpretation by some authority. But this is denying the very nature of literary texts. On the contrary, how wonderful it is to take a poem and have not to converge on a pre-established interpretation: readers can explore it and diverge from the usual schematic paths. The etymology itself of the verb 'to diverge' shows the origin of the word as deriving from the same Latin root as 'to divert' (in the sense of 'to amuse', to entertain'), and 'diversity': this means that to diverge, to be different implies, in its essence, the concept of enjoying oneself, escaping from the boredom of conformity, generating curiosity, passion for discovering new realities, new worlds, new truths.

The reader's journey within a poem, therefore, is not at all different from the poet's journey itself within the poetic language. The reader takes those words arranged in that way and finds his own meanings within them, authenticating that language.

It could be argued, in this respect, that the problem with EFL/ESL readers is that the discourse they could derive from a text could be limited by the fact that they do not know the language very well. In the case with normal, transactional texts, possibilities of authentication can be low for those readers do not know the social-cultural schematic knowledge in which the text was produced and which exerts a social control over the readers' responses to it. Therefore, EFL/ESL readers can only take a certain kind of minimum bearing on the text, unless it is something that they could wish to know about: in this case they will, to some degree, get a discourse out of it, but it would be, nevertheless, a fairly limited one, since, not knowing the conventions which underlie that text, they tend to conform them to the same schematic conventions in their own culture. By doing

this, they could read a quite 'normal' text as if it were a poem, or a mysterious religious message.

To this I could reply that a foreign language text, to be effective on EFL/ESL readers, has to create conditions for increasing authentication, providing the readers, on the one hand, with a wider range of possible discourse interpretations - which means that a text has to actively engage the reader by engaging his experience in order to produce a discourse effect (*top-down* process) - and, on the other, allowing them to recognize the textual conventions which will normally constrain them into one kind of discourse rather than another (*bottom-up* process). The continual *interaction* between these two cognitive/affective processes is crucial in textual authentication. A text which is read only as a manifestation of a foreign language, even if it is a literary one, will have a very limited discourse potential. On the contrary, the way I am using here the term *authentication* has entirely nothing to do with *kinds of reactions* to a text (a top-down kind as opposed to a bottom-up kind of reaction); so that it is possible to talk about *degrees of authentication* (which vary in greater or lesser specificity in relation to a continual interactive movement from top-down to bottom-up procedures) in respect to what might be regarded as reader-response.

In this respect, the most suited text to provoke a wide range of responses from its readers is just poetry, since it poses a challenge to the reader who has to infer out of the written signs the relationships which produce the poetic effect, creating, in this way, his own personal interpretation. In this sense, discourse interpretation is always subjective, personal, individual; it does not only differ from reader to reader, but it can change also within the same reader's mind, according to the time, the mood, the emotions. The text, on the contrary, is always objective: I can point at it, I can hold it in my hand.

## 2.6. The reader, the writer, and the poetic text

### 2.6.1. 'Location' of meaning

A more systematic development of what we have considered so far in relation to the question of meaning will be attempted here. Therefore, if we talk about meaning, we can talk about meaning in three ways which correspond to three questions that have influenced the whole history of Rhetoric and Literary Theory, in terms of relative attention paid to one of them:

*Question one:* "What does the writer mean by this text?", or, put in another way: "How can we look at the text and infer from it what the intentions of the writer are?". And there are people, of course, we all know, in the history of the study of language use who are most preoccupied with the intentions of the writer.

*Question two:* "What does the text mean?". This question requires a close textual scrutiny; no mind who wrote it, no mind who is reading it, that has only to do with the meaning of the text.

*Question three:* "What does the text mean to the reader?", and this is a crucial question which does not mean that a reader has to disregard the text, because he has to be of some warrant to say what a text means as to him. It can happen, however, that another reader can agree on the meaning of a text, and then another, and then another one. And when the reader has got this convergency of discourse reactions, he can loosely say that that is what the text means because that is what it means to everybody, and if it means the same to everybody he can of course say that the meaning is in the text. The consensus can lead him to associate that meaning to the text, but in principle, that is quite a separate thing, and he is really into a considerable danger if he makes that logical link, because by asserting that all agree on what the text means, he is actually saying that this is what the text means *to them*.

### 2.6.2. The authority of the critic's interpretation

This represents very often the context in which much of the critical discourse theory moves, by placing its assumptions on trick-consensuses. This position is clearly represented by Short (1989), when he asserts that the literary critic, when talking about interpretation, does not distinguish properly between competing interpretations of the same text and what actually are just different variations (or, we could say, different instantiations) of the same interpretation. He argues that, most of the time, when literary critics disagree with one another, they do it in the context of an enormous amount of agreeing which they ignore:

"Often the literary critic wishes to focus on the reader to point to the essentially subjective nature of literary response. And it is true that each reader will to some extent interpret a text differently from others, merely as a consequence of the fact that we are all different from one another, have different experiences, and so on. But it should be obvious that such a subjectivist view of literary understanding runs counter to the presuppositions of stylistic analysis, whose proponents assume that *our* shared knowledge of the structure of *our* language and the processes for interpreting utterances in *our* community imply a relatively large degree of common understanding in spite of some differences in individual response. ... Indeed, if this were not the case, it would be difficult to see how communication could ever take place". (pp. 2-3, *my italics*).

Short's view represents the typical close, conservative position many literary critics adopt as a means to protect and to assert the authority of their group's interpretation against the fear of possible challenging 'differences'; the repetition of the term 'our' in the above quotation shows the measure of such an exclusive interpretative right which really does not aim at a true communication, unless within the 'group' itself. In fact, far from defining the domain of stylistic analysis, as he asserts, Short seems most preoccupied with narrowing its communicative potentialities. Short's argumentation confirms his position when he comes to remark how too "extreme" explorations in reader-response to literary texts are actually "producing



readings radically different from those which critics have traditionally provided." (p.3).

Seen in this light, for example, also Fowler's criticism (1986, see esp. chapter 5) is vitiated by the assumption he makes that somehow the effects which are associated with the text are in the text and, therefore, the effect is the same on everybody since there are certain linguistic features which create this effect for them. *For them*, however, is here to be again intended as a particular group of readers reading for a particular purpose. Groups of readers are purposed and what they read into a text is clearly a discourse which would be dependent on where they are, their values, their beliefs, their ideology, their purpose in reading. The problem is, in this case, that they cannot assume that because that is what the text means to them, that is what the text means, and, consequently, if it does not mean that to somebody else, somebody else goes wrong in the reading of the text. The assumption hidden behind this thought is actually that of the critic considering himself as a privileged and authoritative person, a belief recognized by others, so that what the text means to him is 'the meaning' of the text. Therefore, if the text does not mean the same to other readers, there is some wrong in them.

The critic's interpretative interference between the text and the reader is explicitly - but also naively - exemplified by Richards (1924) who asserts that the critic's aim is "to bring the level of popular appreciation nearer to the consensus of best qualified opinion." (p.36).

Assumptions of this kind are at the basis of Structuralist Poetics, too. Culler (1975), for example, asserts that Structuralism disregards individual interpretations in favour of a comprehensive theory of literary discourse (Jakobson's - 1960 - structuralist theory, for example, can be applied to the whole literature). In fact Culler says that:

"the experience of literature may be an experience of *interpreting* works, in fact the interpretation of individual works is only tangentially related to the *understanding* of literature. To engage in the study of literature is not to produce yet another interpretation of *King Lear* but to advance one's understanding of the conventions and operations of an institution, a mode of discourse." (p.5).

But, we would reply, the distinction between *interpreting* and *understanding* is only a false one; this is, on the contrary, just a subtle way of asserting a particular interpretation.

The Semiotic Approach takes this ambiguous position even further, by entirely focusing on a particular interpretation, passed off as the objective text itself; in his book, *The Semiotics of Poetry*, for example, Riffaterre (1978) encloses the function of the reader - the 'super-reader' - within the semiotic structure of the poetic text itself which controls and limits it. This is also in line with what Lotman (1982) asserts:

"Any text contains in itself what we should like to term the image of the audience and ... this image actively affects the real audience by becoming for it a kind of normalizing code." (p.81).

It is clear that, far from being objective approaches to textual interpretations, these theories are real attempts to manipulate the readers' interpretations. Frye's (1957) view is even more extreme than these, insofar as he completely eliminates the reader's (as well as the writer's) critical and creative function, by imposing on the whole of literature a fixed, archetypal structure of interpretation.

### 2.6.3. The critic's construct of the 'ideal reader'

Culler's (1975) Post-Structuralist Approach tends to restore the function of the reader as 'inscribed' in the literary codes and structures (the *langue*). The reader's literary competence in decoding the meaning of the literary text can, thus, activate interpretation (*parole*) through a sort of 'interactive' reading process of authentication and acceptability (which, however, shows a predominance of bottom-up, rather than top-down reading strategies):

"To assimilate or interpret something is to bring in within the modes of order which culture makes available, and this is usually done by talking about it in a mode of discourse which culture takes as natural. This process goes by various names in

structuralist writing: recuperation, naturalization, motivation, *vraisemblabilisation*." (p.137).

However, here Culler is not making any reference to a 'real' reader. His 'ideal reader', in fact, seems another creation of the critic to manipulate reader-response. He says: "The ideal reader is, of course, a theoretical construct, perhaps best thought of as a representation of the central notion of acceptability." (p.124).

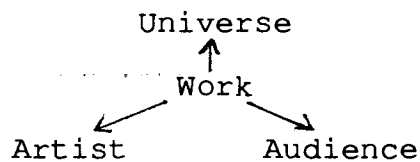
A type of ambivalence similar to the one seen in Culler can be seen in Fish (1970), in spite of the many theoretical differences between the two scholars. Also Fish's 'informed reader' who has internalized "the semantic knowledge that a mature ... listener brings to his task of comprehension" (p.144), is another abstract construction aimed to control the real reader's response: he is - Fish says - "neither an abstraction, nor an actual living reader, but a hybrid - a real reader (me) who does everything within his power to make himself informed." (p.145). Again, the reader's response does not come from the real reader's own discourse interpretation of the poetic language, but it is 'informed' and, therefore, conditioned by another authoritative interpretation (of a particular critical school, or of the author himself).

#### 2.6.4. The pragmatic nature of the work of art

Actually, the three questions - a) What does the writer mean by the text? b) What does the text mean? c) What does the text mean to the reader? - have always been at the centre of the history of literary criticism, as Abrams (1958, p.6) points out. He asserts that in reading a literary text, when the focus is on the writer, then we can talk about the "expressive" approach, typical of the Romantic literary criticism; when, on the other hand, the focus is on the text itself, then we have the "objective" approach, typical of the Formalist and of some Structuralist criticism. When, finally, the focus is centred on the reader (or "audience", according to Abrams' definition), then there is the "pragmatic" approach to the work of art, typical of

most of the recent reader-response literary theory.

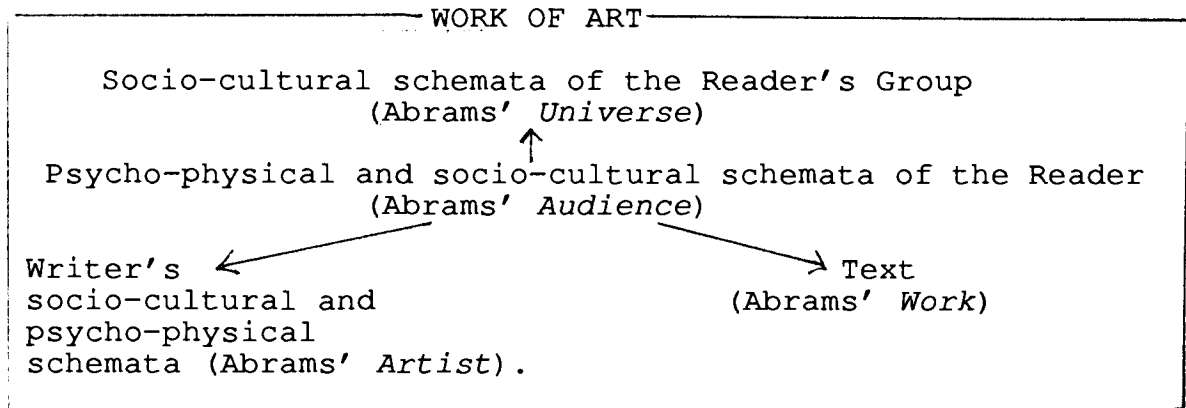
Actually, Abrams adds another element in his famous diagram representing the "total situation" of the work of art, and this is the "Universe". The focus on this element produces the so-called "mimetic" approach, which, I would say, is not only limited to the old Aristotelical view of the work of art as an imitation of the Universe, and, therefore, inferior to it, but it is also referred to most of the present critical and pedagogical practice of considering the work of art as an "illustration" of the period which produced it. In any case, however, the central position in Abrams' diagram belongs to the work of art:



(Abrams 1958, p.6)

Contrary to Abrams' arrangement, I argue that with the present - I would say, post-modern (as I shall demonstrate later in this section) - shift of focus from the text to the reader in literary criticism, the privileged central position of the work of art is undermined. The emphasis on the pragmatic, reader-response oriented theory, in fact, tends to place the reader at the centre of the diagram as the generative element of artistic creation. Abrams' diagram, therefore, could be re-elaborated in the following way (Figure 2.1.), by using a more contemporary terminology:

Figure 2.1.

*The reader-centred process of artistic creation*

This substitution puts under discussion the whole long critical tradition based on the authority of the text. Abrams' idea of "work of art" itself, however, does not fully correspond to the notion of 'text' as it is intended here, since *for 'work of art' I mean the discourse created by the individual reader not only as a response to the text, but also as the result of the interplay between his own psycho-physical and cultural schemata, the socio-cultural schemata of the group he belongs to, and the writer's own schemata.* Seen from this perspective, the work of art is a sort of virtual experience in a virtual reality, and it involves communication.

Iser (1978) suggests a similar view of the *work of art*, based on the *interaction* between

1. The *text* with its enclosed schemata (that is, the writer's schemata and 'intentionality', ready to activate potential meanings);

2. The *reader's processing* of the text (leading, we could say, to an aesthetic realization of his own discourse); and

3. The *conditions* (socio-cultural schemata) that allow and control the *text-reader interaction*.

This is what Iser maintains:

"the literary work has two poles, which we might call the artistic and the aesthetic: the artistic pole is the author's text and the aesthetic is the realization accomplished by the reader. In view of this polarity, it is clear that the work itself cannot be identical with the text or with the concretization, but must be situated somewhere between the two. It must inevitably be virtual in character, as it cannot be reduced to the reality of the text or to the subjectivity of the reader, and it is from this virtuality that it derives its dynamism. As the reader passes through the various perspectives offered by the text and relates the different views and patterns to one another he sets the work in motion, and so sets himself in motion too." (p.21).

Iser's argument is, in many ways, also shared by Rosenblatt (1978) who makes a clear distinction between the *text* which is only an object, words on a page, and the *poem* (the work of art) that is not an object, but an event, created by the interaction between the reader and the text during the process of *aesthetic* reading.

However, although Iser's model looks like the description of an empirical process of reading (as it is in Rosenblatt), it is actually not entirely so, because he does not take into account in any way the possibility of real readers. For Iser the Implied Reader is a textual device:

"(The Implied Reader) embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effects - predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself. Consequently, the implied reader as a concept has its roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader". (p.34).

My argument in this context, on the contrary, is that every reader - being actually a different person, physically as well as psychically - creates a different discourse of the same text. In this sense I agree with Ingarden (1973) when he says that there is a difference between the text as an object and its *concretizations* in the act of reading, corresponding to the number of possible discourse interpretations activated by the readers through their own personal experiences and imagination, that is, through their own schemata. Seen in this perspective, even the 'Universe', which in Abrams' diagram is represented as

something separate from the reader, becomes actually a subjective projection of the reader's perception of the world.

Reader-Response Criticism, after all, is founded on the parallelism which implies that, on the one hand, man's relationship with reality is no longer based on the positivistic, objective assumption of an independent universe, an entity totally separate from man; this means that every perception is already an interpretation. On the other hand, the same principle is applied to the reader, whose relationship with the text reflects his relationship with reality in general: the text - like reality - in itself is empty. For example, in reading a poem, it is impossible to find a meaning which is independent from the results - in terms of effects - that the poem can have on readers. The reason for this is that subjects (readers) and objects (texts) cannot be separated when we consider the discourse interpretation of a work of art. In fact, besides being *cognitive*, the reading process is also psycho-physical and *affective* insofar as it involves the 'body/thought' experiences, the imagination, and the linguistic habits of the readers, as well as their peculiar way of mentally organizing reality, which affects their interpretation and authentication of the text.

In the following section, therefore, I shall examine precisely some theoretical issues concerning the reader's interpretative processes of poetic authentication. Such issues will be relevant to the elaboration of my own theoretical position.

## 2.7. Reader-Response Theory

### 2.7.1. The empirical reader's 'total' involvement in poetic language

The general idea, we have just examined, of the reader as an element that cannot be separated from the text is today an almost widespread view in Literary Theory, although, within this definition, a whole range of acceptations may dwell, from readers as real persons to imaginary, or, simply, linguistic constructs. We have already mentioned Iser's (1974) 'implied reader', Riffaterre's (1978) 'super reader', Culler's (1980) 'ideal reader', and Fish's (1980) 'informed reader'; but there are others, such as, for example: Gibson's (1950) 'mock reader'; Booth's (1961) 'implied reader'; Holland's (1968) 'literent'; Eco's (1979a, b) 'model reader'; Brooke-Rose's (1980) 'inscribed or encoded reader'; Fish's (1980) 'interpretative community'; Prince's (1980) 'narratee'; Jauss's (1982) 'actual reader'; and so on.

My position in this context - as it will be developed in the course of this study - is that the reader, the real, empirical reader, has to free himself completely from his traditionally passive and silent role, in order to start a journey towards the rediscovery of his identity by asserting the authority of his voice - or of his many voices. Such an exploration can be carried out only when the reader allows himself to be totally involved - emotionally, imaginatively, intellectually as well as physically - in the poetic language; this, I maintain, is the only way to authenticate it.

I shall argue (see Chapter 4) that possessing and being possessed by the poetic language in such a way as to appropriate the text and assimilate it into his own being, allows my *Acting Reader* (as I shall define my empirical reader who takes 'physical action' upon the poetic text, thus creating his own dramatic discourse out of it) to start an interactive deconstruction of both the organization of the language in the text, and the organization of his own schemata. Actually, the operations of



deconstruction and construction are, in this case, simultaneous, obliging, in a certain way, the reader's discourse interpretation to recompose itself according to the result of the two 'sets of rules': the textual, and the personal. Submitted to this treatment, textual and personal metaphors - meant as both linguistic-semantic and psychological-imaginative expressions - can merge, transform themselves and revive, offering new, unexpected mental, as well as linguistic associations. And I would say that it is during these truly 'epiphanic' moments that the real works of art - as the results of such an interaction - reveal themselves in their plurality of versions, which are as many as there are readers to interpret.

#### 2.7.2. Top-down approaches to literary reading

Of course, I am talking about a process of reading based on the interaction between top-down and bottom-up reading processes. Fish (1976), for example, tends to found his theory uniquely on a pure top-down approach to poetry reading. In his essay 'Interpreting the *Variorum*', he asserts that the variety of the readers' interpretations is not due to a text controlling their response, but, rather, it is the result of the readers' experiences:

"This is then my thesis: that the form of the reader's experience, formal units, and the structure of intention are one, that they come into view simultaneously, and that therefore questions of priority and independence do not arise. What does arise is another question: what produces *them*? That is, if intention, form, and the shape of the reader's experience are simply different ways of referring to the same interpretative act, what is that act an interpretation of? I cannot answer that question, but neither, I would claim, can anyone else, although formalists try to answer it by pointing to patterns and claiming that they are available independently of (or prior to) interpretation". (p.479).

In this way, by denying any textual control on the reading experience, and by transferring the whole interpretative power upon the reader's background experience prior to the reading process itself, the notions of 'representation', 'discourse',

'interpretation', as well as the very concept of stylistics itself together with any methodological and pedagogical outcome have no reason to exist anymore and, therefore, disappear.

Fish's theory derives in many ways from Derrida's (1974) theories of discourse, but, however, there are other critics who develop a reader-response criticism based on top-down reading processes starting from other theoretical presuppositions. Among them, it is worth mentioning Poulet (1969) - a component of the Geneva school of consciousness - who maintains that in the reader-text relationship, the latter tends to disappear, because the text is simply an object incorporated within the reader's consciousness that is the source of all meaning. And it is within the reader's consciousness that the displaced text is transformed into a mental entity, a work of art:

"This is a remarkable transformation wrought in me through the act of reading. not only does it cause the physical objects around me to disappear, including the very book I am reading, but it replaces those external objects in close *rapport* with my own consciousness. And yet the very intimacy in which I now live with my objects is going to present me with new problems. ... I am thinking the thoughts of another. Of course, there would be no cause for astonishment if I were thinking it as the thought of another. But I think it as my very own." (p.55)

Another fundamental theory in this direction is represented by Holland's (1982) *Psychoanalytical Approach*. He asserts that "psychoanalysis, particularly in its theories of character, has a great deal to tell us about people engaged in literature, either writing it or reading it or being portrayed in it". (p.31). As a consequence, we could say with Lacan (1972) that it is impossible to distinguish the reader's unconscious system of symbolization from the textual semiotics. However Freud (1953a), in his essay 'Creative writers and daydreaming', asserts, rather, an interactive communication between the writer and the reader:

"(T)he essential *ars poetica* lies in the technique of overcoming the feeling of repulsion in us which is undoubtedly connected with the barriers that rise between each single ego and the others. We can guess two of the methods used by this technique. The writer softens the character of his egoistic daydreams by altering and disguising it, and he bribes us by the purely formal - that is aesthetic - yield of pleasure which he offers us in the presentation of his fantasies. We give the name of an *incentive bonus* or a *fore-pleasure*, to a yield of pleasure

such as this, which is offered to us so as to make possible the release of still greater pleasure arising from deeper psychical sources. In my opinion, all the aesthetic pleasure which a creative writer affords us has the character of a fore-pleasure of this kind, and our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from a liberation of tensions in our minds. It may even be that not a little of this effect is due to the writer's enabling us thenceforward to enjoy our own day-dreams without self-reproach or shame. This brings us to the threshold of new, interesting and complicated enquiries..." (p.153).

The reader's and writer's co-creation of a representational world of daydreams and imagination, in Freud's theory, provides a place in which reader and writer can enact their unconscious fantasies by displacing them in their own interpretation of the poetic language; something like that can happen, for example, in psychodrama sessions (see Gale 1990, and Jennings 1990, 1992).

Founding much of his theory on Freud, Holland (1968) asserts that 'the dynamics of literary response' is characterized by a transaction "between the patterns (found) objectively in the text and the reader's subjective experience of the text" (p.xiii), because, "literature is an objective text, but also a subjective experience" (p.108). In this way, it seems as if he recognizes the importance of discourse responses. However, in Holland's theory, the reader's discursual realization, meant as the subjective experience of the text, may be regarded only as the expression of his imagination as well as his unconscious impulses, whereas the reader's use of a poetic language can represent his conscious attempts to make them socially acceptable in order to establish a communication. Far from being interactive, Holland's *Transactive Approach* is mostly based on top-down reading processes, because, although he states that fantasy is universal and already contained within the text (thus asserting a typical principle of New Criticism), the focus of his enquiry is mainly centred on the reader's interpretative reaction to the text, simply dismissing, in this way, any linguistic peculiarity it can possess.

Later, Holland (1975) strengthens his theoretical position by asserting that "interpretation is a function of identity" (p.816) since the reader filters the text in exactly the same way as he filters the real world, that is, through his schematic knowledge. He says that "each of us will find in the literary work the kind of thing we characteristically wish or fear the

most" (p.817), which, during the next stage of the reading process, the reader will submit to a mechanism of adaptation and assimilation. Differently from Widdowson's (1984b) concepts of *authentication* and *accessibility* which imply the reader's process of adapting and negotiating the "available information" of the text to his own schema, Holland's 'affective theory' of *adaptation* and *assimilation* concerns exclusively the reader's psycho-cultural schemata which are to be adapted to the text. Seen in this context, interpretation has very little to do with the language in the text, being only the expression of the reader's identity, therefore we could assert after Lacan (1972) that the poetic language is not ordered by the text, but by the reader's 'identity theme'. According to Holland (1978), in fact, the text is only a "symbolization" created within the reader's mind, that is, the transformation of the reader's experience into an object of analysis. But in this case, I could argue that there is an intrinsic confusion in Holland's theory between the text in itself and the reader's re-textualization of his own discourse interpretation upon which his analysis is based: and this, actually, represents my own theoretical position in this present study.

In the next section, therefore, I shall focus on this crucial distinction between the text and its discursal re-textualizations by contextualizing my enquiry within a background of pertinent theory.

## **2.8. The meaning of the text**

### **2.8.1. Limits of closely text-based reading processes**

Seen under the light of the Reader-Response Theory we have just surveyed, the second question: "What does the text mean?" is quite an abstract one: who could, in fact, decide what a text means? After acknowledging the impossibility of a fixed literary meaning and the instability of interpretation, Deconstructionists

propose a quite consciously controlled and closely text-based reading process. But every time the text is taken as the ordering principle of the experience of reading, we cannot but notice that 'order' does not reside into the text, but within the reader's mind. This is what Widdowson (1992) says:

"But of course what the text means has to be apprehended. You can get rid of the writer and consider a text in complete dissociation from the conditions of its production. But reception is another matter. The only meaning that a text can have is what is read into it by the receiver. On its own it is simply an inert object. You cannot eliminate the reader, for the reader is the only agent whereby meaning can be activated. The essential issue is what role the agent is to play." (p.x).

The 'ordering action' of the reader is metaphorically represented by Benjamin (1969a) in his essay 'Unpacking my library', when he says that "the counterpart to the confusion of a library' is represented by "the order of its catalogue" (p.60). Language is, in its essence, always unstable and elusive, especially when dealing with poetry, therefore the ordering theoretical assumptions of the critic-reader are indispensable.

But, of course, Poetics is not universal, and in any case, attempts to establish a general discipline, 'the ultimate order' in the field of language, are ineluctably doomed to fail - as all utopias do, turning out to be mere (but, sometimes quite dangerous) crystallizations of mental structures. This is indeed implied in Frye's (1957) structuralist-like, Aristotelic 'dream' of a perfect model when he says that:

"A theory of criticism whose principles apply to the whole of literature and account for every valid type of critical procedure is what I think Aristotle meant by poetics. Aristotle seems to me to approach poetry as a biologist would approach a system of organisms, picking out its genera and species, formulating the broad laws of literary experience, and in short writing as though he believed that there is a totally intelligible structure of knowledge attainable about poetry which is not poetry itself, or the experience of it, but poetics." (p.14).

Borges (1962) illustrates the impossibility of a general theory of language by using exactly the same image seen in Benjamin. 'The Library of Babel' represents the foolish dream of an absolute, objective, universal order: "the catalogue of catalogues".

Therefore in this context, the concept of *misreading* (Bloom 1975, Eco 1993) and misinterpretation needs to be further problematized, since it looks like more as a conservative strategy of self-defence by an authoritative and privileged group (a "defensive mastery", as Hartman (1976, p.218) defines it), rather than as a serious attempt to establish an interactive link between theory and practice.

### 2.8.2. Theories against interpretative subjectivity

An attempt in this direction is undoubtedly made by Richards (1924). He actually considers art, in general, as the supreme expression of 'order', and poetry, in particular, as a means to 'overcome chaos'. But it is the reader - he says - the one who has to activate this potentiality in the poetic language through the quality of his response. A high standard of response, can also improve the reader's own life, by stimulating his imaginative experience. He asserts:

"In ordinary life a thousand considerations prohibit for most of us any complete working out of our response. ... But in the 'imaginative experience' these obstacles are removed." (p.237).

A high-standard response, moreover, encourages communication which, in his view, is achieved through shared "interpretation". In spite of his emphasis on the reader's response, however, Richards is here clearly against subjectivity of interpretation. He, in fact, asserts that:

"we continually talk as though things possess certain qualities, but what we ought to say is that they cause effects in us of one kind or another, and the fallacy of 'projecting' the effect and making it a quality of its cause tend to recur." (p.20).

His distinction between *technical* and *critical* remarks make it clear the separation between a kind of 'right' critical enquiry that the reader carries out on the objective, literary qualities of the poetic text, and a kind of fallacious reading

which is based on the 'effects' poetic language can have on the reader. In Richards, therefore, poetry reading is aimed at a unique, normative interpretation implied in the text, and readers should try not to deviate from that. Later, being very fond of Coleridge's Theory of Imagination, Richards (1934) tends to reconcile the 'technical' and 'critical' opposites within a sort of 'Organic Unity', where the 'order' is no longer a property of the poetic text, but of the human mind.

In his negotiation between theory and practice, Richards (1929), then, seems to focus his attention definitely on the reader's interpretative processes by asserting that poetry has to be experienced before being analyzed, and even encouraging 'misunderstanding' as a way of achieving new meanings in relation to 'wandering words'. But even in this case, such meanings have, at the end, to conform to a pre-established, unique interpretation already contained in the text. Unfortunately, his almost unguided practical applications of his principles (he used protocol analysis based upon 'free comments' on poems) produced a range of almost low-quality responses from readers.

A further development of Richards' theory, carried out by Cox and Dyson (1963, 1965) tend to re-establish the authority of the text and its writer as the ordering function in the interpretative process. They assert, in fact, that the poet is "conscious of many effects he precisely intended" (1965, p.13).

Also Richards' disciple, Empson (1961) talks about 'ambiguity' already contained in the poetic language, therefore it seems as if also the "alternative reactions to the same pieces of language" (p.1) are a property of the language of the text, rather than of the reader's response.

### 2.8.3. Intentional and affective fallacies

The 'New Critics' seem to go very close to a definition of what a text means, since they say that it is impossible to read the reader, as it is likewise impossible to read the writer. Their approach is of a formalist type, advocating the self-sufficient quality of the text and tending to eliminate the

psychological implications suggested by Richards' theory. For them, the conditions of the production of text could be erroneous, therefore readers must pay attention to a possible 'Intentional Fallacy' which can occur every time they concentrate their attention on the author's intentions. And for the whole, New Critics are very careful about allowing readers to read things into the texts that are not there, since this, too, can be another 'fallacy'. So they are very close to the notion that there is a meaning intrinsic in a text whose integrity they think they have got to defend.

Wimsatt (1970), who belongs to this school of thought, asserts that any 'state of emotional disturbance', on which the so-called 'Affective Theory' is based, can only limit an objective critical appreciation of the text, because "(t)he purely affective report is either too physiological or it is too vague" (p.32). therefore, in defining the two kinds of fallacy, Wimsatt says that:

"The Intentional Fallacy is a confusion between the poem and its origin (since) it begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological causes of the poem and ends in biography and relativism. The Affective Fallacy is a confusion between the poem and its results (what it is an what it does).... It begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism. The outcome of either fallacy, the Intentional and the Affective, is that the poem itself, as an object of specifically critical judgement, tends to disappear." (p.21).

Interpretation, therefore, is to be ascribed neither to the writer's intentions, nor to the reader's response, but to an objective description of the text in itself, and this can be achieved only through a bottom-up process of 'close reading'. Later on in the same book, however, Wimsatt seems to contradict himself when he states that:

"The more specific the account of the emotion induced by a poem, the more nearly it will be an account of the reasons for emotion, the poem itself, and the more reliable it will be as an account of what the poem is likely to induce in other - sufficiently informed - readers. I will in fact supply the kind of information which will enable readers to respond to the poem." (p.34).



Actually, the ambivalence of this position is produced by the New Critics' determination to allow reader's response not as a way to multiplicity and subjectivity, but only as feelings and emotions already within the poetic text which governs them, so that the reader can just retrieve them, better if under the mediating guidance of the critic. With a reader's response "inscribed and controlled by 'the poem itself'", Freund (1987) comments, "readers and reading become invisible, mute, imperceptible, ghostly" (p.4) and this is the great shortcoming of the New Critics. After all, also Eliot - whose work is generally believed to be at the basis of New Criticism - in his essay 'The function of criticism' (1932), attacks the 'vulgarity' of Middleton Murry for his asserting the importance of the 'inner voice' "which breathes the eternal message of vanity, fear, and lust." (p.27). Again, in the Introduction to his volume *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, Eliot (1933) returns on this subject by attacking Richards, this time:

"Mr. Richards, like every serious critic of poetry, is a serious moralist as well. His ethics, or theory of value, is one which I cannot accept; or rather, I cannot accept any such theory which is erected upon purely individual-psychological foundations. But his psychology of the poetic experience is based upon his own experience of poetry, as truly as his theory of value arises out of his psychology." (p.17)

But, just few lines after having expressed his disagreement with Richards' critical approach to poetry (or, at least, with his own view of it), Eliot contradicts himself by asserting that:

"In order to analyse the enjoyment and appreciation of a good poem, the critic *must have experienced the enjoyment*, and he must convince us of his taste." (p.17, my italics).

Being regarded as the 'father' of the New Critics, Eliot is here indeed expressing what secretly underlies their theory. By advocating that what matters is what the text means, and not what the author or the reader may mean by the text, the New Critics, in effect, assert their particular way of reading a text, and since they have reached a consensus as to what the text means to them, and also because they have a certain status and a certain privilege and authority as critics, they can say that theirs is the preferred meaning of the text. Therefore, their job is to

convince other people to actually see the preferred meaning and assume their discourse.

Such assumptions can be clearly deduced in the work of Brooks and Warren (1960) who dismiss any attempt of the reader to authenticate the text and create his own discourse out of it, by making a distinction between the essential, objective structure of the text - which also includes 'patterns' of irony ambiguity, as well as any other rhetorical mode) and its pragmatic, hypothesis-based realizations actualized in reading. Such discourse realizations produced by the reader's mental experience are later defined by Brooks (1947) as 'the heresy of paraphrase', thus establishing a unique and authoritative interpretation by asserting the formalist, structuralist concept of the self-contained objectivity of the text.

This idea of the 'real', objective text as different from - and superior to - its various realizations in the readers' as well as writer's performance can be found also in Wellek (1949) who, after Ingarden (1973), defines a sort of Platonic theory in which the text (like the Saussurian *langue*) exists with all its layers of sound, structure, and meaning in an atemporal, metaphysical or 'virtual' dimension, finding its 'concretizations' in the readers' discourse performances (something like *parole*).

#### 2.8.4. Reference, force, and effect

So, I am in a different position: there is no meaning in the text as such; meaning is really what the text discursively means to me as a reader, and that is also at the basis of the Reader-Response orientation in critical theory, or, as Iser's group calls it, the 'Reception Critic' orientation. In this context, the reader's response is not to poems as 'texts'; the critic-reader, in fact, does not react to poetic texts, but reconstructs them after having deconstructed them according to his own schemata.

Seen in this interactive, discursive perspective, when we talk about the meaning of a text, we are actually referring to

communalities of discourse interpretation. So, if we can assert that there is a universal consensus on a text (and in certain texts - such as, for instance, instructions or rules - we have to have) then, to that extent, we can talk about the meaning of the text, because we reasonably believe that we all agree on what the text means to us. On the other hand, however, even with such denotative texts, we cannot ensure a whole consensus on the meaning, so, whenever we say the text means this particular thing, we have got a kind of presupposed brackets at the end (to all, or, to most of us).

The implication of what I have been saying so far is, therefore, that there are three interacting sources of meaning: the *producer* (the writer), the *product* (the text), and the *receiver* (the reader). I shall state now that, in reference to each of these three sources of meaning, it is possible to identify three modes of reading which are, in Widdowson's (1991a) terms: *reference* (to be referred to the propositional content of the text), *force* (to be referred to the writer's conditions of intentionality), and *effect* (to be referred to the reader's diverse analogic/propositional responses to it). These three modes of reading correspond to Austin's (1975) *locution*, *illocution*, and *perlocution*.

A discourse that a reader derives from a text is, thus, a discourse in respect to these three modes, so that he reacts to the text by creating his own indexical meaning, and his reaction to a text is a realization that it has an indexical value in respect to these three modes. The reader looks at the text and he is able to see what the text is referring to; he is able to see what *reference* he can achieve from that text; he looks at certain ways, at certain phrases and realizes that he can infer a certain referential value from those phrases because they are referring to a certain objective, that is, to certain things in the reader's world. In this way, the reader makes sense of the words.

Apart from this inferring a *referential meaning* of the text, the reader can also infer an *illocutionary meaning*, that is, a *force* that that particular text has got for him (telling him to do something, for example) thus realizing what *he thinks* the writer's conditions of intentions are. This implies that we all

agree that a particular text - and not necessarily a poetic text - can be interpreted as having a certain *reference* and a certain *force*, and we all agree that this *force* is something we derive from the text.

But the text can also have, on a particular reader, a certain *effect* which might be different from that on other readers. I maintain that the further we proceed from *reference* to *force* to *effect*, the wider the possibilities of discourse interpretation become, so that it is more likely we all agree on what a text is about; we might waver on to what *force* it has, and we almost certainly disagree on what kind of *effect* it might have. So, the reader's reactions to a text depend on what *effects* it might have on them, something which could be connected to a kind of Freudian or Jungian associations, for instance (7).

Nevertheless, the question of the writer's conditions of intentions (illocutionary force), which the reader has to infer from the language of the text, is quite a complex one: I shall examine its implications in the next section.

## **2.9. Writer's meanings**

### **2.9.1. Approximating poet's intentions and messages**

At this point, the first of our three questions posed earlier in this chapter needs to be focussed on in a deeper way. The question is: "What does the writer mean by the text?". According to Wordsworth (1965) poetry is a means in the expert hands of the Romantic poet to communicate to competent readers the truth underlying the whole existence. Only the poet - being "a man endowed with a superior perception of nature" - is able to perceive this, because, although he modestly defines himself as "a man speaking to men", everybody has to recognize unreservedly his prophetic superiority and his authority.

T.S.Eliot (1986a) shares in some ways this view when he talks about the necessity of finding out ways to restore in

present times that 'temper of the age' which allowed the Elizabethan writers to communicate with their audiences with whom they shared linguistic-literary as well as social codes for the conveyance of messages. The Elizabethan audience's reception, however, is unfortunately reported by Eliot as just responding to the writer's meanings in a sort of behaviouristic way, that is, through "a preparedness, a habit on the part of the public, to respond to particular stimuli" (p.64). In this Eliot comes very close to both Abrams' (1958) and to Jakobson's (1960) views which substantially maintain that the reader/critic's function consists in approximating as much as possible to the message and the intentions encoded in the text by the writer.

Eliot, actually, does not seem to take into consideration the fact that the great force of the Elizabethan audiences lay in their discursal freedom, in the centrality of their interpretation. In the Elizabethan age, in fact, playwrights and texts were almost non-existent: the former often did not matter about authorship, most of them seemed to prefer the creative pleasure of collaboration, or of the reshaping poetic works into parallel ones; as for the latter, many versions of the same plays, for instance, are now extant, and such texts are actually to be considered as re-textualizations of dramatic discourses, written by members of the audience and by actors themselves, thus asserting the undiscussed authority of the actors/audiences' interpretations.

Nevertheless, also Knight (1949), in formulating a reader-response view to be applied to the whole of literature, gives us the example of the audience at some Shakespearean play in order to advocate a strategy consisting in the activation of a sort of Keatsian 'negative capability' by the reader, who has to become something like a Lockian 'lazy looker' acritically waiting upon the text to receive the poet's imaginative vision. After which, any further critical speculation is a step towards perfecting the poet's message. So that, in talking about the reader's consciousness, he says:

"Acritically, and passively, it receives the whole of the poet's vision; it then proceeds to re-express this experience in its own terms." (p.3).

Yet, also today, there are some critical positions which still tend to submit the interpretative potentialities of the reader to the author's possible meanings. This is, for example, what Short (1989) asserts against readers' individual responses:

"it is often claimed that it is reasonable for the reader to take along to the text a set of attitudes totally at odds with the presumptions of the author." (p.3).

Let us examine, therefore, this controversial theoretical issue concerning the reader's identification of the author's intentions within poetic language. I shall mainly focus my enquiry on which processes the reader activates in order to be cooperative with the author's conditions of intentionality he achieves in the text.

#### 2.9.2. Poet's guidance and reader's cooperation

At this point I would like to suggest a re-formulation of the question: "What does the writer mean by the text?" in this way: "What would the writer say if someone interprets what he has said in a way which is different from what he intended?". We cannot ignore that in the process of reading this happens all the time. If, on the one hand, a reader reads a text in order to confirm him in his own beliefs, then, on the other, another reader reads a text essentially as schema supportive, therefore, he assimilates into his existing schematic knowledge what the writer says. But the reader, in order to pay heed to the signals of the writer's intentions and, at the same time, to seriously intend to look for his own intentions, needs that they have to submit to some extent to the possibility of being guided by the writer through the signals in the text. Therefore, to accept what the writer has said through the medium of the text is schema-altering. In this case, the reader has to accommodate within his own schemata new ideas, new feelings, new views, and so on. This is actually not always easy to do, and to prevent it in any way some readers are assertive, and not *submissive* (Widdowson 1984b). So that it is also possible that there might be different

readings of the signals that the writer puts in the text.

However, as the New Critics would say - and particularly Wimsatt (1946, 1970) with his definition of 'Intentional Fallacy' - it is quite impossible for the reader to recover what a writer intends to mean, by making reference to the signals in the text. Such an attempt would imply that the reader simply ignores that poets do not necessarily know what they mean, as he also ignores that he himself cannot always report what he means by making accessible to his conscious ways what is unconsciously operating at the back of his mind. So, the effects of a text on the reader are not reducible to the intended meaning of its author who, on the other hand, cannot have the complete control over the meaning of his text; on this subject, for instance, Nietzsche (1964) writes: "I know my fate. One day my name will be associated with the memory of something monstrous." (p.31).

But, having said that, again, there are certain conventional ways to signal the author's intentions, and, of course, a reader can, if he chooses, disregard these signals, but they are conventional, and if he wishes to be cooperative, he has to recognize this assumption of communication. After all, the writer writes something in the hope and expectation that the signals of the intentions that he has put into the text could be interpreted as signals of intentions, and if the reader submits to those signals, he could surely say that there is a consensus between the writer and the reader.

This happens especially when the writer uses words with the standard symbolic meanings, and, therefore, it is clear that a particular statement comes to that particular point of the argument in order to make the reader surely agree that those signals intend to explain the thing, or to shock, or whatever. So that, in pointing out the limits of interpretation, Eco (1979b) asserts that the author has particular signals available in order to give interpretative directions to his 'model reader', who is not an empirical reader, but just a textual strategy for the type of interlocutor the author has in mind. The author, on the other hand, is not, according to Eco, the 'real' author, but, again, another strategy employed by the writer to build those textual rules which can allow both the construction of the 'model reader' as well as the control of his reactions to the language of the text. This will guide the real reader to a correct

interpretation of the writer's intentions. Eco defines this textual strategy as 'model author'.

But is Eco's solution to the problem of the reader's 'right' interpretation of the poet's meanings in the text really the ultimate one, as he actually seems to suggest?

My position in this context is indeed quite different.

### 2.9.3. The untenable certainty of poet's meanings

My position is that: having achieved from the text what for him the writer's intentions are, the 'real' reader could not agree with him on the force his expressions could have in, for instance, 'explaining', or 'shocking', and so on. Or, perhaps, the reader could even ignore that the writer really intended to shock him, for example, so that the intended effect can fail.

What I want to say, then, is that the reader can never be absolutely sure about the writer's meanings; it is, again, a matter of reasonable assumption. Therefore, although the assumption can be fairly evident or even very strong, then the reader has always to bear in mind that when he thinks he knows what the writer means, he is not really admitting an only interpretation, but he is only saying that he probably agrees with a group of readers on an interpretation of the signals the writer put in the text, but he has to be aware all the time that it is impossible to fully recover the writer's intentions.

In this respect, for example, Goodman's (1965) model of reading - built on the *miscue comparative analysis* between observed and expected responses of the readers towards the texts - is based on the misleading concept that there is a unique reading process and a unique interpretation to be retrieved. Although such model has always been defined as *top-down*, it is really based on the assumption that:

"reading is a *receptive* language process. It is a psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader constructs. There is, thus, an essential interaction between language and thought in reading. The writer



encodes thought as language and the reader *decodes* language to thought". (In Carrell, Devine, and Eskey, 1988, p.12, my italics).

Actually, in this context, the reader is not expected to undertake a creative and personal exploration of the language-thought interaction: what, on the contrary, he has to operate is just a decodification of the text to achieve the writer's intentions - which, in reality, are the critics/researchers' interpretation of the text, as it clearly emerges in the following extract from Goodman's same article:

"When readers produce responses which match our expectations we can only infer successful use of the reading process. When miscues are produced, however, comparing the mismatches between expectation and observation can illuminate where the readers have deviated and what factors of input and process may have been involved" (p.13).

And yet, there are certain texts which, for their proper functioning and proper authentication, depend upon the intentions to be recognized as a specific, unique signal. In such cases (instructions, rules, forms, etc.) the intention should be clearly and explicitly signalled. Such texts generally assume that you are being submissive, in the sense that you have to submit to the signals of the writer's intention. So, that's why a reader ponders on application forms, for instance, because he is really sorting out what they mean, what the intended meaning is and how he is supposed to react.

However, on the other end of the scale there is literature. It is actually very difficult to pin down art because it is impossible to know 'whose' voice is the one who is speaking. In real life, when people receive a letter they are fairly sure who the Addresser is; they never wonder who wrote that letter, because it is clear it is from somebody speaking with a certain role, or a certain authority. But, of course, any literary art is not so clear: a reader can read a poem which has the apparent shape of a real letter, for instance, but it would not be a real letter, thus it could challenge all his expected forms, all his schematic expectations.

Actually, in these cases, it is a matter of knowing what position a reader has to take in respect to the text: if he chooses *submission*, or, rather, *assertion*. By submission it is

here meant that the reader is willing to allow the writer's world to impinge upon his, and then he is prepared to accommodate to the writer's world, rather than simply assimilate or assert himself out. It really depends on what the reader wants to get out of the text, and how much intention he wants to recover. Moreover, it is also a matter of what the penalties are.

In dealing with literature - and especially with poetry - readers can really afford to be assertive; literature allows readers to be variable in their response; they do not have to converge, and this allowing variable interpretations could really be a wonderful release. At the same time, however, it is important that readers should look for consensus and evidence in their interpretations of the text, in order to become aware of the way in which text and discourse relate and can be activated as language in communicative contexts. I maintain, in fact, that communicative contexts in poetry discursal interpretation are pragmatically created by the reader as he allows an interaction between the writer's intentional meanings (as the reader himself thinks he achieves them within the text) and his own meanings (as he processes them by filtering poetic language through his own schemata).

### 2.10. Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to speculate on the nature of poetic discourse in general, by locating my discussion in the overall scheme of the argument set in Chapter 1. I have started by putting under discussion the widespread tendency of considering literature as a 'social discourse', by pointing out its possible communication limits.

This has led me to advocate a connection between poetry reading and Schema Theory insofar as poetic language has got the distinctive function of challenging individual schemata in variable ways. The poetry/schema connection has constituted the basis for the formulation of an *interactive approach* to poetry reading which takes into account both top-down and bottom-up reading strategies in the reader's process of pragmatically

achieving his own poetic discourse from a text.

I have also argued - by supporting my argumentation with relevant background literature - that the 'location of meaning' cannot be exclusively identified either in the reader's and the writer's schemata alone, or in the text. Meaning, on the contrary, is subjectively achieved by the empirical reader through his interaction with poetic language.

Having established the interactive implications of poetry-reading and its subjective discursal authentications by means of the reader's schemata, with the next Chapters 3 and 4 I shall start a speculative enquiry into the cognitive/affective procedures adopted by the reader in interpreting poetic texts and, then, in creating his own dramatic discourse from it. Therefore, the actuality of poetic response and poetic embodiment will be mainly discussed in relation to relevant artistic, philosophical, and linguistic theories.

In Chapter 3 I shall discuss the first two 'private' phases of the poetry-reading process. I shall begin by examining the very first 'estrangement' experienced by the reader at meeting a poetic text, to come to his deconstructive attempts at 'familiarizing' with it by exploring the multiplicity of virtual voices poetic language prompts in him (first, top-down phase). This phase will be followed by a sense of 'alienation' once the reader re-focuses on the peculiarity of poetic language (second, bottom-up phase).

In Chapter 4, then, the third, interactive 'public' phase will be discussed, that is, the phase of actual physical poetic embodiment by a group of *acting readers*, who, together, create a dramatic discourse from the poetic text. It is during this phase that the many virtual voices previously achieved in the poetic text are made actual and, then, re-explored again in the collective performance.

## CHAPTER 3: READING POETRY

### 3.1. Introduction

I have stated, in the previous chapter, the central position of the reader in the process of interpretation of a poetic text. I have also pointed out, however, that the reader's activation of exclusively *top-down* interpretative procedures can make him run the risk of overwhelming the text itself, whereas even its very alignment of language, its framing, its visual organization, if dismissed a priori, can affect (or probably deny completely) interpretation. The process of reading, therefore, needs to be *interactive*, so that, by inferring from the written signs those relationships that produce a particular poetic effect on him, the reader creates his own conditions of meaning and, as a consequence, formulates his own personal discourse of the poem.

In this chapter, therefore, I will describe, first of all, how a plurality of readers can interpret the virtual, metaphorical character of poetry through an interplay between their own different personalities and their creative explorations of the *poentialities* of the text. In this way, readers can activate a multiplicity of discourses in reference to the *voices* they achieve within the poetic language. I will also demonstrate, however, how all these *voices* developed by the readers are always controlled by the poetic text itself.

Then, I will focus on the way poetic metaphors effectively work, in terms of making readers aware of the iconic quality of poetic language meant as their own, personal experience of the poetic image and the effects of both 'estrangement' and 'intimacy' it generates in them. In this and in the following chapters, in fact, I will actually illustrate the phases of the reader's process of interaction with the poetic text as proceeding from a sense of alienation to an attempt at familiarization with poetry, to return, again, to a sense of estrangement towards it. But, in spite of these contrasting feelings, I will maintain that, eventually, the reader may achieve a true intimacy with the poetic language just 'within'

the very feeling of estrangement (a *discordia concors* resolved with a reconciliation of two opposite sensations).

Finally, the presence of a multiplicity of readers interacting and interpreting poetry together will be possible only by presuming a real situation of total emotional and physical involvement in the iconic, virtual contexts achieved from poetic language. Such an assumption, however, needs to be prefaced by Widdowson's (1984a, pp.150-9) re-definition of Peirce's (1974) distinction between *symbol*, *index*, and *icon*, as functions of the sign. This is actually crucial to understand the sense of the term 'iconic' as I apply it to poetic virtual contexts. According to Widdowson, the *symbol* is the linguistic sign to be found in the linguistic system, abstracted from the context which uses it; the *index* is the function of the sign in order to connect language with the context. Therefore, the normal referential function is an indexical function, whereas the representational function is the function of the sign in decontextualized language as it is in literature. Then, the linguistic sign in literature, in Widdowson's view, is *iconic* in the sense that it 'represents' a reality. This is the way we realize the linguistic sign as receivers.

On these premises I maintain that everytime we realize the iconic sign, the reader automatically sets it in a virtual context he creates within his own schemata. This implies that the *icon* does not involve him only verbally, but also physically and emotionally, because human perception, even in a virtual world, relies on sensory stimuli, and, indeed - as I shall demonstrate in the course of this thesis - the very bases of schemata are essentially 'bodily'.

### 3.2. Multiple and individual 'voices' - Textual control

#### 3.2.1. Reinstating the physical 'voice' and 'presence' in poetry

When we start reading poetry, we always assume the *presence* of a voice within it. However, it becomes almost difficult, at the beginning, to establish either how much of 'our own' voice we put into it, or how much of our interpretation is effectively 'guided' by the signals of the voice/s we realize while deriving our poetic discourse from the text. In any case, it is just the perception of a voice within poetry what prompts the reader to reinstate the physical *absence* of the speaker. According to Derrida (1978) written signs imply *absence*, although they contain within them *traces* of *presence*. What the reader does - Derrida says - is just to search for *voice* and *presence* within the written text, in order to give it meaning and to authenticate it. This occurs - he explains - because 'phonocentrism', with its emphasis on the spoken voice, is dominant in western philosophies.

Although I object to the assertion that phonocentrism is central in the tradition of our thought - which, on the contrary, seems to me mostly based on the written language (the Bible with its emphasis on the written law of the 'Word' being at its origin) - I maintain that the vitality of poetry reading necessarily depends on the assumption of a living speech. Reading a poem silently is an experience that can limit the reader's possibilities of authentication of the voices he could activate in the text. Moreover, the poetic discourse the reader derives from the text cannot fully rely, for example, on the significance he might achieve by interpreting the evocative power that assonance, alliteration, rhymes, metre and so on exerts on him. This means that to find his own voice within the range of voices that can be activated in a poem, and to communicate it to the others, the reader has to 'play' the sound pattern as if it were - to use one of Barthes' (1977b) similes - a 'musical score'. Barthes asserts that there are two ways in which a reader

can deal with the text: one is "looking for a practice that reproduces it"; the other is playing it as "co-author of a score", in order to be involved in a "practical collaboration" with the text (pp. 162-163). And it is this latter alternative - suggesting an authentication of poetry by achieving and 'possessing' the voices within it - the one I tend to share. Learning how to listen to these voices and to find, through them, one's own personal, individual one, implies that the reader has to be able to follow directly the development of his own voice. In this 'quest' for his voice, he will have to explore various divergent/convergent directions by a continuous making and sharing meaning with the others' voices by means of the poetic text. All this will create situations of real communication.

Moreover, the reader's achievement of his own voice within the poetic language clearly highlights the strategies he employed in determining meanings and re-organizing his reading in function of his own interpretation and authentication of the poetic text. In talking about the discovery of the 'personal voice' in both reading and writing, Murray (1982) asserts that "a creative voice is a single voice, a recognizable voice which is different from the voices around it" (p.137). According to Elbow (1973) it is necessary that individuals accept their own voices, so that, in Martin's (1983) words, "an individual 'voice' ... can confidently share its meanings with others" (p.10); in this way, Martin stresses the interactive, communicative quality implied in reading and writing. To this purpose, Protherough (1983) suggests that, in order to achieve confidence with his own voice interpreting the voice within poetic language, a reader has to 'try on other voices' by 'consciously or subconsciously' assuming other personae in a "pastiche of someone else's distinctive style" ; this, in Protherough's opinion, would help him to understand what the author means to communicate and to initially overcome his "own rather hesitant voice" (p.160).

Contrary to this view, I would rather claim that assuming others' voices has got a wider scope than that insofar as it would allow the reader to 'play' with the poetic language by initially 'exorcizing' that sense of 'inviolability' and unfamiliarity he feels in relation to it (1). His attempt to achieve a certain degree of intimacy with the poetic language is realized by disrupting, deconstructing it, and, in so doing,

creating alternative texts prompting in him different voices, that is different discourse interpretations. A subsequent comparative analysis carried out on the parallel discursal re-textualizations will enable the reader to focus on how, in poetry, effects are directly dependent on the special arrangement of its language, so that, for example, he will become aware that it is impossible to paraphrase a poem without altering its effects (see Nash 1989).

### 3.2.2. Familiarity within alienation: The three phases of a reader's 'minidrama'

And yet, even by reading the same piece of poetry, different readers will come to different interpretations through the activation of different voices. This happens because each reader adopts different strategies of authentication of the poetic text in order to render it 'familiar' to his own schemata. Such particular reading procedures, however, are made possible by the iconic, representational nature of the poetic language which allows the reader to diverge imaginatively from any pre-established interpretation in order to achieve his own voice, through, in Freud's (1953b) terms, "words (which) are substitutes for deeds" (vol.III, p.36). For Freud, in fact, words in themselves have no meaning; what is important, instead, is the voice which expresses the emotion that the reader associates to those words. To this, Jung (1953) adds that a person possesses not one, but many voices, many personalities. The schizophrenic experience of multiple personality, in his view, is only the pathological exaggeration of a normal condition in which the 'many voices' are firmly kept under the control of the 'ego' strengthened by the social conventions. Of course Jung - having to deal with people to be re-integrated within a real, social context - cannot suggest 'divergency'; nevertheless, his therapy, which is aimed at 'convergence', is based on the process of vocal exploration of the many 'inner voices' by 'talking them out' until reaching a unique, final decision, a unique voice. Such voice will be recognized as 'one's own voice' with which one

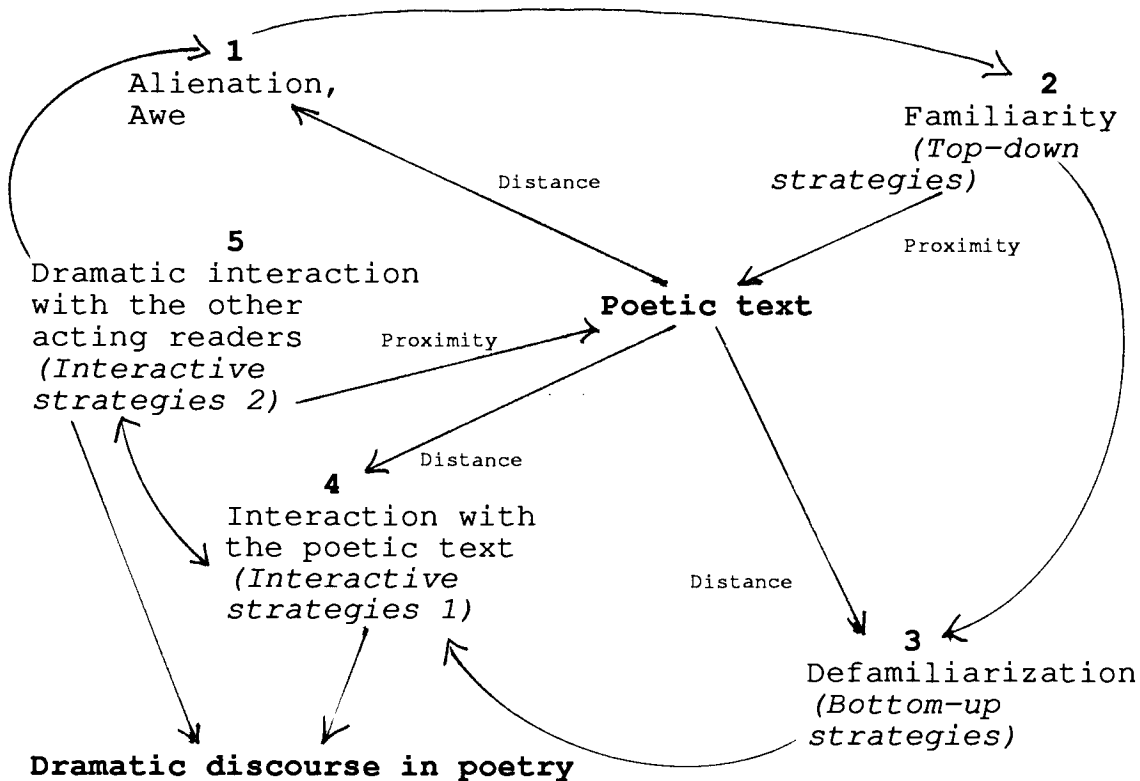


feels completely 'at ease'. In his study on the psychology of voice, Newham (1993) regrets Jung's later abandoning voice explorations in order to focus only upon "the use of painting and creative writing as a means to encouraging the expression and integration of the psyche's complexes in the form of characters and images" (p.62). The therapist who, instead, develops Jung's exploration of the multiple voices is, in Newham's view, Alfred Wolfson, since he "discovered a way of making the images of the psyche audible through the sounds of the human voice" (p.62), that is, he developed ways of 'physically' communicating to the others our mental figures through voice.

If we apply these theories of voice to the reader's approach to poetic language, we soon realize that the crucial point is how the reader can actually share his own interpretation of the voice he activates within the poem with the others and allow it to interact with - and even to be modified by - the other reader's 'voices'. The question, however, has to be dealt with gradually, therefore I will now start to focus on the issue concerning the reader's search for his own personal voice within the poetic text.

Actually, I would describe the process of poetry reading as a 'reader's minidrama': at his very first approach with the poetic text what a reader generally feels is a sense of alienation, and even of awe, towards the unfamiliar mode of the poetic language. As a consequence, he may decide to adopt some top-down, deconstructive reading procedures by 'imposing' his own 'voice' on the poetic text in order to make it more familiar to himself. But, eventually, the reader has to return to the original text, and so the activation of a close, bottom-up realization of the poetic images and metaphors will defamiliarize him again with the poetic text. At this point, what the reader needs to do is to perform an 'imaginative leap' into the language of the text and to appropriate it by, first, interacting with it, and then, inter-acting with the other readers, in order to share his own, personal poetic discourse interpretation. I exemplify the stages of the 'reader's minidrama' in Figure 3.1.:

Figure 3.1.

*The stages of the 'reader's minidrama'*

By keeping these stages in mind, let us consider three phases in the growth of the reader's awareness of the way poetic language exerts 'that particular affect-effect' on him, and prompts him to develop 'that particular voice' in reference to it:

1. The first phase, which I am going to consider in Section 3.3., concerns the way readers approach the text by - in Graves's (1983a) words - 'changing something' (p.151). Although Graves's concern is here exclusively with writing, I will apply his theory to an activity of 'poetry reshaping' through vocal improvisation and creative re-writing, carried out directly by the readers who, at this stage, adopt a prevalently top-down reading strategy. The reason for this is that they can be still unable to actually interact with the text to create their own poetic discourse out of it, therefore, since they feel a discrepancy between the

possible voices that could be activated by the language in the text, and their own 'real' voices, readers tend to impose their own meanings by reshaping the text to suit them. Widdowson (1992) says:

"When confronted with a poem, our first inclination perhaps is to read it as we would any other communication, looking for meanings which we can accommodate within our customary scheme of things, rather in the same way we look for something in a painting which we can recognize as replicating the familiar world" (p.14).

'Deconstruction on the Wild Side' - in Norris' (1985) words - extends this preliminary reading procedure till making it its usual practice. On the contrary, such a theory of reading could become a real learning experience for the readers only if it is used as a 'post-modern language game' aimed to enable the readers to play first with the language in the text, and then eventually return to the original text and reflect upon the peculiar quality of its poetic language, as Widdowson widely demonstrates in his book *Practical Stylistics*. This is what Widdowson (1992) says - by using himself a very evocative language:

"The first impression we get as we read the poem is that the meaning seems to pass us by, fleeting and elusive, like images seen from a moving train, and we arrive at the end of the poem without any clear idea of what has actually been said ... Something catches at the mind, but what exactly? We return, replay the poem, try to get it into focus by recurrent reading. This initial elusiveness, and the refocusing that it provokes, are, of course, part of the significance of the poem, because they are phases in our experience of its meaning. If we now hold the poem still and look at it more closely, what features come into focus?" (p.16).

And these words actually 'prompt' the second phase of my exploration.

2. The second phase - which I will examine in Section 3.4. - concerns the reader's return to the poetic language of the text and his realization of the iconic quality of poetry. This quality will first provoke in the reader a sense of systematic bewilderment in relation to the estrangement produced on him by the poetic language. Then, eventually, the reader activates a 'suspension of disbelief' which prompts him to consider metaphor

as a real 'figure of speech' involving both sight (figure) and voice (speech). The reader's recognition of an emotional as well as spatial dimension of the language of poetry will lead him directly to the third phase I will develop in the following Chapter 4 and which will constitute the core of my practical experiments.

3. The third phase, in fact, will be characterized by the 'presence' of the *Acting Reader* who - through a step-by-step process of identification with the voice/s in the text, as I shall describe later in this study - comes to embody the voice/s he achieves within the poem by acting it out and inter-acting with other readers. In this way, he turns a text into a poetic discourse truly meaningful to him - as well as to the others with whom he shares and communicates his aesthetic experience - at every level of 'perception'.

But now, let us start examining the first top-down phase.

### **3.3. First phase: Deconstructive, 'top-down' reading strategies**

#### **3.3.1. Linguistic differentiation and deferment of meaning**

To return to the first phase for a close scrutiny, I want first of all to define this markedly deconstructive stage as the real beginning of the reader's personal journey through the experience of poetry. The action of reshaping the poetic texts to create parallel ones can take its origin from an unconscious 'top-down' attempt of the reader to assert his own 'real' voice/s on the poetic text, also at the expense of its peculiar linguistic organization. In fact, to adapt again Graves's (1983b) words to our case, in reading poetry, readers "sense imbalances and seek to right them" (p.841); so that, they try to achieve their own meanings from the poetic text by recreating them through a multiplicity of 'different' free forms. The result of

this mode of reading is that the reader comes to realize that his own 'differentiation' from the language of the poetic text, far from taking him to the 'ultimate meaning' (meant as the confirmation of his own beliefs), activates an endless 'deferment' of meaning. This is just what Derrida (1974) defines as *differance*, his neologism that encloses the two terms of 'differentiation' and 'deferment'.

I would like to interpret *differance*, however, as a pre-interpretative, post-modern game of 'practical deconstruction' in which the reader asserts his 'author-ity' on the text by reshaping it without reaching any final interpretation. Queneau (1983), for instance, performs such a post-modern game in his 'stylistic exercises', by re-telling a totally trivial story through a great number of variations (2). It seems to me that this joyful, playful, 'anarchic' aspect of reading is absent from Derrida's critique. Derrida (1973), for instance, asserts that "perception does not exist", and that "everything 'begins' by 'representation'." (p.50). For him, then, there is no perception because what we perceive is always a *trace*, a written sign of the thing and not the thing itself. On the other hand, it is impossible to perceive anything in reality because also 'presence' does not exist: our experience, therefore, and the concept of reality itself are completely denied. It seems to me that Derrida's continuous focusing on 'absence' and 'lack' - of 'perception', of 'presence', of 'receivers' - is self-defeating insofar as it confers his theory a sense of hopelessness closer to the Modernist nihilism rather than to Post-Modernism with which Derrida's thought is often associated. (After all, at the basis of the Modernist thought we find, indeed, William James' (1890) negation of presence in his theory of the *Specious Present*, that is, a 'present' which does not really exist, being our perception taken in by the continuous flux of the 'already' into the 'not yet'). Even the many resourceful implications of Derrida's (1977) concept of *iterability* - that is the possibility of transferring the language of a written text from one particular situation to another - seem to be affected by such a negativity:

"My communication must be repeatable - iterable - in the absolute absence of the receiver or of any empirically determinable collectivity of receivers" (p.172).

Derrida's emphatic denial of any sort of discursual communication - though he still speaks of 'communication'! - is clearly stated here. An intransigent position like this can only encourage a type of reaction leading to more conservative ways of dealing with written texts, as we can see in Moffett's (1981) book *Active Voice* where he emphasizes the undiscussed superiority of the author's "firsthand content" - marked by true creativity and originality - over the "secondhand content as ... writings of others, ... (or) some sort of transcription or paraphrasing or verbal tailoring from ready-made cloth" (p.89).

My position in this context, on the contrary, is that meaning can be achieved only through a serene interaction with the poetic text that is not something sacred and untouchable, something which cannot but be either unconditionally accepted or totally destroyed. Therefore, I agree with Barthes (1977a) when he asserts that:

"We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash." (p.146).

This is in line with that interpretation of Deconstruction meant as Post-Modern criticism - that is, what in philosophy is defined as 'Weak Thought' - which <sup>does</sup> not believe anymore in the reaching of an 'ultimate truth': in the Post-Modern 'code' there is, in fact, a refusal of definition, because defining something means limiting, labelling it as 'something'. Actually, the Modernist criticism was founded on a fundamental misunderstanding of absolute expectation characterized in terms of constancy, length, faithfulness, genuineness, which are constantly and strongly challenged by the instability of reality. In this way, it becomes impossible to understand the possibilities, not only negative, but also positive that a 'relieving of the weight of reality' - according to Vattimo's (1981) words - can give: obviously, this weight failing, also the absolute terms of reference fail, but, as a result, it becomes possible to achieve a greater freedom of personal, creative and critical expression.

This view is clearly reflected in the more positive spirit of Culler's (1982) interpretation of Derrida's deconstructive concept of *iterability*, which I share. He maintains that:

"Something can be a signifying sequence only if it is iterable, only if it can be repeated in various serious and nonserious contexts, cited and parodied. Imitation is not an accident that befalls an original but its condition of possibility. There is such a thing as an original Hemingway style only if it can be cited, imitated, and parodied. For there to be such a style there must be recognizable features that characterize it and produce its distinctive effects; for features to be recognizable one must be able to isolate them as elements that could be repeated, and thus the iterability manifested in the inauthentic, the derivative, the imitative, the parodic, is what makes possible the original and the authentic." (p.120).

Actually, the idea of a textual deconstruction generated by repetition, citation, imitation, deviation, desfiguration, distortion, parody always appears in the works of Derrida and de Man. In his foreword to Jacobs's (1978) book *The Dissimulating Harmony*, de Man defines paraphrase as 'a synonym for understanding' insofar as it turns into familiar, recognizable terms what is dissimilar and alien to the reader. In this way, the reader becomes capable of dealing with possible difficulties such as those concerning syntax, metaphors, or even those regarding the experience that the language in the text communicates to him. Again, this deconstructive procedure is reflected in the thought of some of the first Post-Modern critics: Benjamin (1969b), for instance, in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* criticizes the almost fetishistic value often ascribed to the work of art. On the contrary, he proposes both reproduction (cinema, rather than the single performance; photography, rather than the genuine painting, in which this idolatry of the single work of art is no longer central) and man's refusal to be bound to the unicity of the experience as possible positive starting-points towards a new way of expressing, recreating personal values and re-interpreting reality.

3.3.2. Referentiality to reader's schemata: Getting familiar with the poetic language

My position in this theoretical context is that this deconstructive search for a referentiality to the reader's own schemata - rather than pursuing an interaction between them and the poetic language - is not to be confused with stylistic analysis; it is not, in other terms, to be considered as the ultimate objective of poetry reading, but only as a phase, the playful first phase which will break the barriers between the reader and the poetic text - a phase corresponding to that of the little child who starts becoming familiar with the objects of the world by breaking them 'to understand the way they are made'. As Widdowson (1992) points out:

"Analysis is not the same as dissection: for it always involves a reconstitution of some kind, dismantling something in order to reassemble it in a different form. In this sense, analysis is always creative, and it is for this reason that its application to poetry can serve a recreative purpose in education." (p.87).

However, in *Allegories of Reading*, de Man (1979) seems to come very close to this position when he asserts that "a deconstruction always has for its target to reveal the existence of hidden articulations and fragmentations within assumedly monadic totalities" (p.249). Therefore, a deconstructive procedure - especially when it is carried out through irony - will lead to the overthrowing of those well-established, authoritative interpretations.

Moreover, de Man maintains that the reader's understanding of a text requires from him at first his making a distinction between literal and figurative meaning. The purpose is that to enable him to determine the 'referentiality' of the text on a different, personal, interpretative level, thus establishing by himself the relationship between Signifier and Signified. A reading process of this kind, of course, cannot be applied - as many deconstructionists tend to do - to all texts; however, I would claim that it is extremely appropriate to this first phase of poetry reading, since the personal referential mode de Man talks about is nothing but the representational quality of the



poetic language which finds its actualization in the reader's initial process of interpretation-by-familiarization. Such interpretative procedure can bring to the creation of 'displaced parallelisms' - according to Brenkman's (1976) definition - that is, parallel texts based on the narrative reorganization of plot, characters and situations. This 'reorganization' does not aim to the achievement of a final critical reading, and this is also the reason why J. Hillis Miller (1975) considers Deconstruction as 'metaphysical' making a reference to the seventeenth-century use of paradoxes, hyperboles, false syllogisms which never reach a conclusion.

Deconstruction, in fact, puts in question anything that might seem a positive conclusion, showing its paradox, arbitrariness and indeterminateness. What must be removed is, according to Derrida (1978), that "reassuring certitude, which is itself beyond the reach of text" (p.279): by removing the certitude what remains is 'nothing'. But this 'nothing' is, also in Renaissance literary theory, the site of the poetic imagination. Deconstruction - Derrida (1974) asserts - is not realized by destroying the structures of the text 'from outside', but by "inhabiting them in a certain way", acting "from the inside" (p.24) and using all the strategies of subversion against the previous interpretative patterns. In this way, the text 'explodes' from within, generating alternative readings which can be radically different from those ones established by traditional criticism. The reader's following discursual construction becomes almost a metaphysical gesture which can privilege the Signified at the expense of the Signifier (3). In this way, the content of the text acquires wholly personal interpretative connotations, no longer subject to interpretations proposed from the 'outside'. This represents, according to Frye (1957), the reader's quest for his own critical identity aimed to reconcile reality and desire, social patterns and individual imagination, but, at the same time, capable of putting everything in question at every new provocation coming from the text itself.

However, it could appear as if poetry - for its peculiar linguistic choice and arrangement, and for its detachment from any real context - already anticipates any deconstruction a reader can achieve, therefore his work will be nothing but a deconstruction of a deconstruction. It actually seems as if every

kind of reading and interpretation was already 'encoded' inside the text, or rather, the very existence of the text seems to be justified by the various and often contrasting alternatives the text itself offers. Of course it cannot be so, because if it is true that the text controls discursal interpretations in many ways, it is also true that it cannot control the 'effects' the language of a poetic text can produce on the readers, even on the same reader dealing with a particular poem in different times. This is, therefore, the way I want to interpret de Man's (1979) words when he warns the readers with phrases such as "before yielding to this very persuasive scheme, we must...." (p.147) stimulating them, in this way, towards new 'discursal deconstructions'.

The negativity implicit in the claim of some deconstructionists concerning the impossibility of reaching the 'Ultimate Truth' does not mean that readers have to deal just with partial truths: every interpretation, since it exists, is true. Actually, differences, contrasts and misunderstandings constitute a crucial problem, but we all know that it is thanks to alternative - sometimes extreme - readings, far from the pre-established critical-interpretative canons, that other stimulating paths are opened up towards new revelations the literary text can offer us. This is in the nature of the poetic language itself which challenges the reader to find out meanings, to understand, to question, to remove, to recognize, to re-interpret, to repeat, and all this is prompted by the text itself which, by interacting with the readers' different personal experiences, produces different effects on them at every new reading.

### 3.3.3. The interpretative determinacy of a poetic text

Actually, one of the central issues in Deconstruction is precisely the question of determinacy, that is, the power to determine the interpretation of a text. In reading literature, for example, there is a tendency to consider a text - and especially a poetic text - only as a stimulus for the readers to

create something new and, therefore, to start on the text and extrapolate beyond, rather than aiming always to be governed by or determined to the text. So that readers might feel allowed to move out from it but, at the end, they have to go back, since the freedom of interpretation is nevertheless constrained to some degree by the text. Readers have to be taken back to the 'script' - that is, to the poetic text - thus the interesting question is to what extent that script limits the range of possible interpretations, limits, for instance, the vocal performance. In short, if readers read a poem in a certain way they must be able to refer back to the script because that is the way they are acting on that particular signal.

Therefore, every 'performance' is an interpretation because it is referred back to the text; this means that a particular change of voice can be affected to some degree by, for instance, a change of pronoun. Readers are free to explore the poetic text, but, in a way, the whole issue is how do they exploit the freedom they have to interpret the poem. Poetry should be personalized through the individual experience of the readers; however, there has to be a recognition that personalization is nevertheless relatable to a specific script. The text cannot, as it were, just mean anything; a poem is a statement of order, a statement of regularity, and readers can understand it by making it their own, by personalizing it, but not ~~at~~ random. When readers interpret poetry and make it their own by using all kinds of voice, they must always keep in mind that their performance is an expression of their interpretation, it is a matter of re-ordering the text, that is why it all has to be referred back to the text which in itself is extremely ordered.

What some trends in Deconstruction generally do - as, for instance, Fish's (1980) interpretation of the deconstructive mode of reading - is to disintegrate the whole text, deconstructing all its parts in all directions. On the contrary, the crucial thing about poetry is that there is a control over the way they fly off because they always refer back to the actual order of the text itself. Paradoxically, what a poetic text does is to encourage deconstruction, freedom of representation and even disintegration into a diffusion of different interpretations; nevertheless, the text itself, on the page, is extremely ordered. A sonnet, for instance, is an extremely well-organized structure,

it has metrical arrangements, a precise kind of pattern, but reactions to it are extremely disordered, they can fly up in all directions but, at the same time, the reader is held 'within' the order of the text itself (4).

On the other hand, it is clear that meaning does not reside in the text but it is something that is created out of the text. This does not mean, however, that the text is just, as it were, a stimulus for the reader to think what he likes. For Fish, reading is not a matter of discovering what the text means, but a process of experiencing what it *does* to the reader. Interpretation, therefore, is totally focused on the reader's experience and not on the work itself, so that the text becomes just an excuse for any reaction, and by deconstructing it into its extremes it can mean anything. So, what is the point of having a text?

Although it is certainly true that Derrida and others show that Deconstruction does seem to involve such an undermining of the authority of texts - or, at least, to refuse or to tolerate the absolute authority of authors - actually, it quite paradoxically goes hand in hand with a sort of traditional determination to read as closely and in a disciplined manner as possible. Derrida is often just a close reader of the very traditional kind since what he attempts to do is not to get 'outside' the text (his famous claim 'il n'y a pas de hors-texte', instead of being translated as 'there is nothing outside the text' could be rendered as 'there is no outside to the text', which means that it is impossible to escape from the 'textual clutches'); rather, his reading takes root deeply 'in' the clutches of the text to the point where the text appears to be less in control of itself than he had thought. Of course, it is no longer really possible to maintain the notion of the author completely in control of what is written, because, in that sense, the text is not a possession of an author. We cannot refer things back to the author, we cannot ask the author if what he says is a lie or not, because he is only giving a reading of the text, even while writing it; but the mistake is often to assume that this means a kind of pure freedom, a pure creativity of production as opposed to slavery and reduction.

The question of freedom or restriction is often very close to the question of philosophical tradition: in his early essays,

Derrida (1973) asserts that it is impossible simply to step outside philosophy because we are going to be 'caught within' metaphysical assumptions, and the very ambition to be able to do something completely different, that was not metaphysical, is itself metaphysical. The only way to escape, paradoxically, is to hope not to escape but to, as it were, 'dwell inside' of the ideas that we are first suspicious of, to come to disturb them, to dislodge them, but that does not necessarily result in any permanent disruption.

Therefore, in dealing with poetic texts, even in a quite traditional way (which is to say: reading a text, trying to interpret what it means, trying to think of the contradictions which it involves or which it acknowledges - all things that require rather painful and exacting sorts of discipline) can involve the very exhilarating sort of freedom in the attempt to ask the kinds of questions that have not been asked before. Nevertheless, the questions have to be framed because the attempt to escape from that determination is a kind of illusion and this is also what Derrida feels.

#### 3.3.4. Deconstruction as self-reflection

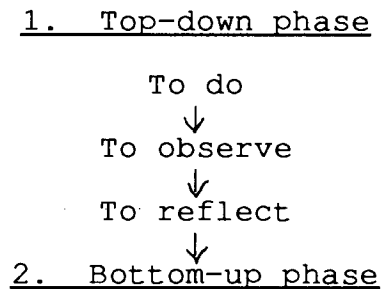
My position, in this context, is that coming to the text totally free is impossible because there are profoundly culturally-limiting assumptions in play. Readers themselves actually feel that no theory could do justice to the variety, to the plurality of the individual interpretative responses to a text, therefore, in a situation like that, I would be inclined to keep the word 'deconstruction' for that more complicated activity of self-reflection which is involved in reading and analyzing poetic texts. So, for readers, it is not just an activity of 'coming afresh' to a text, but also of interrogating where they are, interrogating where they are coming from, reflecting on the psychological and social 'context' from which this interpretation takes origin.

The final part of this first phase of poetry reading, in fact, has to be characterized by a 'reflection' on the

improvised, creative work of text-reshaping carried out on the poetic text, thus, 'to do, to observe, and to reflect' represent the three cognitive steps of the first top-down phase, which will bring the reader back to consider the language in the original text during the second, bottom-up phase, as I illustrate in Figure 3.2.:

Figure 3.2.

*Cognitive steps from top-down to bottom-up phases*



Actually, if we reflect on our earliest responses to poetic texts, what is striking about them is how thoroughly and utterly conventionalized they are, and it is just at the moment when we think we are most enthused and instinctual that they are at their most conventional. Indeed, the 'instinctual' is often a way of legitimating certain kinds of widespread and shared cultural biases which need themselves to be interrogated too.

Involving in reading also 'voice and body' explorations of poetic texts is a way of enlarging and deepening discourse interpretation, giving it a further dimension. However, readers are always to be aware that they should not accept the possibility that every interpretation is good. They should, instead, understand that there are certain kinds of interpretation which - not because they are according to any celestial or divine law - are in the end demonstrable and persuasive, and other kinds of interpretations that are not demonstrable and persuasive, often because they depend on emotion of absolute truth, rather than on consensus. It does not seem to me, however, that Deconstruction is irrational, since its procedures for determining truth do not abandon rationality but,

rather, they explore the relationship between freedom and compulsion, whereas what we would call a desire for complete freedom of interpretation, for a kind of multiplicity of interpretations for the sake of freedom is to be ascribed to a certain kind of post-modernism degenerated into populism, which has to be distinguished from Deconstruction.

Norris (1985) argues for what he has come to call 'Deconstruction on the Wild Side', that is to say, an attempt always to dissolve every kind of authority to the suspicions that every kind of authority is a sort of un-principle. He has, therefore, really tried to recruit Derrida back into a quite traditional philosophy and to distinguish him from his American interpreters, like Fish and all those who approve of Derrida because Derrida basically allows for a kind of 'anything goes' situation, and Norris does not think that 'anything goes'. But I tend to disagree with Norris because that particular way in which he deals with Derrida is, in the end, rather conservative, whereas I think that one has to maintain that really corrosive force of Derrida's critique in which there is really a sense of 'nothing can be sacred'.

So, that is why it seems to me that Deconstruction, in our case, cannot be just a theoretical attitude, it has to be a practical 'performance' of a poetic text, since performance can be a mode of enquiry, but there should be, really, also a kind of ethical compulsion involved in that: that is, a reader should want to find out, to test, to be sure, and all this is realized through intuition, spontaneity and free creativity. It is just this first phase of 'free creativity' which leads the reader to pass to the second, bottom-up phase of his exploration of the poetic language in the text, by focusing on its metaphorical quality and the contrasting effects it can produce on him. And this further development in poetry reading will be the subject of the following Section.

### 3.4. Second phase: Reconstructive, 'bottom-up' reading strategies

#### 3.4.1. The pragmatization of semantics: Sound/sign non-arbitrariness in poetry

In the previous Section I have pointed out how the reader can initially approach the poetic text by allowing his own 'voice/s' to prevail upon it, through the activation of a mainly top-down, deconstructive process applied to the poetic language. This implies the creation of parallel texts to the original one, which can help the reader become familiar with the poetic text, thus removing that 'sacral aura' poetry is usually surrounded by.

Then I have maintained that such reading procedure brings readers, later, to return to the original text in order to reflect upon the peculiarity of its poetic language. This can lead them to consider the way metaphors prompt in each of them some particular effects, thus encouraging readers to develop different discoursal interpretations through their own, personal performance.

I have also claimed, however, that this first approach to poetry-reading should not be seen in the light of a theory of Deconstruction meant as a semantic nihilism, that is, as the denial of significance achieved through the employment of a methodological relativism. In such a context, in fact, it is very easy to shift into a kind of 'ethical' relativism, which not only puts in doubt 'presence' and 'perception', but also generates a confusion in the very nature of the functions of the sign. In fact, if we assume that there is nothing that the author meant by using those particular signs while writing, we have also to admit that it is likewise true that there is nothing that the reader's interpretation can catch or miss in the language of the text. So that, in the hermeneutic realm, everybody has got the immunity of one's own interpretative paradigm.

Seen under this light, we should conclude that the author's arbitrary use of the sign and the indeterminacy of meaning which the reader infers from the use of the linguistic signs are two



related aspects of the same process. But, actually, they are not, insofar as the former concerns the semantics of the signs (having to do with the nature of the *symbol*), whereas the latter concerns the pragmatic interpretation of signs (having to do with the nature of the *index*). The *iconic*, representational nature of poetry, on the contrary, not only allows the reader to diverge in his interpretation from any reference to the real contexts, but it also challenges the concept itself of the arbitrariness of the sign. This means that either the reader can entirely follow his own imaginative capability to create virtual contexts by interacting with the poetic language he deals with, or he 'pragmaticizes' the semantics of the sign insofar as he discovers that the sound/sign association is not arbitrary anymore, because certain sounds, as they are associated to certain signs, actually enter into an interpretation activated by the reader himself. It is the 'interpretation', therefore, that is 'arbitrary', since the 'effect' of the sound/sign can be variously and 'arbitrarily' interpreted by a multiplicity of readers. In this sense, a holistic view in relation to meaning - otherwise impossible in reality - becomes possible in poetry, insofar as the content of what the reader means or thinks of while reading depends exclusively upon the 'whole' context activated in him by the poetic language of the text.

The negativity of Deconstruction is due, to a great extent, to a fundamental misunderstanding: that of considering every kind of text as a literary one, thus denying *reference* completely. Moreover, by also denying *denotation*, everything is focused on the 'role' that a symbol plays in a particular system of symbols, that is, its role in a system of 'differences'. In this way, it becomes a relationship exclusively among symbols, and not between symbols and things of the real world. This is what Stoppard (1980) is ironical about in his play *Dogg's Hamlet*: here, the language of Shakespeare acquires a completely different significance from the accepted, conventional one, in reference to the strange environment in which it is played, where meanings are paradoxically re-shuffled and arbitrarily re-associated to sounds (5). In this way, Shakespeare's language produces the most disparate effects on the audience. Billington (1987) asserts that Stoppard's emphasis on the 'self-referential and arbitrary properties of words' is mainly based on Wittgenstein's notion of

language as an 'assemblage of games of different kinds' (pp.136-7). Although such view of the language could lead us to associate it to Freud and his *biologic*, there is actually a fundamental theoretical distinction between these two approaches: Freud considers free associations as meaningful in reference to the real life of people; Wittgenstein and some post-modernists, on the contrary, assert that free associations are meaningless in reference to reality; they can acquire some significance only 'within' a representational view of whole contexts.

If, therefore, we negate the relationship between symbols and real things, what matters is the 'role' a particular symbol has got 'in the game'. To explain this contextual correlation, I will use the classical analogy with the game of chess: what a castle does is independent from its shape, its colour, the material it is made with; what is important is its system of moves which are forbidden to a bishop or a knight, for example. If, in fact, we substitute the castle with a pawn, or with any other piece or object, playing that same role of the castle, that piece is a castle (6). This, of course, cannot happen in reality: in the real world a castle is a castle, a building which cannot 'move' anywhere, with its indexical meaning, with its denotation, and also with its connotations produced by the personal, emotional responses of those people who view it or think of it, but these connotations are, nevertheless, related to the functions a castle has got in the real world.

In the poetic world, on the contrary, everything is possible, as it happens in the fairy tales: the association sound/sign/meaning for 'castle', for example, can be disrupted: the word castle can no longer correspond to an inert object: a castle can speak, can dance, can be changed into something else. The sound itself of the word, in that particular, imaginative context, can carry a special significance: 'the castle that whistles', for example, could be a good beginning for a fantastic story based on assonances. In the world of imagination, in other terms, it is possible to unify the two questions which some deconstructionists - in a quite self-defeating way - aim to integrate also in the real world: the epistemological question (how can we know that this is how a certain thing is?) and the metaphysical question (what is, for a certain thing, being, in point of fact, what it is?).

### 3.4.2. Imaginative discursual re-constructions

Of course, also those cognitive philosophers - such as Fodor (1992) - who attack Deconstruction without making the essential distinction between *referential* and *representational* texts, are wrong. The representational, iconic nature of the poetic text, as it were, encourages holism as well as deconstruction insofar as the reader is allowed to diverge and to live in a different, imaginary, virtual reality he himself creates by interacting with the language in the poetic text, thus 're-constructing' his own poetic work, his own poetic discourse. In fact, as I stated before, my position is that a 'practical deconstruction' always implies an empirical reader who 'deconstructs' the poetic metaphors by dwelling 'within' them, in order to subsequently 'construct' his own, fantastic interpretation out of it.

Among Novalis' (1922) 'fragments' there is one which says: "If we had a 'Fantastic' as we have a 'Logic', it would have been discovered the art of creation" (my translation). In my interpretation, 'Fantastic' is the art of invention through the poetic language, which involves readers as individuals as well as whole groups, and it also becomes theatre as total exploration of words. Paul Valéry (1975) says that there is not a word which could be thoroughly understood when we deeply explore it; his famous statement: 'il n'y a pas de vrai sens d'un texte' - 'there is no real meaning of a text' - is emblematic of his thought. Actually, readers' interpretations are varied because they can either proceed from the readers' individual experiences, or they can be activated by intertextuality; in fact, in Widdowson's (1992) words, "all texts reverberate with the echoes of other texts" (p.55). Wittgenstein (1953) asserts that words are like the surface, thin layer on a deep water. And, indeed, poetry can be found by swimming underwater. We may say - by adopting one of Rodari's (1973, p.7) analogies - that any word thrown in the mind produces the same kind of effects as those produced by a stone thrown in a pond: it involves at different distances and depths, with different effects, all kinds of objects and living creatures which are called to react, to get in touch with one another,

digging up forgotten things from the sand and causing incessant molecular shakings and endless microevents. In the same way, also a word thrown in the mind causes an endless series of chain reactions involving, in its descent into the deepest levels of consciousness and subconsciousness, sounds and images, analogies and memories, meanings and dreams in a movement which affects experience and reason, imagination and the unconscious and which is made even more complex by the fact that the mind itself does not just look passively at the 'representation', but it continually interferes to accept and to refuse, to connect and to censure, to build and to destroy, to differentiate and to associate.

Once readers become conscious of these 'movements' taking place in their minds, reading becomes a wholly creative interplay between the readers themselves (as individuals or as a group) and the poetic text. Associations, therefore, are developed on what Jakobson (1960) defines as the *verbal selection axis*, that is, a schematic search for the words close to each other along the chain of meaning. But the new words the reader associates to those of the original text do not represent a diversion, or an abandoning of the theme of the poem: indeed, they clear up and determine its development. In the process of making poetry, Jakobson says, the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the *selection axis* to the *combination axis*: it could be a sound to evoke a meaning; a verbal analogy to give life to a metaphor and to prompt a particular use of voice or gesture; a rhyme, for instance, can suggest to a reader some sound equivalence and impose it on the discourse: sound, in fact, precedes meaning. Therefore, even before the *selection axis* we can see the projection of the *personal-experience axis* on the *combination axis*.

When the reader creates 'his own' poem out of a text, or invents a parallel one, he performs the same creative and aesthetic operation as that realized by the poet himself. In fact, all the 'poets of memory' - including the 'poets in prose', from Proust to Woolf - have learnt how to listen to echoes buried in words, and to synesthetically connect them to sounds, and odours, and taste, and physical movements and sensations. Often, all these components appear 'condensed' into a unique figure (of speech, or of thought), following the same rule of the Freudian

*oneiric condensation*, according to which each story is the result of different components: words, their sounds, their meanings, their sudden connections, personal memories, the 'sorties' from the depth of the unconscious, the pressures of censure. Everything is combined on the level of expression in a system which readers can activate by using their own imagination, so that the whole of their personality is engaged in the creative act.

It is necessary at this point to describe how imagination is kindled in the reader's mind while approaching poetry. I will define this cognitive procedure as the *fantastic pair* process.

### 3.4.3. The 'fantastic pair' process

In the human mind, the individual word 'acts' only when it meets another word which provokes it, obliging it to come out from the routine, to discover in itself new potentialities of meaning. After all, there is no life where there is no fight. This depends on the fact that imagination is not a faculty separated from the mind: it is the mind itself - in its entirety of 'body/thought/emotion schemata - that, if applied to an activity rather than to another one, always uses the same procedures. And the mind was born in fight, not in quiet. In his book *The Origin of Thought in the Child*, Wallon (1947) writes that the thought is being formed through pairs of concepts. The idea of 'soft' is not formed before or after the idea of 'hard', but simultaneously, from a direct, physical, nonpropositional experience, in a strife which is generation. The fundamental element of thought, therefore, is its binary structure, and not the individual elements which make it up. The pair is anterior to the isolated, individual element. So that, in the beginning there was the opposition. Also Paul Klee (1964) shares this same opinion when he says, in his *Theory of the Form and Figuration*, that a concept cannot exist without its opposite; in his view, there are no distinct, separate concepts, but 'pairs of concepts'. This is a variant of the same theory which was developed either by the Romantics as 'Organic Unity', or by Freud

as 'Bilogic'.

My position in this theoretical context, as regards poetry, is that I also maintain that a poem can be generated only by a *fantastic pair*. However, a certain distance is indispensable between the two words (evoking different abstract concepts and/or physical experiences); it is necessary that one is alien enough to the other, so that their matching becomes quite an unusual one: this would compel imagination to establish a relationship between them. In this way, it is possible to build a 'fantastic' whole in which the two disconnected elements co-exist. Therefore, the more the 'fantastic pair' is selected in an arbitrary way, with the only help of chance, the better imaginative result it will yield (7).

When readers start reading a poetic text, they read the first words of a poem without knowing which the following ones will be. Reading poetry slowly, almost word by word, for the first time, is a little unconscious preparatory rite which has got its importance. It creates an expectation. If the reader comes across the word 'cat', for instance, this word is already a very special word, ready to become part of a surprise, to get into an unpredictable event. That cat is not any quadruped, it is already an adventurous character, available and fantastic. At this point the reader can momentarily depart from the original poem and find another word which is totally disconnected from the word 'cat', and activate momentarily his own creative 'flight'. The word, for instance, can be 'wardrobe'.

Now, a wardrobe in itself does not usually provoke any emotional reaction, it does not make anybody laugh or cry. It is an inactive presence, a banality. But that wardrobe in pair with a cat is quite another matter, it is a discovery, an invention, an exciting 'prompt' for the imaginative creation of something totally new, capable of arousing new emotions in relation to them. (The result will be something similar to the creative tale generated by the 'fantastic pair' 'cat/boots', that is, the story of 'the Cat with the Boots', or to what Eliot (1939b) later invented in his book of poems *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*).

The technique of the 'fantastic pair' is, indeed, at the basis of most of Metaphysical Poetry:

"If they be two, they are two so  
 As stiff twin compasses are two,  
 Thy soul the fixed foot, makes no show  
 To move, but doth, if th'other do."

(J. Donne - *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*)

In this case, in a much more sophisticated way, the 'fantastic pair' is constituted by the words 'souls/compasses' which, put together, provoke a real 'process of estrangement' of the two concepts, allowing the reader to consider them under a new light and through a new sensibility (8).

To explain his concept of the 'systematic bewilderment', Max Ernst (1970) uses the image of a wardrobe, the one painted by De Chirico in the middle of a classic landscape, among olive trees and Greek temples. So 'estranged' as it is, in an unusual context, the wardrobe becomes a mysterious object. Maybe it is full of clothes, maybe not, but surely it is full of charm. Also T.S. Eliot adopts this strategy of juxtaposing two completely different concepts to stimulate new sensibilities in the reader (the 'objective correlative'):

"Let's go, then, you and I,  
 When the evening is spread out against the sky  
 Like a patient etherized upon a table."

(T.S. Eliot - *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*)

"And through the spaces of the dark  
 Midnight shakes the memory  
 As a madman shakes a dead geranium."

(T.S. Eliot - *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*)

Sklovski (1968) describes the effect of 'estrangement' (in Russian 'ostraneniye') which Tolstoy obtains by speaking about a simple divan as a person who has never seen a divan before, or has never thought of what all its possible uses can be. This conception is very close to what Wordsworth defines in the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* as a 'process of estrangement' to be activated on quite simple and everyday objects or scenes:

"Behold her, single in the field,  
Yon Solitary Highland Lass,  
Singing and reaping by herself,  
Stop here or gently pass."

(W. Wordsworth - *The Solitary Reaper*)

When we consider the 'fantastic pair', the words are not taken in their everyday meaning, but they are freed from the verbal chains they normally belong to. They are 'estranged', 'bewildered', hurled one against the other in a wholly unknown sky. It is just then they are in the best conditions to generate poetry. Poetry, in fact, interrupts the habitual state of everyday life - as dreams do - in order to keep alive in us the very sense of life. In this way, it changes objects and situations of the everyday life into something new and seductive (9).

#### 3.4.4. Experience of estrangement and intimacy in poetry reading

When Sklovski defines the experience of 'estrangement' in art he claims that the purpose of art is that of transmitting the impression of the object as a 'vision', not as 'recognition': in this way, if we apply this concept to poetry reading, the process of estrangement provoked by the poetic language actually impedes the reader to reduce poetry to his own schemata through recognition, thus inhibiting, after a little while, the activation of any exclusively top-down, deconstructive procedure. That is why I have claimed that such deconstructive reading process can be only considered as the warm-up, starting point of poetry reading, an attempt to 'familiarize' with poetry which, eventually, has to fail as soon as the reader re-focuses his attention on the poetic language. The artistic procedure, in Sklovski's view, is the procedure of the estrangement of the object, which has to be detached from the series of usual associations. To this, I will argue that the effect of the poetic language on the reader is one of *estrangement* and *intimacy* at the



same time: this is, in my opinion, the only way the reader can really authenticate poetry. What poetry does, in fact, is to realign the reader's normal schematic expectations until he finds himself facing the new and the strange, which alienates him. To make intimate something estranged becomes possible if readers manage to be more sensitive to what Tauber and Green (1971) define as *subliminal precepts*, and are able to use them creatively. The material of the subliminal perception, that creative people realize in art, is exactly the same as what everybody finds in dreams: it is composed by all that fantastic verbal and visual substance that lingers about our conscious life, and that - if rescued from its condition of alienation from ourselves, and recognized and acknowledged through a process of appropriation - constitutes a real mine for the active imagination.

On this subject, for instance, Martinet (1966) asserts that the originality of thought can manifest itself only in an 'unexpected disposition' of the first-articulation unities (those ones endowed with an intrinsic sense and phonic form). Such unities, however, are subject to both 'phonic pressures' and 'semantic pressures' from those unities close to the selected ones, but which have been excluded. Now, the imaginative work of the reader consists exactly in recovering and giving voice to those peripheral, removed alternatives to the 'chosen' one. Such 'latent phonic and semantic alternatives', of course, are not yet arranged according to any 'logic' order, but they just wait, suspended and bewildered, for the creative intervention of the reader to achieve, out of the many possible 'fantastic pairs', parallel poetic experiences. Uspenski (1969), in fact, maintains that the phonetic affinity compels the reader to look for semantic connections among words; in this way, he says, thought is generated. Not only, but we can assert that many, alternative thoughts are generated by such a procedure insofar as an element which before was totally deprived of any relevance, suddenly starts acquiring, in a particular context, a fundamental role. This is made possible by the multiform and, in many ways, asymmetrical character of the things, especially in a poetic context: what is insignificant in a particular sense, becomes, under certain circumstances, something quite important. Such a process is what is defined in cybernetics as *amplification*, but

it is also what Woolf and Joyce define in literature as *epiphany*, that is, as a revelation of significance. A significance which is wholly personal and individual, but which is, nevertheless, prompted by the context of the situation (in our case, the result of the interaction between the textual and the personal schemata) in which the individual (the reader) finds himself.

Therefore, if we consider poetry as a kind of covert enactment which the reader has been withdrawn into, the drawing of the reader into the text can be enabled by the text being projected out through the reader. The covert dramatization of the text into an overt discourse interpretation creates in itself the sense of dynamic discourse which is crucially a part of the poem. The problem with this view is that it can generate the misunderstanding that such reading process automatically leads readers to become intimate with the text, since they are drawn into it. Actually, when we talk about readers who make the poetic text their own - to the extent that they are somehow 'living' it - that implies intimacy. But, in spite of it, the very way in which schematic expectations are first disrupted and then realigned is through a kind of estrangement, of dislocation.

Therefore, I claim that *the effect poetry creates in the process of reading is a double sense of intimacy and alienation*. This paradox can be resolved only in poetry, so that the more intimate the reader is, the more estranged he is, and the more estranged he is, the more intimate this will make him with the poem. So, when we talk of 'estrangement', it does not mean that we simply treat the poem in detachment from the reader who interprets it, because it would mean that he never actually activates the meanings that he links to the poem. The resolution of the paradox is rather in the way in which art destroys in order to create, and by creating destroys, and by destroying creates. Poetry is always a disruption of normal linguistic expectations; it is an oddity of lexical relations; that is why the features of the poetic discourse are, to some degree, necessarily conflictual. The reader, in fact, always perceives and, eventually, experiences the tension, the uncertainty within poetry; he never settles into it because the way he becomes aware of poetry is a very precarious one. And yet, though it remains estranged, at the same time it becomes intimate through the reader's activation of a 'willing suspension of disbelief' which,

again, draws him within the poem, and makes him experience it as an imaginative, virtual reality. If this reconciliation of the two opposites does not occur, exclusive estrangement, or exclusive intimacy are the result of poetry reading, and that is not true art. I maintain that art implies necessarily instability, but the extraordinary thing is that we live with it, we live within that disharmony. Therefore, when readers develop an awareness of how two totally disparate, incongruent words (like the 'cat/wardrobe' of the previous example), belonging to totally different experiences and realities, somehow become convergent (and yet not), somehow become familiar in the unfamiliarity of their relationship, then they really experience the challenge of the opposition, alienation, estrangement the poetic language poses to them. The process, actually, almost resembles a strategy of seduction, because the readers' aim is that of achieving intimacy, harmony within discord; and yet discord is still there.

This process of appropriation of the metaphorical language of poetry necessarily brings the reader to a recovery of 'perception' and 'presence' within the poem. I have previously asserted that poetry reading paradoxically implies a pragmatist view of semantics, because of the presence of real readers deriving their own interpretative discourse from the linguistic patterns in the text; I will try to demonstrate now that it is likewise true that, when readers return to the language in the text - after their 'deconstructive escape' - they have to 'semanticize' their own 'real' experience within the poetic metaphors.

#### 3.4.5. Semantics of metaphor and psychology of imagination: The reader's 'divided reference'

Metaphors are shaped by that unique semantic structure of the text, therefore, the sign/sound pattern does not seem to be arbitrary anymore, in fact, by changing a metaphor through paraphrase the effect on the readers changes as well. And yet, even without changing anything, the effect a metaphor can have

on readers is variable. To explain this, it is therefore necessary to talk about a *semantics of metaphor*, on the one hand (assuming a kind of bottom-up reading procedure in reference to a particular linguistic schema within the text) and, on the other, a *psychology of imagination* (implying the reader's own, individual discursal interpretation as a result of his interaction with that linguistic schema). In a context like this, metaphor cannot be defined any longer as a substitution - words substituting for each other - but, according to Todorov (1966), as a particular kind of combination.

If we see this theory in the light of the possible discursal actualizations of a poetic text, we realize that the interpreter of a metaphor is someone who, from an utterance considered inconsistent from a literal, referential point of view, derives an utterance which is significant from an iconic, representational point of view, and therefore, capable of generating a divergency from reality, a divergency which is paradoxically acceptable in the context of poetry. Such a process can explain, to a certain extent, the estranged/intimate effect provoked by the two distant terms of the 'fantastic pair': it is a shift from literal incongruence to metaphorical congruence between two semantic fields. This transition - or, in Aristotle's words, *epiphora* - is realized through the reader's interpretation by imaginatively reapproaching two completely heterogeneous ideas. In this process of 'appropriation by interpretation' of the figures in the language, the reader becomes a dreamer who imaginatively bridges - under the spell of what Sartre (1948) defines as 'fascination' and Coleridge (1983) as 'suspension of disbelief' - the semantic distance of the two images.

And yet, my position is that the iconic aspect of poetry does not exclude completely reference to the real world, or, in Barthes' (1975) terms, it is not just language that 'celebrates itself'. Jakobson (1960) asserts that poetry does not deny the referential function, but it alters it by making it ambiguous through a process which Kenneth Burke (1966) defines as 'deflection' and compares to the Freudian 'displacement'. That is why it is necessary to talk about a 'divided reference' in poetry which presupposes a 'willing suspension of disbelief' - or *epoché* - activated by the reader who creates his own poetic discourse by consciously diverging from ordinary reference. In

other words, in dealing with the metaphors of the poetic language, the reader has to consider simultaneously two different perspectives: the real and the imaginary; he should not try to keep them separated otherwise he would never be able to experience any 'epiphanic moment' in the process of 'possessing' and interpreting poetry. In fact, according to de Man (1979) our realization of rhetoric "radically suspends logic and opens vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration." And then he adds: "I would not hesitate to equate the rhetorical, figural potentiality of language with literature itself." (p.10). Also Lotman (1976) talks about 'defamiliarization' in the realization of poetry insofar as metre, for instance, can create a particular pattern which the syntax of the poem may cut across and violate. In this process of interpretation, according to Widdowson (1987) "the paradigmatic pattern of prosody, which realizes absence, deconstructs the present syntagmatic pattern of the syntax and that process has the effect of reconstructing reality along a different dimension." (p.246).

And then, we have also to consider the properly 'iconic', visual aspect of poetry which generates images associated with feelings thus prompting the reader to 'inhabit' the poetic space, to fill its elliptical features, and to make it his own by physically and vocally possessing it through the poetic language. It is during this following third phase that the reader really becomes an *acting reader* - according to my definition - who 'embodies' the voices and the images within the poetic text by 'acting it out' and, in so doing, creating and communicating his own discourse interpretation. But this, however, will be the subject of the next chapter in which I will propose to focus on the various stages of the reader's identification with the poetic voices and characters, shifting, once again, from estrangement to intimacy, until he reconciles both feelings within his total experience of poetry.

### 3.5. Summary

In this chapter I have started an exploration into the process of poetry reading from a theoretical point of view. I have examined both the first and the second phases by focusing on the way the reader reinstates 'presence' and 'physical voice' within poetic language.

In theorizing the first, top-down, deconstructive phase, I have referred to philosophical Post-Modernist currents to rationalize the reader's process of 'familiarization' with poetry by reference to his own schemata. In this context, I have advocated the activation of deconstructive strategies as procedures for 'self-reflection'.

The second, bottom-up, reconstructive phase, on the contrary, has been focused on 'language-reflection'. I have started my discussion by exploring the question of the non-arbitrariness of the sound/sign relationship in poetry, to proceed with the examination of the reader's experience of 'extrangement' during one of the basic cognitive processes activated in poetry: the 'fantastic pair' process. I have then advocated a pragmatization of the semantics of the metaphor in association with a psychological view of imagination: in this way I have meant to assert the necessary bottom-up/top-down interaction between metaphorical language and reader's schemata, which is resolved into multiple imaginative, discursal creations.

Therefore, the implication is that already in these two phases the reader can realize the potentiality for multiple voices which 'subliminally' wait to be actualized. The argument of the next, final phase - that I shall postulate in Chapter 4 - will be exactly that giving actual 'voice and body' to the discursal potentialities of the poetic text actually enhances the reader's experience of the poem. I shall claim that a dramatic 'embodiment' of the poetic language, performed by a group of *acting readers*, can really extend the propositional language to a whole range of other analogic aspects of the emotional/physical response to such collective poetic experience.

## CHAPTER 4: THE ACTING READER

### 4.1. Third phase: 'Interactive' dramatic interpretation - Introduction

#### 4.1.1. Summary of the previous two phases

In this chapter I shall discuss the third phase of poetry reading concerning dramatic interpretation.

What I have been trying to demonstrate in the previous chapter is that reading and interpreting poetry is a process which engages different feelings and conflicting sensations in the reader. I have argued that the peculiar mood generated by such emotional, inner 'strife' could be described as the reader's split sensibility proceeding through an alternating, bewildering sense of estrangement-intimacy-estrangement. Thus, I have maintained that the reader experiences the sensation of displacement as the primary effect of his approach to the poetic imagery. In spite of his continuous attempts at making poetic language familiar to his own schemata, in fact, the reader goes on confronting himself with such a sensation throughout the whole process of poetry reading. In the preceding chapter I have described the first two phases of this process, which now could be summarized in this way:

1. initially, the reader attempts to familiarize with the poetic language by making his own schemata prevail over the text. In so doing, he employs a top-down, deconstructive approach as a means to overcome the sense of unfamiliarity poetry produces on him on his first approach to it.

2. Then, eventually, he feels the need to focus on the poetic language, thus activating bottom-up reading strategies which make him feel again 'estranged' from the original, metaphorical expression of poetry.

In this chapter, therefore, I shall try to theorize the third and - for the purpose of this study - crucial phase of poetry reading.

#### 4.1.2. Third phase: Poetic embodiment

The assumption at this stage is that to achieve a total, all involving, personal experience of the poetic language, the reader - the empirical reader - has to free himself from his customary silent position, by giving poetry a context in space and 'inhabiting' it. In this way, he becomes an *acting reader* who takes dramatic action on the poetic language of the text by accomplishing an 'imaginative leap' within it. *An acting reader, therefore, is an empirical reader who 'physically' inhabits the poetic text in such a way as to derive from it his own subjective dramatic discourse capable of enhancing his imaginative apprehension of poetry at all levels of experience.* I shall demonstrate, therefore, how the reader's 'embodiment' of the voices he achieves in the text will gradually enable him to reconcile the two opposing sensations of intimacy and estrangement within his own self. In this way, he can physically as well as emotionally communicate and share his own interpretative discourse with the other acting readers who interact with him.

Of course, when I talk about the poetic discourse the *acting reader* derives from his own dramatic embodiment of the text I do not mean anything final and 're-textualized'; for *dramatic discourse in poetry I intend the continuous interplay of the different effects poetic language has on the acting reader as he physically and emotionally explores and interprets it in a real - and not just a mental - space.* For, if, on the one hand, he possesses and is possessed by the poetic language emotionally, imaginatively, and also physically, on the other he becomes capable of internalizing that language and using it creatively only through a process of estrangement.

To solve this paradox, it is necessary to assume the aesthetic experience of the self merging with poetry through a



process of identification with the voices in the text resembling, in many ways, the practice of translation. Just like the translator, the *acting reader* follows somebody else's text step by step, exactly as if he had thought it himself, as if that text were his own. In other words, he gets the impression that his schemata start coinciding with the mental circuits he achieves within the text, and as he enters them, he feels as if he were progressively engulfed into a total identification. Therefore, he cannot understand any more where his thought ends and the other's thought begins to infiltrate his own whole self. And yet, in spite of such total identification, he still retains at the same time that consciousness that the voice he is identifying himself with is not his own, thus keeping a constant, underlying sense of a third-person estrangement towards the text he is translating. I actually maintain that translating and acting poetry out are two ways (covert and overt respectively) which involve the receiver much more than the simple silent reading. Indeed, the process itself (either of the performance-rehearsal or of the translation) makes the receiver aware of the particular discursal potentials of the poetic text. This occurs through the Receiver's continuous operation of selection and rejection till reaching his own discourse interpretation, which in a sense, encloses all the potentialities he has been considered up to that moment. Nevertheless, I would argue that, by assimilating the text into his own whole being and giving it a dimension within a real space, the *acting reader* simultaneously allows a displacing of the self into a different, virtual context he himself creates by interacting with the text and with the other readers. In this way, the 'voice' he achieves in the poem becomes embodied, disembodied, and then re-embodied again in an 'iconic' space. This means that the procedures of deconstruction and construction the *acting reader* carries out on the poetic language are actually simultaneous during this third phase, thus implying that the two poles of the textual/public and the personal/private are reconciled within the very experience of the dramatic interpretation of poetry.

#### 4.1.3. Development of the chapter

I shall try, in this chapter, to define the third phase of poetic interpretation through drama in a systematic way. To achieve this purpose, it will be necessary to consider different areas of enquiry as intersecting and justifying each other. I shall jointly examine, therefore, some particular directions within the disciplines of Applied Linguistics, Literary, Philosophical, and Drama Theory, by proceeding in this way:

1. In the second Section (4.2.), after arguing the 'pictorial', spatial, physical dimension inherent in the iconic function of metaphor, I shall advocate my position in favour of a poetic discourse which - like all the other uses of language - is meant for communication. So that, in defining the *acting reader's* process of interpretation-through-identification, I shall also point out my position about poetic communication. I shall state that for me communication in poetry does not imply exclusively the reader-text interaction, but it involves a total, emotional, physical and intellectual communication of groups of acting readers embodying the discourse 'poentialities' they achieve in the text and interacting in the virtual, iconic context they themselves create from the poetic language.

2. In the third Section (4.3.) I shall define the peculiar nature of dramatic communication in poetry by describing the *acting reader's* process of appropriation of the Sender/Addresser's 'voices' during his physical and vocal authentication of the poetic text.

3. In the fourth Section (4.4.) I shall theorize the *three stages* of this third interactive phase of poetic embodiment by describing the gradual process of involvement of the 'self' with the poetic text and with the other 'selves'. The focus will be put on the way the *acting reader* interprets the images he achieves in the language while 'in action': I shall claim that he embodies them within the physical/emotional context he creates as a result of the effects they produce on him. At the same time, however, he reflects on them through that characteristic sense

of 'involved detachment' poetry provokes in him.

Now, let us examine, in the following Section, the acting reader's process of recognition of an actual spatial dimension in the metaphorical language of poetry.

## 4.2. Metaphors of space and dramatic communication in poetry

### 4.2.1. The physical space of poetry

The assumption I shall start with in this Section is that dealing with metaphors in iconic language necessarily implies the recognition of their spatial, visual dimension. Aristotle himself states that *lexis* (diction, elocution, and style) - a fundamental component of poetic metaphor - makes *logos* (discourse) appear, and this is also what Ricoeur (1978) means when he says:

"(T)he vividness of such good metaphors consists in their ability to 'set before the eyes' the sense that they display. What is suggested here is a kind of pictorial dimension, which can be called the *picturing function* of metaphorical meaning." (p.141)

Although I do not agree with Ricoeur's implications of a passive reader who just 'receives' the images language 'sets before his eyes', and of a metaphorical language already containing a meaning within itself, I nevertheless share his view about the pictorial dimension of metaphor. Also Todorov (1980) talks about metaphors as 'discourse made visible', and Genette (1976) defines them as 'inner space of language'. It is within this space that, as I have stated before, the reader can find similarities in things which in real life are totally dissimilar.

In his book *Poetics of Space*, Bachelard (1969) asserts that, in spite of the conventional view of a wholly 'verbal' figure of speech, metaphor involves also an 'optic' component which, he maintains, is at the basis of Kant's theory of schema - as providing images for concepts - and productive imagination. Henle

(1958) defines this optic, 'pictorial' component as the iconic aspect of metaphor: in his view, metaphor is not presented as an 'icon', but "what is presented is a formula for the construction of icons" (p.148).

My interpretation of this statement is alike to Peter Brook's (1990) definition of 'the empty space', a space in which the actor's imagination, interacting with the language of the text, creates its own icons, its own metaphorical representations as the analogic effect poetic language produces on him. Such effects are not just mentally experienced but also physically and bodily. After all, the reader's use of imagination does not simply create a mental image of what he finds in the poetic language; it rather creates a space in which he can make language 'act' deictically, according to particular situations, feelings and attitudes. I claim, in fact, that the mental image which remains only 'mental' throughout the whole process of poetry reading, is just the product of an absence, of the reader's impossibility of actually realizing and physically experiencing the effects poetic language prompts on him. The experience of poetry, I maintain, always implies physicality and communication with the text and with the others; the reader, in Sartre's (1948) words, always tries to transcendently possess the absent object, or the absent body, and to give it form and voice in space. To achieve this physical embodiment, he unconsciously resorts to his own memory, to his own 'body/thought' schemata, yet he is obliged, in a way, to 'rehearse' the fantastic situation poetry suggests to him only in his own mind, just because social, cultural, or simply situational constraints inhibit its overt expression. Therefore, it is always the reader's background knowledge - populated by people, objects, situations, feelings, physical sensations, dreams and desires - what interacts with and 'incarnates' poetic language.

Poetic language, on the other hand, is a language often expressing extremities of passion which a reader, in real life, perhaps only rarely experiences linguistically in such an intense way as in poetry. In the past, the oral tradition merged poetry, voice and body into a unique expression of the 'self'; the real world itself, indeed, was experienced through a total poetic fusion of body, words and macrocosm. Eskimo tribes, for instance, found their way home by 'singing the landscape', giving

collective emotional 'voice' and 'shape' to rivers, mountains and valleys.

Today, the experience of language has dissociated the body from the mind where the essence of 'self' is usually thought to reside, so that experience has become covert, and the intense pleasure of emotional communication with the others through the body has been denied. My position, instead, is that *poetic language, to be fully authenticated by the reader, has to belong to his whole body which defines itself through the others' bodies*. It is through his body and his voice that the reader can disclose his own 'self' within the spiritual, emotional effects poetry has on him. Usually a reader 'talks about' the effects a poem has had on him, rather than 'revealing' and communicating them to the others by creating physical and vocal 'objective correlatives' of the emotions he experiences within the poetic language. On this subject Linklater (1992) says, by referring to poetic language in Shakespeare:

"It was a language that was still a part of an oral culture ... (1) language lived in the body. Thought was experienced in the body. Emotions inhabited the organs of the body. Filled with thought and feeling, the sound waves of the voice flowed out through the body and were received sensorially by other bodies which directly experienced the thought-feeling content of the sound waves." (p.6).

What Linklater describes here, therefore, is not the expression of the self 'in a different language', but 'in a different experience of language'. Poetry, in fact, can arouse vocal energies capable of activating unimagined 'sub-verbal meanings'.

Poetry of space, therefore, does not imply only the visual, pictorial aspect of language, but it involves all the senses: the reader's experience of sound in a spatial dimension can evoke emotions and sensations which are different from those exclusively created within his mind while reading silently, associating sound to imagery. Spoken language in general - and spoken poetry in particular - always creates a subliminal communication electricity not only between speakers and listeners, but also between the speaker and his text (1). I maintain, therefore, that the silent reader still keeps within himself unconscious 'whole-body' potentialities of poetry

activation; once he becomes aware of them, he can allow them to trigger in him further emotions by taking physical action upon the language of the poetic text.

#### 4.2.2. Mental/physical schemata in 'poetic action'

What I have been arguing so far does not simply suggest that the reader just accepts that poetry has a phonological design; actually, understanding the prosodic features of poetry is an important part of the incorporation of the text in the self, thus allowing the text to activate an interpretation and actually enhancing the acting reader's experience of the poem. In this way, the notion of the silent prosody and its actual 'voiced' vocalization can be really extended to other aspects of the poetic experience.

Nevertheless, I also claim that the process of interpretation of poetry - as a total and all involving experience - has to be externalized in dramatic behaviour. This does not mean that readers have to deal with the final product (the performance) of their previous, silent pondering over poems, but, rather, *they generate, 'in action', a physical expression coherent to the effects poetry continually produces on them.* In this way, the acting readers make visible what Artaud (1977) defines as the 'double', the other side of their 'self' which could not easily find its own, full expression in everyday life. The acting readers, in fact, give expression to alternative virtual realities through their own bodies by interpreting poetic language.

Surely it is possible to argue that a silent reader can hear 'internally' the phonological effects of the poem as well, without necessarily giving them any overt expression of phonology. This view usually tends to consider all art as an intense and exclusive private experience: people who turn to it neither need any kind of overt expression, nor wish to communicate their feelings and imagination in relation to the effects art produces on them. My position, instead, is that a silent approach to poetry limits the possibilities of

experiencing the peculiarity of that kind of language, because, by excluding the body, the reader removes his deepest and most instinctual life force energies and impulses: poetic rhythm influences the breath rhythm, that is emotion felt within the body. Vowels can convey emotions, and consonants can convey moods which relate those emotions to the particular virtual context realized by the acting readers interacting within its space. Linklater (1992), for instance, recommends a return to a more instinctual, body-centred language in interpreting poetry. She says:

"When a baby is born, breath is its life. The connection of survival impulses with the baby's breath and voice is essential to its life, and a baby's voice communicates essential information long before words are learnt. A baby's voice is emotion ... The 'selfhood' of the baby is undivided instinct-impulse-emotion-breath-voice-body.

Today's adult voice is deprived of the nourishment of emotion and free breathing. Society has taught us that it is wrong to express ourselves freely. Conventional child-raising ('poisonous pedagogy' ...) tells children that it is not nice to shout, that it is ugly and dangerous to get angry, that is upsetting to others to cry in public and that loud hoots of laughter are disturbing. The adult voice is the product of the other people voices." (p.5).

What Linklater seems to advocate, therefore, is a recovery of a physical, body memory that has been removed by social conventions. Physical memory, too, I maintain, is part of the reader's schemata, so that, if schemata interacting with the poetic language are the essence of discourse creation, then they cannot be considered as split into the two categories of 'mental' and 'physical'. Mental and physical are two more opposites which are to be reconciled within the process of poetry reading. The resolution of these apparent contradictory terms actually implies another mysterious paradox about poetry: on the one hand, poetic discourse is dependent on what the sound evokes in the reader; on the other, it is also dependent on carefully composed and organized features of writing. So that, although poetic discourse is based on the spontaneity of the *acting reader's* physical/vocal associations, there is certainly nothing spontaneous about the features of written language. This entails that if sound has the implication of utterance and phonetic embodiment, it is also 'sound in the abstract', beyond the behavioural level. Therefore,

there is, again, another reconciliation of opposites in poetry: sound is concrete and abstract at the same time. This, in its turn, implies another crucial paradox: poetry is a public statement in print, nevertheless it allows for a multiplicity of individual responses, so that it is neither public nor private. And yet the reader, by acting poetry out and externalizing his own discourse interpretation in space, may appear as if he were emphasizing the concrete over the abstract, the public over the private. This paradox can be solved only by considering the nature of dramatic communication in poetry (2).

#### 4.2.3. Dimensions of dramatic communication in poetry

Poetic language is not substantially different from any other use of language; what differs is the kind of communication, because poetry is language used to communicate emotionally. Let us consider, therefore, its peculiar mode of communication.

Ambiguity. Today it is conventional practice to consider levels of ambiguity as already contained within the written text (Empson 1961; Frye 1957; Cox and Dyson 1963, 1965); a paradigm of this kind is Sklovski's book *Zoo, or Non-Love Letters* (1923), where, throughout his critical essays, he finds ways of 'verbally' communicating his passion for his Receiver (Elsa Triolet, who forbade him to speak of love to her) without ever mentioning the word 'love'.

What I shall argue here, instead, is that ambiguity is not inherent in the language, but in its mode of communication which is dependent on the context readers set language, so that ambiguity necessarily increases as readers give poetry a spatial dimension while acting it out. In this way, communication itself achieves a multi-levelled dimension as well as a more variable quality. On the subject of the multiple levels of communication in speaking, for example, Widdowson (1978) asserts:



"Speaking as an instance of use ... is part of a reciprocal exchange in which both reception and production play a part. ... But when we speak normally in the course of a natural communicative interaction we do not only use our vocal organs. The act of speaking involves not only the production of sounds but also the use of gesture, the movements of the muscles of the face, and indeed of the whole body. All of these non-vocal accompaniments of speaking as a communicative activity are transmitted through the visual medium. When we think of speaking in this way, therefore, it is no longer true that it is associated solely with the aural medium." (p.59).

Widdowson, here, is talking about referential communication within which the connotative, personal, 'ambiguous' aspects of language often play a little part, insofar as speakers usually have to reach an agreement on what they are verbally negotiating. In the iconic context of poetry, on the contrary, words lose their referential meaning. This means that not only the paralinguistic features of communication, but also the sound conveyed by the speakers' quality of voice creates a subtext communicating 'ambiguous' feelings which prompt in the listeners interpretations even in contrast with the denotative meaning of the words (3).

Embodiment of discourse 'poentialities'. It might be argued, at this point, that as soon as the reader gives voice to the phonological level of poetry, he is bound to give it a much more specific sound presentation which would provide him with only one interpretation, with only one way of rendering the poem. Again, positions like this derive from the assumption that in silent reading, instead, a number of definite ways of rendering the poem, in some sense, still co-exist, whereas, if the reader performs the poem what he actually does is narrowing, rather than broadening, the possibilities of authentication of the text.

My position in this context is that I agree that performance - when it is meant as the final product of interpretation - does not extend, but, indeed, diminishes, discourse potentialities. However, what, on the contrary, I mean by the reader acting poetry out is *the process itself* of exploring the poetic language by 'embodying' it. In this way the acting reader realizes those aspects of the language that he would have just ignored if he had confined himself to silent reading.

Of course, discourse potentialities increase as the acting

reader allows his own discursal interpretation-in-progress to interact with other acting reader's interpretations of the same poetic text.

Collective dramatic interpretation. In a situation of collective dramatic interpretation, the acting reader's schemata, including his body memory, react to the language of the poem and interact with the way the other acting readers are receiving and re-interpreting his discourse. Then, they re-compose their own individual interpretations of the poetic effects around the text; in this way, they achieve their collective interpretation within which different discourses co-exist and merge.

Therefore I maintain that if the acting reader externalizes the poem by making his interpretation overt, he actually makes himself and the others aware of the alternative renderings of it. Through the phonetic manifestation, the reader realizes either the alternative renderings of a poem or the underlying phonological abstraction which allows for a whole discursal realization of the phonetic representation.

Moreover, while acting poetry out, the reader actually explores through action not only the way he engages his own schemata in interpreting the text, but he also identifies himself momentarily with the other acting readers' interpretations, thus assuming a subjective perception of the way each reader conceives his own discourse. This 'splitting of the self' allows the acting reader to meet other potential expressions of the poetic language 'out of himself' and 'within the others'. This collective and total sharing of feelings, paradoxically, broadens the reader's own private emotional experience; at the same time, it frees him from any sense of uneasiness at dealing alone with what his imagination creates under the impulse of the effects poetry generates in him. Sharing and communication in poetry dramatization also imply a sort of Brechtian estrangement by means of which the acting reader temporarily dissociates from his 'self' to freshly re-experience the poetic language 'through the others'. This will allow him to eventually develop new and individual discourse interpretations.

However, it is the reader's emotion in reference to the poetic language which ultimately has to give sound to the phonetic patterns of the poem. After all, also in real life, one thing is

to speak referentially in order to get a particular illocutionary force in what is said; another thing is speaking with somebody and communicating not just what one is saying, but also what one implies by saying it, what one thinks while speaking and saying things, and the effect he intends to communicate to the others. Seen in these terms, if acting poetry out on the one hand enhances the emotional and physical experience of the acting reader, on the other it represents the very experience itself.

This does not mean, of course, that readers have to reject any reference to reality, on the contrary they are perfectly aware all the time that they are performing something, that there is an imaginative displacement in what they are doing. Nevertheless, they are so wholly concentrated on the communication of the emotions through the poetic language to the extent that they are 'really' completely involved in what they are doing. Therefore, what they create is not an artificial situation, insofar as the border between the virtual/iconic and the real/referential is blurred into a physical/psychological level; such level is neither real nor virtual, but it is the result of their interaction.

#### 4.2.4. Internalization and externalization of poetry

And yet, acting poetry out is still a way to the reader's self-identity. In his quest for his 'self', however, the acting reader cannot dissociate the internalization of the poem from its externalization in performance because the two processes are simultaneous within the 'total' experience of the poetic language. In other words, the reader's physical externalization of poetry is not just a way of presenting his own 'authorized' interpretation of the poem to the others, it is not just performing an already re-textualized discourse where the danger of self-exposure has been removed and neutralized during a previous phase of silent reading. In such case, in fact, performance would become some sort of behaviouristic response of the individual acting reader to the others' expectations, thus 'socializing' poetry by reducing it into a pattern of

conventional rules. On the contrary, the atmosphere in which acting readers create poetic discourse together has to be based on a true involvement and trust in each other. In this way, they are not put off by the emotional 'public' involvement; rather, they feel that their private experience of poetry can still exist on a 'sublimated' level, and yet it may be enriched by the intense physical, emotional pleasure poetic communication conveys.

In fact, acting readers' communication has the power to create conditions for discourse 'coherence' by giving physical and vocal expression to their otherwise covert feelings and intentions in relation to the poetic language. Moreover, 'dramatic' communication enables the acting reader to coherently interpret what somebody else is trying to communicate within the discursal context of the poem, because, in Widdowson's (1978) words "in the case of coherence we infer the covert propositional connections from an interpretation of the illocutionary acts." (p.29). After a communication of this kind, then, the acting reader spontaneously re-casts the experience he has had as an internal, private one.

Such process of externalization and then internalization of the poetic experience can be compared, in a way, to Vygotsky's (1972) notion of language acquisition: he asserts that language is essentially acquired as a social discourse, so that a child first learns to interact with others, and then, this interactivity becomes internalized within himself. In this way, the social uses of language become abstracted and sublimated, in some sense, as an internal reaction to what he has being learned. Vygotsky's view is also consistent with what William James (1890) says in his *Principles of Psychology*: he maintains that we do not first cognitively recognize things and then experience them, but we first experience and then recognize them. In the same way, also the acting reader first effects an overt, physical interaction - with the text and with the others - in order to allow his individual experience of poetry to take place in a situation of total communication: he externalizes all the prosodic features in poetry in terms of his interpretation of rhyme, assonance, alliteration and so on, and then he internalizes them as a private experience. Music, for instance, can be experienced in almost the same way: we create our

'internal performance' of a piece only after having listened to its actual execution. On the other hand, musicians who read the score and hear the music for the first time in their 'inward ear', actually 'rehearse' in their mind a situation of emotional communion with the others through that music; they project their covert experience into an imaginary situation to which they associate the effects music has on them. The aim, however, is almost always the public performance as a means to share and communicate emotions which, eventually, will be internalized and made private by the listeners.

Poetry, like music, is carefully composed through verbal and sound patterns in order to produce a certain illocutionary force on the readers/listeners. Of course, the effects it generates in them are multiple and variable. Again, it is possible to draw another parallel with music here: music is always experienced simultaneously on a physical and a spiritual level insofar as each instrument enters into a kind of interpretation by reproducing and following the actual physical operations of the body: drum beats are usually associated to the wild rhythm of our basic instincts; strings are thought to reproduce the pace of meditative thought. But, of course, the effect on listeners can be variable to the extent that they realize the most diverse physical representations of their emotions in relation to music; the example of discos where the listeners/dancers physically and creatively interact with the music and with the others in a multiplicity of different, subjective ways is emblematic.

Also poetry, in the past, was written to be put to music: lyric required the accompaniment of the lute, for example, so that those poems today are to be considered in some sense incomplete because something in their rhythm is missing, the lute in no longer there. And yet poetry does not require any kind of 'accompaniment' external to its own rhythm to help the reader authenticate it within his whole 'self'. There is, in fact, something about poetry which engages the whole body, and it is the reader, the *acting reader* the one who can give life to that language by 'appropriating' it and 'embodying' it through a total interaction with the rhythm and the sound of the text.

### 4.3. The authorial role of the acting reader

#### 4.3.1. The acting reader's appropriation of the Sender/Addresser's 'voices'

Seen in this context of poetic embodiment, however, the *acting reader* has not to be considered simply as a 'conductor'; he does not correspond in any way to that kind of reader Goffman (1981) defines as an *animator* of a text. On the contrary, he is much more alike to Widdowson's (1992) concept of the reader as the *author* of the text. Widdowson makes a clear distinction between the two types:

"(T)he reader can assume the role of animator, whose task is simply to activate meanings deemed to be in the text, but who takes no initiative to engage creatively with the text and so to act as author of personal reaction. As animator, we might say, the reader provides an exegesis. As author, the reader provides an interpretation." (p.x)

Therefore, in dealing with the question of the *acting reader's* interpretation within a dimension of discourse, I find it necessary to consider, as the starting point of my enquiry, Widdowson's (1975) suggestion of a 'dual focus situation' as relevant to literary discourse. Here is his diagram:

|        |           |           |          |
|--------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| /1     | /2        | //2       | //1      |
| Sender | Addresser | Addressee | Receiver |

(Widdowson 1975, p.51)

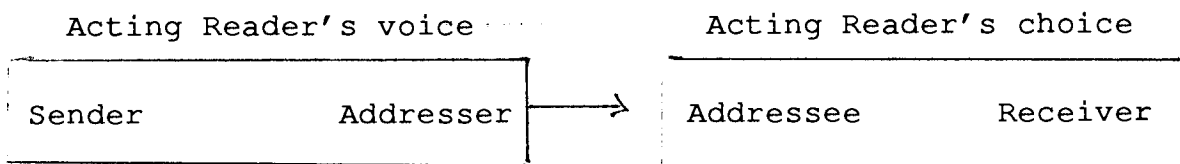
Widdowson maintains that Sender and Addresser, and Addressee and Receiver coincide in normal communicative situations, but they do not coincide anymore in literary communication (pp.51-52). In other words the Sender and the Receiver correspond, respectively, to the Actual Author and the Actual Reader, whereas

- to adopt Leech and Short's (1981) terminology (pp.259-62) - the Addresser can be identified either with the Implied Author or with some character's voice, and the Addressee either with the Implied Reader or, also in this case, with another character's voice. Therefore, if we consider the Author as the Sender, we can also imagine an Addresser which is independent from the Author-Sender. Nevertheless in poetry - and particularly in lyric poetry - the first person pronoun may refer to the poet's voice which is both Sender and Addresser.

In dealing with poetic texts through voice and body, however, the *acting reader* 'acts poetry out' by filtering the text through his own voice and body, and, consequently, through his own sensibility. He places himself 'within' the text, interpreting it, analyzing it through his whole being in order to communicate it to the Receiver. In this way he appropriates the text becoming the 'voice' of the Sender and the Addresser at the same time. In taking possession of the Sender's role, the *acting reader* has to operate some conscious choices on the role of the Addresser and even of the Addressee, which does not represent a choice of the Actual Author anymore. The new discursal relationship established between the *acting reader* and the poetic text can be, therefore, represented as in the following Figure 4.1.:

Figure 4.1.

*The Acting Reader's 'voices' and 'choices'*



In the light of this 'text/acting-reader' interaction, each acting reader has got the opportunity of recreating, re-experiencing, through representation, the emotional journey of a poem, which could, or could not, coincide with the Actual Author's own journey. This is, after all, what is meant - in the

context of theatrical performance of dramatic texts - by the difference between *text* (representing the author's product) and *script* (representing the actor's possibility of discursal authentication).

It is necessary to point out, however, that the difference between Author and Reader is only illusively denied by the reading process; moreover, it could be argued - as New Critics would do - that reading is not actually the 'reader's reading', insofar as the linguistic elements are provided by the text itself. To these arguments I reply that if they might apply - though only to a certain extent - to the process of referential reading, they are certainly inconsistent when considered in relation to poetry reading. Poetry - De Man (1979) would argue (p.17-8) - paradoxically asserts and denies, at the same time, the authority of its rhetorical mode: in this sense it can be regarded as a quite advanced form of deconstruction. It resists any attempt at reducing its iconical quality to referentiality, so that even if we try to constrain the Sender and Addresser to a simple grammatical pronoun, its function will never be grammatical but rhetorical: it is the reader, in fact, the one who 'gives voice' to that particular grammatical organization of the text, thus creating his own poetic discourse. On the subject of difference between poetic and the referential functions Jakobson asserts:

"The supremacy of poetic function over referential function does not obliterate the reference, but makes it ambiguous. The double-sensed message finds correspondence in a split addresser, in a split addressee, and what is more, in a split reference, as is cogently exposed in the preambles to fairy tales of various people, for instance, in the unusual exhortation of the Majorca story tellers: *Aixo era y no era* (it was and it was not)." (Quoted in Ricoeur 1978, p.151).

Therefore, when poetry is acted out it does not represent just an emotive reaction to what language does to the reader in reference to both his real and virtual contexts, but also an emotive reaction to the acting reader's own discovery of what language might be up to, for, according to Widdowson (1992), "What poetry does is to explore the absences, the meanings which lie unrealized in the interstices of conventionalized thought. It *sings other worlds into existence.*" (p. 9, my italics). This



view of poetry meant as the reader's process of exploration of the 'poentialities' of words can be seen in parallel with some post-modern drama theories, among of which there is Grotowski's (1969) assertion that the important thing is not the words but what we can do with these words, what gives life to the inert words of the text, and Artaud's (1977) view of 'metaphysics-in-action' which is based on the assumption that to make metaphysics out of spoken language is to make language express what it does not ordinarily express.

#### 4.3.2. Authentication of poetry through 'physicality'

Derrida (1973) wrote two of his early essays on Artaud emphasizing Artaud's argumentation for a non-repetitive drama, a drama that could have no script - meant as a crystallization of meanings in the way words are interpreted - a drama that could be broken free entirely from the control of the author, from the 'authority of the father' pre-determining, freezing and paralyzing the action of drama (4). Moreover, in these essays, Derrida brings forth the idea that there can never be purity, immediacy or 'presence' in drama, an idea which, however, at times takes the form of a suggestion that Artaud's theatre will always be in some sense textual, though not in exactly the same way as a literary text is. Actually, the deconstructive critique has always been concerned with the ways in which the body, the whole physical being, can be involved with textuality. It is not simply that 'the body is the text', nor is it that the texts are entirely abstract and non-bodily. It is not, in other words, that a text and the body are the same, nor is it that they are utterly distinct. There is, in fact, some complicated interchange between abstraction and physicality which performance can restore to the abstractness of text (5).

My argument, in this context, is that it is the *acting* reader the one who, through his voice and his body, creates 'divided references' by, on the one hand, suspending reality and generating 'absence', and, on the other, reinstating 'presence' in a virtual context through physicality. *By physicality I mean*

*the acting reader's capability of expressing himself physically as well as vocally in ways that are to be coherent to his emotions in reference to the poetic text.* When we feel an emotion we are under the spell of our body; so that I maintain that the way the body expresses emotions has many resemblances with verbal texture, insofar as the physical realization is itself a part of the acting reader's engagement to the illocutionary force of the metaphors he achieves in the poetic language.

Through emotions felt in his body, the acting reader appropriates and authenticates the poetic language which he previously put at a distance during the second, bottom-up, objectifying phase. And yet such appropriation simultaneously implies an *epoché*, a suspension of his bodily emotions in relation to everyday life. This does not simply mean a denial of emotion, but, rather, it represents what Aristotle defines as *catharsis*, that is, the dramatic displacement of real feelings into the iconic, virtual level of poetry. Therefore, I do not share Frye's (1957) notion of 'mood' as contained within the verbal structure of the poem itself, because it seems to me that, in this way, he tends to blur distinction between the force and the effect poetry has on readers. Poetic mood, instead, is the product of the interaction between the force to be found in the language of the text, and the effect to be achieved by the acting reader. This is the way I want to re-interpret Frye's assertion that the mood is just the way a poem affects the reader as an 'icon'.

#### 4.3.3. Summary

So far, then, I have argued that, among the various possibilities of poetry authentication the reader can opt for (which can be more or less covert-overt, according to his own nature, mood, or disposition), I consider dramatic discourse as the best suited one to create a total, all-involving experience of poetic language, insofar as the *acting reader* finds himself engaged not only with the text, but also with the other readers' discursal interpretations and, finally, with the deepest sides

of his own self.

In the following Section, therefore, I shall adopt a phenomenological approach to inquire how the acting reader achieves that deliberate mimetic involvement with poetry as well as with the others during physical interpretation. In other words, I intend to speculate upon the various *stages* through which the acting reader connects reality and virtuality in the process of interaction with the text. I shall demonstrate, therefore, how this mental/physical journey is accomplished either through the reader's own direct experience of the poetic language, or through the way the others communicate their own experience to him. The assumption is that poetry reading, meant as total, dramatic communication, represents the very process of realization of the reader's real 'self'. I maintain, in fact, that the reader's virtual dislocation into the iconic context of poetry enables him to explore conscious and unconscious potentialities of self expression in imaginative situations which can be unfamiliar to his own schemata, thus broadening his physical and emotional experience.

#### **4.4. Acting poetry as 'self' creation**

##### **4.4.1. The three 'stages' of dramatic embodiment of poetic language: A phenomenological enquiry**

In the previous Section I have maintained that the acting reader is not an 'animator' of the poetic text. I shall argue, now, that he is not a simple 'impersonator' as well. Impersonation is just a linguistic-physical illustration void of any affective involvement, whereas the acting reader's process of dramatic interpretation directly affects the 'body/thought' basis of his own schemata and, consequently, the complex structure of his own identity as 'self'.

Therefore, in this Section I intend to adopt a phenomenological method of enquiry in order to analyze the three

stages of the *acting reader's* 'embodiment' of the poetic language as they proceed in this way:

1. Stage A: the acting reader experiences a sense of artistic *detachment* from his physical experience of poetry;
2. Stage B: the acting reader achieves a sense of *involvement* with the language of the poem as well as he experiences his own 'self' as merging with the others' 'selves';
3. Stage C: the acting reader realizes a metaphorical embodiment of the poetic language in which the contrasting feelings of *detachment* (self-reflection) and *involvement* (self-expression) are reconciled within the very physical and vocal experience of poetry.

My aim in this context is to demonstrate how each stage presupposes a specific psycho-physical positioning of the acting reader within the 'inter-acting group of acting readers' in the process of creating a collective dramatic discourse from a poetic text. I shall argue that the acting reader's *physical journey* within poetic language develops from a sense of *alienation* of his 'self' from poetry, to a sense of *identification* and *familiarity* with the poetic experience. Then, he finally returns to himself as a 'person' simultaneously realizing the two contrasting feelings as inseparable aspects of his aesthetic experience of poetry. In this way, the acting reader can experience his body becoming, at the same time, an experiential 'physical metaphor' (first-person experience of identification) as well as a 'physical objective correlative' (third-person experience of estrangement/alienation) for the communication of further emotional effects to the others.

At this point, I shall examine the distinctive aspects of the three stages.

4.4.2. Stage A - Artistic detachment: Estrangement by 'suspension of belief'

As the acting reader starts acting poetry out, he constantly compares 'himself-in-virtuality' with 'himself-in-actuality'; this is a way which enables him to initially keep a kind of conscious artistic distance from both existential conditions. On the other hand, however, the comparison of these real/virtual conditions allows the acting reader to call absence into presence within the iconic context of poetry by means of artifice and enactment. In so doing, he activates a sort of phenomenological detachment from actuality in order to free his imagination.

One of the effects of this process of estrangement on the acting reader consists in his becoming aware of the many biases limiting his habitual perception. In terms of physical expression, estrangement is revealed through the creation of physical and vocal images as 'objective correlatives' of the new sensibilities the 'state of bewilderment' prompts in the reader: bodies standing for other bodies, or for objects, or for moods and states of mind, just as it happens in visual art, from Cubism to Surrealism. Bodies and voices detached from their normal contexts and projected into virtual spaces contribute to the effect of aesthetic detachment, so that, each gesture becomes, in Chekhov's (1953) definition, a 'psychological gesture', and each body an object of art. Art generates distance and detachment, but, by comparing this state of alienation in art with actual life, the acting reader realizes that also in his existence there are moments of imagination generating detachment within emotional involvement. After all, in art, normality is disclosed through the effect of its violation within representation, and the aesthetic distance provoked by representation paradoxically reveals our involvement.

In dramatic representation of poetry, resemblances and differences with the acting reader's own background knowledge oblige him to break the associations and rely on the detachment provoked by putting his schemata under discussion. However, such detachment is actually a phase of the acting reader's quest for his 'self'. At this point, therefore, more than a 'suspension of disbelief' - which would imply involvement - the acting reader

activates a 'suspension of belief', insofar as he re-considers and re-arranges his own beliefs, his own mental and physical schemata, under the new light of his poetic experience. This operation, according to Bradley (1914), is made possible by dramatic action which frees man from the limits of empirical reality, in order to create a context for itself. Also Brecht's (1979) theory of the 'estrangement effect' in theatre (*Verfremdungseffekt*) is meant to increase the aesthetic detachment in both actors and audience as a way to make them "capable of thinking and reasoning" (6). Therefore, he asserts his view against the Aristotelian 'theatre of identification' which relies on the "high emotional suggestibility of a mob". The weakness of his assumption, however, lies in the separation of the mental/cognitive level from the emotional/affective level in theatre. In dramatic representation, instead, cognition can only be generated by emotional involvement. Therefore, what Brecht actually fosters is, again, another reconciliation of opposites: the achievement of an 'involved detachment' in dramatic art, or, in Fo's (1983) words, the realization of an 'epic' drama where:

"Everything has to be done coolly, with detachment. But this does not mean that the actor must not have feelings and passion. Rather, he must project an image of passion. The actor's emotion, his sensibility, lies precisely in the fact of projecting." (p.26).

And this position of 'involved detachment' (which means that the acting reader simultaneously takes a first- and a third-person stance on his own poetic enactment) leads us to the next stage of the acting reader's exploration of poetry.

#### 4.4.3. Stage B - Aesthetic involvement: Intimacy by 'suspension of disbelief'

After having physically and emotionally experienced aesthetic distance - or artistic detachment - the acting reader starts realizing that dealing with poetry through drama implies a detachment which paradoxically discloses his deep levels of total imaginative involvement with the poetic language he is

exploring.

Imaginative involvement 'in action'. The use of imagination in general - and in poetry reading in particular - is traditionally regarded as a mental, individual act; I argue, instead, that groups of acting readers imagine while in action, while creating alternative, virtual realities as variations on their actual existence by activating a 'suspension of disbelief'.

In such a context, imagination is what emerges through their spontaneous and collective involvement with the poetic language. Therefore, it is not just a case of 'imagined involvement', but rather, it is a straightforward 'involvement in imagining' while 'in action' which re-structures the experience of any previous commitment with poetry occurred in isolation. For, it is when acting readers are in each others' physical presence and interact through poetry, that new feelings and emotions can be achieved within the language: extremes of feelings and emotions, as they are found in poetry, have to be experienced in a total, deep-down, physical way in order to be known at all, therefore, they cannot be fully apprehended by the isolated, silent reader because there is nobody else to interact with him, to arouse them, and to reflect them back.

Of course, the reader can resort to his own private emotional and physical memory to retrieve those feelings. I claim, however, that such exclusive reference to actual, personal contexts makes the reader's concentration shift from the virtual situation in the poem to his own personal experience to the detriment of the aesthetic effect which should include involvement as well as detachment. Too exclusive top-down procedures of interpretation, in fact, can produce only a psychodrama effect, lingering over the reader's past experiences without broadening his emotional and physical knowledge in reference to poetic language and to the other readers.

Empathic absorption of the 'self' in the 'they-self'. Acting poetry out, on the contrary, involves a collective, 'kin-aesthetic', visionary process which enables the acting reader's bodily 'self' to become imaginatively absorbed in others. Heidegger (1962), for instance, asserts that what we call an individual person or 'self' is actually just a condition of the

group identity, the 'they-self'. This condition can be applied also to the iconic context of poetic dramatization, insofar as theatre is a phenomenological, imaginative alternative to real life. In real life, meaning is achieved within the communicative interaction between persons in an actual context; in the same way, in poetic dramatization, imaginative alternatives can be achieved by being open to the others inter-acting in a virtual context. In such a context, *the acting reader uses his body as a way to experience poetry through physical movement, and to disclose his own interpretation to the others*. This means that the acting reader, as he is engaged in the artistic act, constantly relates his own experience to a multiplicity of other 'available' real and fantastic experiences which he enacts or identifies with. In this way, his 'self' comes to be absorbed in the others' selves 'experientially' and also 'mimetically', through physical, emotional, and perceptual ways of empathic expression (7).

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche (1956) focuses on this sense of absorption in the process of dramatic embodiment. He asserts that drama is a sort of enchantment, a 'timeless time' of myth, memory and imagination, within which the actor - like Tiresias - totally merges his 'self' with other rhythms and other bodies, thus conjuring spatial/temporal and experiential absence. Also Heidegger (1962), in *Being and Time*, observes that absorption interrupts referential reality; he maintains that our 'being' is defined by 'roles' in relation to the others, so that our presence necessarily assumes the others' presence. This implies that we do not experience our body in detachment from our experience of others' experience of it. In this sense, also mood is not only an individual, internal condition, but it is also external, that is, created by the self interacting with other selves in a context.

The danger of the acting reader's stopping his quest for identity at this stage is obvious: his 'self' becomes dissolved into the others and he will never return to himself. In Modernist terms, this could represent the 'loss-of-identity tragedy'; in Post-Modernist terms, on the contrary, this epitomizes the very endless journey into 'self'-deconstruction. So that the acting reader has to find ways to return to his 'self' through the text and through the others; ways which can be different from the



conventional, 'socially acceptable' ones (8). And so, at this point, we shall move to the third stage of our exploration.

4.4.4. Stage C - Reconciliation of contrasting feelings: Intimacy and estrangement

*The return of the 'self' to itself through 'the other'.*

When Nietzsche (1956) formulates the 'enchantment' notion of bodies standing mimetically in the others' bodies within theatrical experience, he ultimately defines an aim for such experience, that is: *eventually the 'self' must return to itself through the other, thus re-establishing and giving coherence to 'presence', and reconciling the two opposite sensations of alienation (out-of-the-self) and intimacy (within-the-self).*

The acting reader, as he explores poetry, projects and enacts his own 'self' only within the virtual reality of the poem; this, however, does not mean that his experience is not real: there is, actually, a tendency to regard the 'self', aesthetically involved in art, as endowed with a split identity: on the one hand it is real, but, on the other, when it embodies poetic language, in some sense, it is not. This position represents what William James (1890) defines as the 'Psychologist's Fallacy', that is, the psychologist's constant preoccupation for establishing at all costs the referent in the actual world. The acting reader, on the contrary, creates a virtual reality only within the context of the poem, thus metaphorically relating the real and the imaginary. It follows that, although the reader embodies other voices, his identity is real, because he goes on experiencing himself through those poetic voices he achieves within the text.

Therefore, I maintain that the iconic function of poetry is actually a function of the acting reader's reality as 'self'. Poetry is not a perfect, petrified language located in a sort of Platonic space; on the contrary, it is, indeed, a live language located in a 'space of interaction' created by the acting readers who discover together new expressive possibilities through poetry. I claim, in fact, that the acting reader's experience of

physically possessing the poetic language by interacting and identifying himself with the others, enables him, eventually, to return to himself through them.

The individual's experience of his own 'self' is always filtered through the roles he plays in an interpersonal, interpretative, theatre-like space; that is, he always encounters himself - in Wilshire's (1991) words - "in a shock of decentredness" (p.101) (9). The acting reader, therefore, by embodying poetic 'selves', becomes somebody else 'in essence', but, at the same time, he finds his 'self' as mediated by those 'voices' he enacts. So that, paradoxically, by de-distancing himself from his own absorptions, he becomes intimate with his own 'self'.

Self-expressivity in poetry dramatization. At this point it is possible to assume that poetic dramatization has to be ascribed to the acting reader's function of identity, insofar as it defines his 'self' as essentially bodily, that is, as private and social at the same time. That is why I advocate that the acting reader's quest for 'self'-expressivity in poetry has to proceed through the others and, then, back to his own 'self'. Although I concede that the reader needs room for individual experience of the 'self', I nevertheless argue that the poetic, 'iconic' space has to be interactively experienced. When poetry is physically explored, the poet's imagination is altered, modified, changed by the acting readers' individual and collective perception which actualizes that metaphorical language. The poet - like the silent reader - cannot imagine what feelings and emotions may arise when body-selves meet and 'give physical presence' to poetic language; when both their memories and fantasies revive, mix together and merge with metaphors, thus suspending actual time, space, and situations. The poet, on the other hand, always leaves 'silences' for the creation of new metaphors, or, in Husserl's (1962) terms, for new, original images to be 'appresented', to be connected 'experientially' to the already-given language. This view, in a way, is close to Bachelard's (1969) concept of *retentissement*, or reverberation, that is, the power of metaphorical language to renew sensorial experience by prompting the reader to imaginatively complete the 'ellipsis', thus re-schematizing the experience in his own terms.

The very word 'reverberation' is itself a metaphor of space: acting readers taking part in poetic exploration isolate a virtual space and, within it, they 'give presence' to metaphors, reframing them as objects of art, through condensation, stylization, impersonation, simplification. While physically interacting with poetic language, the body not only feels (thus experiencing metaphors from a first-person involvement), but also reflects (thus objectifying the first-person experience of metaphors as a detached and external third-person physical objective correlative of that experience). I shall pragmatically demonstrate this process in the following Part Two of this thesis, in which a systematic analysis of some protocols produced by 'empirical' acting readers (my students) will illustrate how dramatic discourse in poetry does actually take place.

#### 4.5. Summary

In this chapter, then, I have analyzed the third phase of poetry reading concerning the physical involvement of the empirical reader in the poetic language he explores. I have defined such reader as *Acting Reader*, who is not a textual device in the tradition of other 'model' or 'implied' readers meant to 'guide' the actual readers' exploration of the text. Therefore, my speculation so far has been meant as a search for possibilities of poetry authentication which, on the one hand, could deeply involve the reader at every level of experience; on the other, could allow for a total emotional communication of the aesthetic experience of poetry to the others, as a more appropriate alternative to an exclusively intellectual, metalinguistic communication of critical assumptions.

With my theory of the *Acting Reader* I have in fact tried to contest the typical mentalistic view that experience is just a cognitive, cerebral act which can only be private. I have argued that, seen under this light, the scope of experience is greatly reduced, insofar as this position does not recognize that the very experience of the 'self' is possible only when the private and the public interact and merge. Not only, but such limitations

of a purely mentalistic approach become even more evident when the 'self' interacts and merges with the other 'selves' through poetic language: such an interaction, in fact, occurs on a ground of vocal and paralinguistic features which, being framed within an iconic space, become bodily metaphors for emotional communication, thus acquiring the status of work of art which, as such, communicate further effects. Physical and vocal expressions become, therefore, bodily 'objective correlatives' which, eventually, break their iconic detachment to merge with the deepest levels of the acting readers' 'selves'. In this sense I have meant to demonstrate how the opposite poles of estrangement and intimacy, public and private, mental and physical, conscious and unconscious come to reconcile in the very aesthetic experience of poetic art.

The acting reader's journey back to his 'self', after merging with poetry and with the others, implies that his emotional experience turns out enriched and redefined by the others who, together with him, have used the poetic text to create their own dramatic discourse.

With the exploration of this third 'interactive' phase of dramatic representation of poetry I have concluded my theoretical argumentation. In Part Two, therefore, I shall move to a pragmatic operationalization of my theory into the actual classroom context.

**PART TWO: PRACTICE - POETIC DISCOURSE IN ACTION**

## CHAPTER 5: A PRINCIPLED PEDAGOGIC APPROACH

### 5.1. Introduction - Objectives, pedagogic rationale, and operationalization design

In this second part of my thesis I shall raise the question concerning the relationship between theory and practice and demonstrate how it can be pragmatically relevant in the context of poetry teaching.

Objectives. The main objective of this practical part is that of developing a pedagogy of poetic language (which could be subsequently extended to the literary language in general) centred on the reader's 'body/thought' imaginative interaction with the poetic text in the pragmatical achievement of his own discourse. This is based on the theoretical assumption - I have advocated in Part One - that schemata are not merely mental, but also physical, therefore a physical embodiment of the poetic experience can actually enhance the experience.

Therefore, through the poetry-based drama activities and the students' protocols on their discursal responses that I shall present in this Part, I intend to demonstrate that there is a strong link between the physical and the non-physical experience: indeed, a physical state of being activated by the adoption of drama techniques in the poetry-classroom is actually preparatory to a kind of conceptual work students can subsequently carry out on their dramatic discourse they achieve from poetic language.

The pedagogic rationale. The rationale underlying this pragmatical second part of my thesis, then, is that there is a movement from the physical experience to the non-physical concept; therefore, encouraging students/acting-readers to 'perform' poetry could of itself allow them to explore their own experience and 'externalize' it as poetic discourse, in an interaction with other students/acting-readers' experiences of the same poetic text.

Such a collective dramatic representation of poetry can

actually help students to subsequently develop the capability of physically and emotionally 'internalizing' the poetic experience, and then reflecting upon poetic language with a renewed sensitivity. This would enable them to realize that poetic language and physical, dramatic action are inherently and imaginatively related, to the extent that they continually influence each other in the creation of a dramatic discourse of poetry.

Operationalization design. The argument in Part Two will be developed in this way:

This initial chapter of Part Two (Chapter 5) will focus on how the theoretical foundations discussed in Part One can acquire relevance in the context of classroom practice. To this purpose, I shall propose a principled pedagogic approach by starting an exploration of the positioning of the students/acting-readers in a situation of dramatic representation of poetry. Then, I shall substantiate the pedagogical rationale to a poetry methodology by taking into account both Bakhtin's notion of *dialogism* as well as some post-modern conceptions of classroom dynamics in relation to drama techniques. Finally, I shall focus on the research tools and procedures that the teacher/researcher can use for data collection.

Chapter 6 will be devoted to the first phase of the students' dramatic approach to poetry, presupposing readers adopting *top-down* reading strategies to carry out an exploration of the meanings they achieve within words through the use of their own 'body/thought' schemata, which are accessed by means of their whole physical beings.

Chapter 7 will deal with the second phase of this methodology, requiring from the students/acting-readers the adoption of *bottom-up* reading strategies in order to appropriate and, indeed, 'embody' the meanings achieved from the linguistic signs. Such meanings, pragmatically realized in the text, will then inform the sound of the readers' voices and their own actions and re-actions to the poetic language, as they embody the communicative roles of speakers as Senders and Addressers, and listeners/viewers as Addressees and Receivers.

Chapter 8 will finally analyze the third *interactive* phase,

in which groups of inter-acting students/acting-readers achieve their collective dramatic discourses from poetic texts, and then 'perform' their analysis on them.

Chapter 9 will draw the conclusions, thus directing the discussion on either a verification of the theoretical/pedagogical rationale, or an exam of the possible methodological implications.

Finally, the chapters of this second Part will be accompanied by some Appendices in which I provide evidence of some additional activities and protocol details relevant to my argument, in order to show how technically this kind of methodology works out in the class, and what pattern of responses actually emerges from it.

But now let us examine the pedagogic implications of my theoretical grounds, by restating them in a classroom context. This will constitute the subject of this chapter.

## **5.2. How theory relates to practice**

### **5.2.1. The lack of a univocal interpretative path**

In Part One of this thesis I have examined some theoretical aspects concerning the nature of poetry and poetry reading. I have meant, in this way, to establish a conceptual framework for advocating the possibility of a dramatic representation in poetry, on the assumption that acting poetry out represents an effective procedure for readers' authentication of poetic language at every level of experience.

In this chapter I shall analyze the relationship between theory and practice. The purpose is that of exploring possible conditions whereby readers can appreciate poetry in their own way on the basis of certain relevant theoretical assumptions. In this context, therefore, the question of how to re-think the way in which poetry is presented and used in the classroom becomes crucial.



The principled pedagogic approach I shall formulate is founded on a post-modern view essentially advocating the lack of a univocal interpretative path to follow while dealing with the literary text. Starting from the assumption that a poetic text allows as many discursal interpretations as there are readers to 'react' to the multiplicity of subjective effects the text produces on them, I suggest that students have to be guided, on the one hand, towards a 'consciousness raising' as to what the dramatic nature of poetry is, and, on the other, towards a realization that a dramatic approach to poetry allows a sort of hypertextual enquiry in different directions, involving many acting readers playing active roles in their enjoyment of poetic language. Such an approach can help students to creatively interact with poetic texts and acknowledge the effects poetry produces on them as individuals as well as a group (1).

### 5.2.2. Reconciling public and private domains

Accordingly, one of the crucial methodological aims of this principled approach to poetry is that of reconciling the *public* and the *private spheres*. The pedagogic point I want to make, thus, consists in using the group to enhance individual awareness of poetic language. Individual awareness, on the other hand, is also shared by the group in such a way as that it is possible to create a kind of reciprocity. The assumption is that, even within a representational literary context, the individual is a projection of the normal function of the 'individual in society'. The following Figure 5.1. will exemplify my position:

Figure 5.1.

*Pedagogic action*

Individual → Society → Individual

Figure 5.1. intends to highlight my principle that the

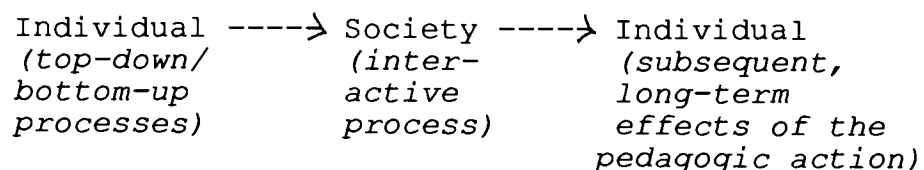
individual externalizes his poetic interpretation in 'social' terms within the group, and this, then, leads him to internalize poetry as 'individual' awareness. Therefore, I do not agree with Baudrillard (1983) when he asserts that any representation of reality is only a *simulacrum* of what reality is, being only a constructed fantasy: his view actually would imply that people in real life remain untouched by their own - or the others' - imaginative experiences (2).

Contrary to this view, I maintain instead that there is no self separated from society, because, although the self is beyond society, it actually becomes a constitutor of it. What I shall try to demonstrate is that literature enhances the individual's awareness of precisely this complex public/private relationship, insofar as, in dramatic representation, the individual's imaginative interpretation feeds back into the other's interpretation. This is one of the educational relevances I intend to convey in this Part.

The other educational bearing of my methodological approach to poetry consists in assuming that the readers' experience of collective poetry enactment actually can enhance the conditions for subsequent private enjoyment without performance (3). This is very much in tune with Vygotsky's (1972) principle that 'what a child today can do in collaboration, tomorrow he can do in isolation'. Therefore, whenever readers come across another poem, they will be able to appreciate it without going through the process of internalizing/externalizing the meaning by dramatization. In other terms, they would be able to transfer the 'dramatically-acquired' sensitivity to poetic language to another poem by reading it silently and on their own. Actually the force of the methodology I am proposing here consists exactly in its 'power of transfer', as it is illustrated in Figure 5.2.:

Figure 5.2.

*Phases of the pedagogic action (chronological dynamics)*



### 5.2.3. The students/acting-readers' multiple positioning in poetic performance

To experience poetry, therefore, *the student/acting-reader himself* has to 'act it out'. From his experience of traditional dramatic performance the student knows that in such conventional theatrical situation he can only position himself as a passive, receptive spectator who sees just the rendering of one interpretation of the dramatic potentialities of the poetic language. This is actually a great limitation on the interpretative powers of his imagination. Moreover, even though he could feel affectively involved in that poetic performance, nevertheless, he is hardly ever directly and actively involved in it as a first and even as a second person insofar as he is always addressed by the performing people as an outside third person. Besides, according to Widdowson (1993b), the onlooker perceives the representational context on stage as an "unfamiliar third person information" (p.2) as well.

When students are encouraged to act poetry out by themselves, on the contrary, they come to occupy the space of poetic representation; therefore, they are no longer witnessing something from the *outside*, as in theatre, but they are drawn *within* the representational world created by poetic language and become *acting readers* who come to inhabit it. This does not mean, however, that students as acting readers automatically become familiar with the new, virtual context of poetry: in fact, even though they come to experience poetic language from a first/second-person perspective, they still retain that sense of third-person displacement they would feel as audience. Such a 'divided reference' - I have theoretically analyzed in Part One (Chapter 3: 3.4.5.) - is due to the fact that physical and vocal 'staging' - like textual devices, such as line-arrangement, metre, and rhymes - is a fundamental condition for creating that peculiar sense of displacement poetry generates in acting readers who, though acting from the *inside*, still perceive themselves from the *outside* as inhabiting a virtual, iconic space (4).

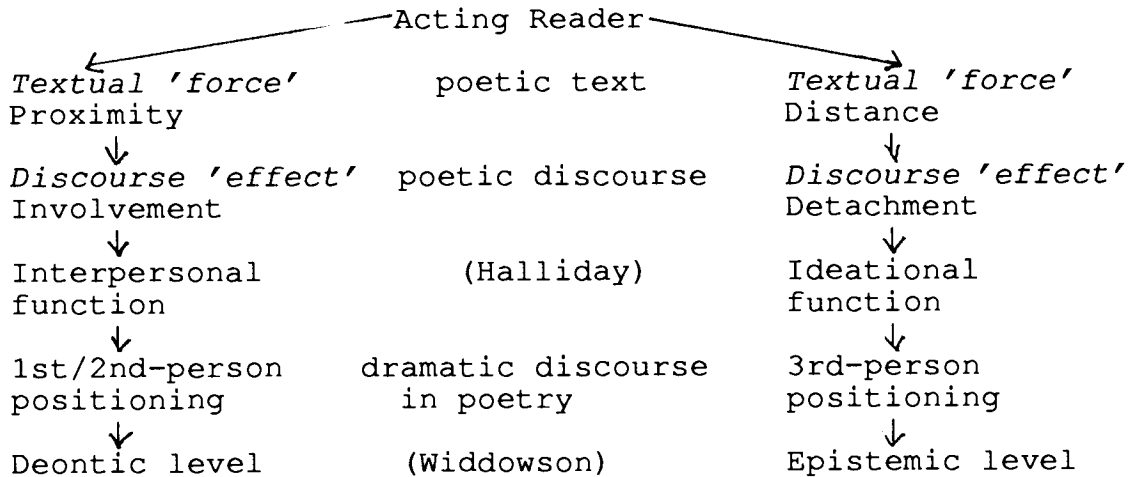
Indeed, they themselves, on the other hand, create that

virtual, iconic space by constantly interpreting poetic language, making selections, deciding, considering various possibilities, so that they imagine and choose virtual alternatives while acting. In addition, they identify themselves with the others who act poetry out with them, so that they can experience also the others' choices 'in progress'. In this way, by acting poetry together and continually switching perspectives in a physical environment, students/acting-readers simultaneously activate a sort of detached *ideational*, third-person level in collective representation - or, in Widdowson's (1993a, p.144) terms, an *epistemic* level - and an all-involving *interpersonal*, first/second-person level in communication - a *deontic* level.

Associating Halliday's (1975) *ideational* and *interpersonal* functions with the first-/second-/third-person positioning of the acting readers can be very useful to describe the interactive classroom dynamics in dramatic interpretation of poetry. As I have already stated in the previous chapters on theory, (Chapters 3 and 4) the peculiar effect poetry exerts on readers is a simultaneous sense of *involvement* and *detachment*. These two sensations, if regarded individually, can presuppose, on the one hand, a consideration of the *first/second-person interpersonal function* (implying a *proximity* textual 'force' which may correspond to an *involvement* discoursal 'effect' on acting readers); on the other hand, it presupposes a consideration of the *third-person ideational function* (implying the acting readers' identification of a *distance* textual 'force' which, in its turn, may correspond to a *detachment* discoursal 'effect'). Such simultaneous relationship of positioning levels in the acting readers' process of dramatic-discourse creation is exemplified in Figure 5.3.:

Figure 5.3.

*The acting readers' simultaneous 'positioning' levels in dramatic discourse creation*



These two 'positioning' levels also correspond to the two phases of *interpreting* and *rendering* in traditional performance, but also in translation, as Widdowson (1991a) points out, and whose two terms I am adopting.

However, in traditional performance these two levels are not simultaneously experienced as it happens, instead, in the situation of poetic dramatization-in-progress I am considering here, insofar as they are usually kept very well separated, since they occur in two different phases:

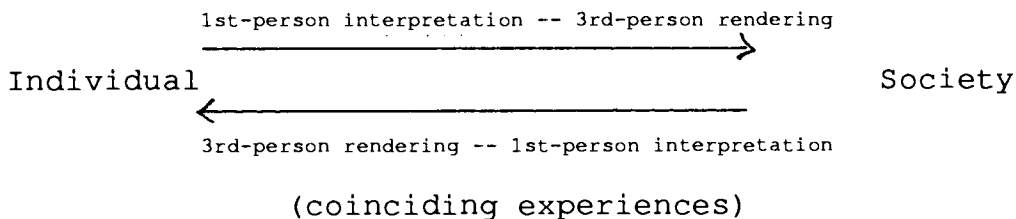
1. (1st phase) The rehearsals (the 'interpretation' phase during which the actor positions himself in relation to the text at the beginning as a second-person Receiver, and, eventually, as a first person, inhabiting the voices in the text);

2. (2nd phase) The actual performance in front of an audience (the 'rendering' of the previously internalized interpretation, during which although the actor positions himself as a first-person Addresser - adjusting his interpretation to another second-person understanding - he actually communicates a third-person perspective). Audience, in their turn, may remain confined to a third-person perception of the 'show'.

In a physical-theatre-classroom situation, as the one I am advocating here, on the contrary, there is no passive audience; the group of students/acting-readers overtly and constantly 'interpret' poetic language all together, thus simultaneously providing a continual and variable overt 'rendering' of it. In this way, the two phases come to correspond in collective dramatic creation, insofar as acting readers assume at the same time the roles of the first-person Sender/Addresser, the second-person Addressee/Receiver, and the more detached, third-person Observer, who could be an *external observer* (acting readers perceiving other acting readers), or, rather, an *internal observer* (the reader's split perception of himself as 'acting'). Figure 5.4. illustrates such psychological dynamics of dramatic interpretation in relation to the general pedagogic action:

Figure 5.4.

*Dramatic interpretation (psychological dynamics)*



In this way, different 'works of art' can be differently perceived by the acting readers themselves by shifting their perspective from one role to another.

After all, discourse analysis and the pragmatics of interaction both acknowledge the possibility of multiple receptors: so that a speaker could talk to somebody (thus activating a first/second person involvement) but, at the same time, he could still be aware of what effect he is having on another hearer, and, indeed, what effect he is having on himself (thus taking a more detached, third-person perspective in self-analysis, shaping, at the same time, his own Implied 'Addressee' as well as, in Bakhtin's terminology, his own *addressivnost'* - that is, his own conditions of being addressed). So that, even

though during his very first encounter with the text the reader is expected to be on his own inferring an initial interpretation, then his individual interpretation is subsequently put under discussion in the group dynamics. Moreover, as the dramatic interpretation goes on, also the rendering goes on, thus fulfilling Halliday's principle of a language which is simultaneously 'thought' (ideational - having to do, in our case, with individual, private interpretations) and 'action' (interpersonal - collective, public interpretation/rendering dynamics).

Such a continual, dynamic process applied to classroom practice actually exploits the familiar phenomenon of variability in discourse insofar as when people are engaged in interaction, they are constantly choosing what they say in relation to who is there, that is, they are continually constituting and reconstituting, reformulating what they think and/or analogically feel, and what they propositionally express (verbally/physically) in relation to multiple Addressees. So they are, as it were, assuming the identity and assuming the ideas and the emotions of their interlocutors who, in their turn, are also continually modifying their responses, and this pragmatical issue fits in well with my theoretical model of aesthetic appreciation of a still-in-performance poetic language.

#### 5.2.4. Cognitive/affective awareness in discursal imaginative incorporation of textual organization

Such interactive procedure would enable students/acting-readers to become aware either of the cognitive processes they adopt in their achievement of meanings from the poetic text, or of the extent to which the cognitive dimension they activate in relation to poetic language interacts with - and, indeed, is manipulated by - the affective dimension necessarily involved in the process of collective dramatic-discourse creation.

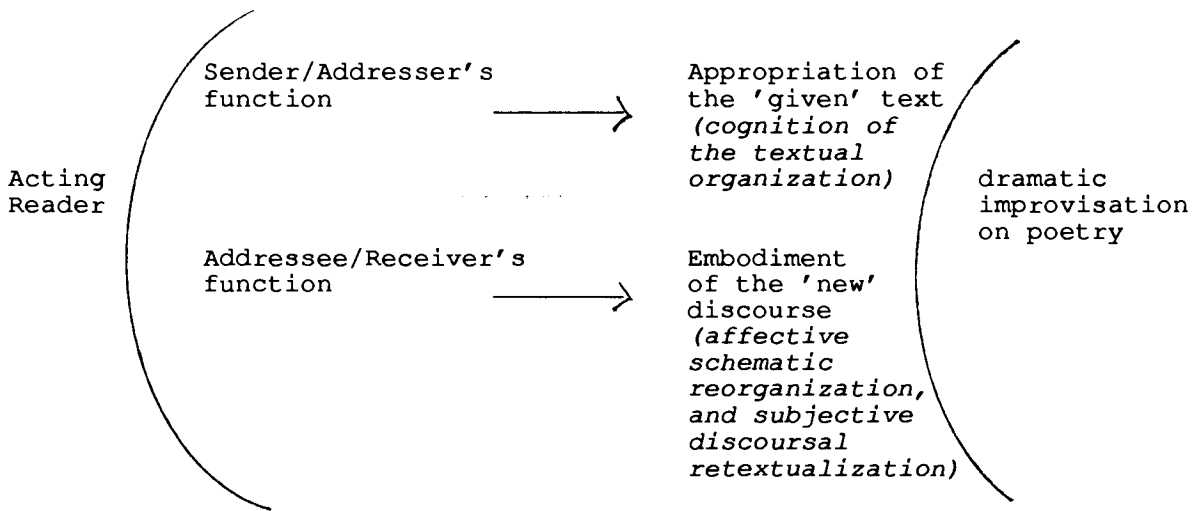
The multiple, simultaneous positioning involved in dramatic discourse-in-progress, moreover, is a crucial condition for activating imagination in group-interaction with poetry. New

signifiers and signifieds are propositionally and analogically generated and unexpectedly associated so as to create effects of surprise and dislocation within the discursal inter-play among acting readers': this gives rise to what Halliday (1975) defines as the 'imaginative function of language' which occurs when language is used to generate 'parallel worlds'.

To achieve such a purpose in a drama-based poetry-classroom, I shall advocate the possibility for the acting readers to physically and vocally *improvise* on the 'voices' they identify - and, indeed, identify themselves with - in the poetic text. This would allow students/acting-readers to appropriate and incorporate into their own discourse not only those linguistic aspects usually connected with the functions of the Sender and Addresser (writer/speaker) - such as the textual organization of information into *theme* and *rheme*, for instance - but also those functions in relation to the Addressee's and Receiver's (listener/reader's) schematic reorganization in reference to a subjective discursal retextualization - such as the awareness of a distinction between *given* (the original text) and *new* (their individual dramatic-discourse actualizations) in poetic enactment. Figure 5.5. illustrates this process:

Figure 5.5.

*Acting readers' improvisation process on 'given' texts and 'new' poetic discourses*



This procedure (mainly implemented through the use of



protocols as a 'drama technique', as I shall demonstrate) would enable students/acting-readers to explore from 'within' the 'movements' of thoughts, moods and physical reactions suggested to them by the poetic language, thus putting such 'movements' in relation to virtual situations. In this way, students would also give vent to their physical and verbal inventiveness, free-associations, and the unpredictability and spontaneity in movement. The objective is to encourage a rediscovery of their own whole imaginative creative power.

This objective can be achieved, during the first, 'top-down' phase, by allowing students to deconstruct the poetic text and create parallel ones, even through the activation of their unconscious forces in 'psychodrama-like', 'physical-theatre' sessions (as I shall demonstrate in Chapter 6). Such a deconstructive procedure would create conditions for the students to choose what to 'thematize' in the text, which details to add and how to organize the 'given' to generate their metaphorical 'new'; in so doing, they indeed play a first-person authorial role (the Sender's role), though they also simultaneously experience their own imaginative creation as third-person Receivers (5).

In sum, such procedures are not only meant to contextualize poetic language in a spatial dimension, but also to explore the various discursual potentials of the text in a lively and motivating way. Students, as I have maintained, are to be made aware of the cognitive/affective processes they employ while interpreting a poetic text; they should realize, for instance, that if during their first approach to poetry they can feel free to 'fill in' an interpretation with their own schematic mental/physical experience, on the other hand, during a second, bottom-up phase, they have to try to 'build up' their interpretation through the experience they achieve 'within' the text. This second phase, then, will lead them to a subsequent proper activation of interactive strategies which would enable them to 'dialogically' and imaginatively interact with the text and the others in a context of dramatic enactment.

It is exactly a situation of interactive, imaginative group-communication within poetry what I am going to explore in the next Section in the light of Bakhtin's theory of the *dialogic imagination*.

### 5.3. Applied Dialogism

#### 5.3.1. 'Dialogic imagination' justified by 'otherness' - Relative time and space of interaction

My aim in this Section is to consider the third, interactive phase of my pedagogic approach to poetic language in the light of Bakhtin's (1981) theory of the *dialogic imagination*. I shall try to demonstrate that cognitive/affective procedures activated during this phase can be appropriately described in terms of an 'applied dialogism' in the classroom.

Bakhtin's assumption that consciousness, in activating dialogic imagination, is only justified by otherness is demonstrated by the fact that in dramatic interaction the student/acting-reader's self is never self-sufficient. Actually, the self is always engaged in a dialogic relationship with the poetic text (in terms of achieving meanings by relating text with schematic contexts and communicative situations; non-propositional imagination with language; signifiers with signifieds) as well as with the others' selves. Such dual communication occurs in a multiple space/time-positioning relationship which, in Holquist's (1990) words, resembles Einstein's relativistic theory of the non-existent 'zero time' (p.19-20), based on the assumption that different perceptions of time from different subjective perspectives come to coincide to the extent of neutralizing each other. I would interpret this metaphysical (out of) time/space dimension as the virtual, collective place students are encouraged to create while interacting with the iconic character of poetic language.

In such a place, also physical actions in space have a relative meaning since they are always perceived in relation to a multiplicity of observers. Every thought and body movement, in fact, acquires a meaning only in a dialogic relationship with another body. That is why, in our classroom-activities organized on dialogic principles, the position of the observer is crucial.

In Bakhtin's view, the observer's function is not simply that to accomplish a mere outside perception of the 'event'; on the contrary, he has to be an 'active participant' in the experience of the dialogic interaction. That is why, differently from the typical 'action research' classroom, the observer has not to be somebody alien to the group dynamics, but, rather, students/acting-readers themselves are simultaneously the 'involved observers' of their dramatic interaction from all their different points of view. The teacher's point of view represents only one of them. Later on (Section 5.5.) I shall discuss the way in which the researcher (or the teacher-researcher) has to deal with the protocols he collects in terms of data-analysis processes and evaluation; by now, my intention is to go on exploring the implications of dialogic classroom dynamics.

To return to the idea that cognitive/affective time-space perception differs according to the different physical, emotional and intellectual viewpoints of the perceivers, I would suggest that, in the context of a dialogic methodology, students should be elicited to continually modify each other's multiple perception of space through vocal and physical movement. This is meant to prompt fresh perspectives in their discursal interpretations of the poetic text which, in Cook's (1989) terms, is, in itself, already 'schema refreshing'.

Therefore, in order to guide students towards the achievement of a multiple-perspective kind of awareness, I suggest the devising of activities based on a 'shifting' point of view from first to second to third-person perspective in relation to psychological/chronological perceptions of time and space (but it can also be, for example, in terms of physical embodiment of mood, modality, pronouns, adverbials etc.). Let us see, then, how the time/space relativity of the context of interaction can affect the cognition and, then, the actual affective enactment of the textual organization.

5.3.2. Enacting the textual organization within the 'chronotopes' of classroom interaction

Earlier in this chapter (5.2.3.) I have advocated the distinction between two planes of textual experience, by making reference in particular to the acting reader's achievement of the textual 'force' of *proximity* and *distance* within the propositional organization of the poetic language, which - I have claimed - can correspond to analogic 'effects' of, respectively, *involvement* and *detachment* in dramatic discourse.

Guiding students to realize how the 'force' of a poetic text can be modified by just 'appropriating' the poet's (Sender's) role of illocutionary planning of both physical and psychological *proximity* and *distance* (thus making them aware of the perlocutionary 'effects' of *involvement* and *detachment* that such textual plan might exert upon them as Receivers), would make students conscious of what is, in Benveniste's (1971) view, the "profound difference" between these two 'linguistic planes' (p.219), usually deictically represented through the two 'movements' of the *proximal* and the *distal*. In this way, students can also experience how it is possible to 'manipulate' these planes by taking an authorial stance.

Yet, the appropriation and manipulation of the Sender/Receiver roles by the individual acting reader is a process that can work especially during the first top-down phase, when the reader explores the potentialities of the poetic text almost in isolation, by relating them mostly to his own 'body/thought' schemata. This means that his realization of a force/effect correspondence always works on him, because he himself actually embodies both the roles of Sender and Receiver.

A Bakhtinian methodology, on the contrary, must always recognize the need for 'the other' in the process of achieving force/effect correspondence - and, consequently, meaning - from an 'event'. The event, in our case, is unified within the dialogical and changeable perception of what, in dramatic interaction, is 'given' (the language of the poetic text) and what is 'new' (each dramatic interpretation each student shares with the others). This means that the previous cognitive realization of two affective 'proximal/distal' spheres into two

distinct linguistic planes cannot apply anymore to a subsequent, truly inter-active phase.

During this phase, in fact, students/acting-readers create together a collective experience in which the contrasting sensations of *involvement* and *detachment* come to be reconciled either within each individual (being both *internal* and *external* observer of the group representation), or within the group-experience as a whole. This is possible because the whole aesthetic experience itself has no 'centre', so that it can be reorganized and recentred according to each individual's different perspective.

It is through the others' perspectives, however, that students/acting-readers can perceive their own perspective, since, in Bakhtin's (1986) words "in the realm of culture, outsidersness is the most powerful factor in understanding" (p.7). Differently from the text the self as being (*bytie*), according to Bakhtin, is not 'given' (*dan*), but it is always something 'new', or, in his words, something to be 'conceived' (*zadan*), rediscovered, by interacting with the others and with the language of the text within the 'event' which, in Russian, also means 'co-being' (*sobytie*).

The student's ability to understand the 'new', therefore, depends on his ability to activate the 'given' since the beginning, already throughout the activities of warming-up, brain storming and physical/vocal improvisation, when he projects onto the world his own 'body/thought' schemata, as well as expectations and predictions. Predictions would enable his schemata to engage with the poetic text, as well as with the other students' predictions. In this sense, a prediction either starts activating the 'given' text, or projects each 'new' 'anticipatory' discourse pragmatically achieved from it during the top-down phase. Therefore, in such a case, rather than talking in terms of a 're-action' taken upon a text we should really talk about a 'pro-action' students take upon it.

Eventually, students provide each other with the sensory input (sound, touch, and all sorts of moods and sensations generated by their discorsal interaction with the text) which matches and eventually modifies their initial response to the poetic language of the text (6).

When a student is elicited to interact with the others

within that metaphorical area Vygotsky (1962) terms as *Zoped* (*Zone of Proximal Development*), he should be guided to realize that, in his dramatic approach to poetry, collaboration is crucial insofar as it involves observation of what the other students do. By interacting with the others, however, not only sight, but also all the other senses can be involved in an analogic, synesthetic way. The individual student/acting-reader moves outside the confines of his own cognitive/affective processes, thus having them enriched by the others' cognitive/affective processes. In this way, he can constantly match the 'given' with the 'new' in dramatic action within the virtual context of poetry, thus developing both his *ideational* and *interpersonal* experience.

In poetic language, however, 'given' and 'new' are never in consonance; students might realize this incongruence when they reflect upon the divergencies in their discursal interpretations of a poetic text. Differently from transactional texts, in fact, poetry tends to provoke surprising effects of dissonance between the 'given' text and the possible 'new' discursal interpretations.

In this respect, Bakhtin's (1981) theory of the *chronotope* might be very useful to describe such a lack of conventional 'given'/'new' coherence in classroom interaction. According to him the chronotope - which I would define as a space/time schema - is in relation either to the space/time co-ordinates the poet represents in his text ('given') - as they are achieved by the reader - or the space/time co-ordinates within the reader's mind, which could be different at every new discursal actualization ('new'). That is also why such a theory has many resemblances with the Einsteinian concept of relativity.

*Internal and external chronotopes.* Chronotope, however, is not only determined by internal time/space categories (that is, time/space within the poet's and the readers' schemata) but also by external time and space which, in our case, could be applied to the multiple, subjective perception of the interactive classroom scene. These two spatial/temporal levels acquire, in poetry reading, a further, iconic dimension within the virtual poetic contexts discursively created by students inter-acting with each other. Within such contexts, time and space undergo a

multiplicity of psychological diversions, depending on the variety of acting readers' individual stances, and also on their physical positioning within the representational scenes. In a dramatic representation of poetry, therefore, internal and external chronotopes are continually re-defined according to each individual's schematic coordinates within the mutability of the group dialogic 'action'.

Once this principle (that Bakhtin defines as *law of placement*) is applied to the poetry classroom, students should be elicited to actualize those two different perspectives Bakhtin labels as *metaphor of vision* and *metaphor of voice*, both dependent on multiple perceptions, internal points of view, and external physical positioning as well, in reference to their visual/auditory processing of their own dramatic representation of poetry. Getting students to realize these external/internal processes would mean helping them to understand the nature of their imaginative contribution to the creation of a work of art.

So that, for example, during the third, interactive phase, students/acting-readers may come to reflect either on the way their use of voice can create vocal metaphors, or on what effects vocal metaphors generate in them and in the others as well. Moreover, they should also be elicited towards an awareness of how their vocal/physical poetic discourse acknowledges and reproduces the other's presence, as well as how they come to receive the others' sound/body metaphors and to re-process them by creating a sound/body response to the effects the others' visual/vocal representation of poetry provokes in them.

Such a procedure has to be reciprocally coherent in a group of students/acting-readers inter-communicating within the virtual contexts of the poetic-language classroom.

Relevance of some 'standards of textuality' in the dialogic poetry-classroom. Virtual contexts make acting readers' utterances meaningful and coherent. In poetic discourse, in fact, what de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) define as the *seven standards of textuality* (which are: *coherence, cohesion, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality*) acquire their significance only in a highly elusive metaphorical consonance within the iconic 'chronotope' created by the acting reader's cognitive/affective inter-action

with the poetic text.

Accessibility to textual *coherence*, therefore, cannot follow the usual standards. In dealing with poetry, students have to supply by themselves that schematic knowledge necessary to make coherent those imaginative links poetic language prompts in them. This is a wider concept than Halliday and Hasan's (1989) idea of coherence as a quality of the text, insofar as it also includes what is going on in the reader's mind during discursal interaction with the others in poetic contexts. In fact, the concept I advocate goes beyond simple textuality to suggest, instead, that coherence, in poetry, is an outcome of the interactive process between text and selves, that is, between 'given' and 'new' (see also Guido 1993b).

Also Halliday and Hasan's notion that coherence is created by *cohesion* is also arguable in the context of poetry reading, since cohesion is realized by students - already during their second, bottom-up phase - as a surface textual network of relations explicitly designed by the poet on the surface of the poetic text.

Such a recognition of a fixed, set frame imposed by the poet upon a possible, too enthusiastic, 'anything-goes' tendency of the students during the first top-down, deconstructive phase, eventually should lead them to achieve the poet's attitudes of *intentionality* and their own attitudes of *acceptability* as acting readers. This would enable true communicative interaction with the poetic text in order to achieve a collective dramatic discourse representation.

To achieve such a collective interpretative dimension, co-operation among students/acting-readers is crucial. In fact, although a very high level of *informativity* is inherent in the nature of the poetic text (insofar as both form and content could not always be contextually expected or predictable in reference to an 'outside' shared knowledge), surprising effects provoked by poetic language within the individual consciousness have, nevertheless, to be 'socially' modulated within the group of students/acting-readers in terms of informative efficiency and communicative effectiveness. This would require a particular adjustment of the four maxims in Grice's (1975) *co-operative principle* to the peculiar poetic situationality: therefore, *quantity, quality, relevance* and *manner of information* have to



be constantly calibrated within the group communicative dynamics in almost the same way as, for example, Imagist poets choose words and sounds and avoid unnecessary redundancy in order to create a particular force and elicit a particular effect in their poetic expression.

However we know that *ambiguity*, especially in poetry, cannot be avoided, insofar as, although the group operate a cognitive/semantic selection in their dramatic discourse representation, the effects such a representation provokes in each individual cannot obviously be the same. Each student's individual schematic model affects the way a collective representational situation is perceived and processed.

Poetic *situationality*, therefore, is multiple, also depending on the intertextual connections acting readers are able to activate within their variable relationship between their individual, *internal chronotope* and the physical, *external chronotope* they share with the others. A physical chronotope, as it were, may activate the background knowledge of a genre which, in Bakhtin's (1981) view, is a 'collective phenomenon', whereas style belongs to the field of individual expression within a purely mental chronotope.

In the next Section I shall focus on how the physical chronotope of the classroom can be organized in order to allow students' multiple internal chronotopes to overtly inter-act with both poetic language and the other students/acting-readers' internal chronotopes. I shall try, therefore, to establish a principled link between 'dialogism' and practical deconstruction in the poetry-classroom context. Such a connection will be defined as *applied dramatology* - after Ulmer's (1985) *applied grammatology* - insofar as it embraces deconstruction as well as an idea of dialogism in drama not just meant as a retextualization of poetic performance, but as drama techniques in action during poetry explorations.

#### 5.4. Applied Dramatology: Setting the scene of the dialogic classroom

##### 5.4.1. Active production of meaning

In his book *Applied Grammatology*, Ulmer argues that Derrida is very useful in the classroom because he suggests that teaching ought to be a kind of Artaudian drama where what is happening in the classroom is not the recounting of something that already exists complete and entire before the transmission begins, but teaching should become the active production of meaning rather than simply its reproduction. In other words, the scene of the classroom would not be scripted, which is not to say it could be entirely free, but it would be a site of transaction where there would be a kind of self-consciousness of what is going on, and a willingness to explore and then to become aware of what is being explored (7).

In this sense, Hymes's (1972) distinction between *setting* and *scene*, in a classroom context, is crucial, insofar as it encloses the idea - that I have maintained in the previous Section - of an ongoing interplay between external (*setting*) and internal (*scene*) chronotopes. He says:

"Setting refers to the time and place of a speech act and, in general, to the physical circumstances. Scene, which is distinct from setting, designates the 'psychological setting'." (p.60).

To create a classroom *scene* enabling students to realize a true active production of 'their own' meanings, it might be useful to put any kind of art at the service of pedagogy, by starting from the *setting* of the classroom, thus making students aware not only of the role of art in their lives (visual and musical arts included), but also of the fact that what they create out of their physical and mental imagination in response to a poetic text is itself a form of art. A highly charged artistic *setting*, therefore, contributes to generate an artistic disposition in the students' creation of their psychological

scene (8). In other words, they have to believe in what they do; this would enable them to be constantly conscious of the fact that in such a classroom situation there is no separation between theoretical/critical reflection and imaginative/creative practice.

Another crucial point concerning the creation of a classroom atmosphere appropriate to this kind of poetry pedagogy is that students should feel that their activity of dramatic discourse achievement from poetry is - to use Widdowson's (1992) meaning of the term - *re-creational* (p.78) in the sense that, by undergoing such an aesthetic/artistic process, they continually 're-create themselves'. This implies that their selves are continually decentred, deconstructed and 'disseminated' in the multiplicity of poetic experience which allows an endless interaction between the students' imaginary, top-down level (or, in Ulmer's terms, their own "personal mythology") and a symbolic, bottom-up level ("the system of culture and language", p.229). I claim that it is just this imaginary/symbolic interaction what allows students to create their own discursal meaning from the poetic text.

#### 5.4.2. The role of the teacher

But what procedures should the teacher follow, then, in order 'to teach poetry poetically', and in such an all-involving way?

Certainly, he has to avoid placing himself within the Hegelian tradition (still so widespread) according to which the teacher has principally a transfer function. Such a traditional role of the teacher is actually based on the authority of his interpretations, thus setting himself as a model for 'critical imitation'.

By contrast, the role of the teacher I am advocating here rests on the authority of his elicitations, and not on the authority of his interpretations. This does not mean that the teacher in such cases has a weak role, or no control, or no intervention; on the contrary, he should always try to create

conditions for responses to be elicited in such a way that they could be justified by students themselves. This is different from control which is a transmission of interpretation. So, in allowing interpretations, the teacher does not abdicate responsibilities; on the contrary, he actually has got more, since he has got the business of creating effective conditions for eliciting a response, and for the students to justify, consolidate and learn from their own responses on the basis of the artistic effect they produce (9).

However, if it is true that, in such a context, the teacher's role is that of allowing the free expression of students' own creativity and imagination, it is also true that a teacher has always to be aware that in poetry interpretation there is a very big area of misunderstanding that has to do with the 'emotion of interpretation', so that he has to cope with it, too. I argue, in fact, that where some classroom deconstructive methodologies go wrong is, first of all, in ignoring the importance of the way language works, by allowing a sort of anarchistic line of enquiry, an 'anything goes' way. Therefore, everytime students experiment with poetry, they have to be aware that in every text they look at there are millions of things that it cannot possibly mean. the point that I am trying to raise is that the teacher has to establish criteria enabling students to distinguish between a set of interpretations which are reasonable (because it is possible to trace evidence of them within the text themselves) and a set of interpretations which are not reasonable. Whatever interpretation students give, therefore, it has to be justified by the text.

But now, let us enquire about what tools and procedures the teacher/researcher might adopt in the dialogic poetry-classroom either to implement our methodology, or for data collection. This will constitute the subject of the following Section, in which I shall also claim that the researcher in this context has to be necessarily the teacher himself as a person internal to the group dynamics. This also explains why research procedures often coincide with classroom activities in such a way as that they become an integral part of the teaching plan.

## 5.5. Research tools and procedures

What I advocate in this Section is the adoption of a descriptive type of research to be applied to the kind of poetry-classroom methodology based on the theoretical constructs I stated in Part One of this thesis.

So, first of all, I shall try to lay out as exactly as possible what kind of point of view I am adopting to this research. My position in this context is based upon the way in which I intend to reconcile the first-person-participant stance and the third-person-observer stance. In fact I maintain that, in a way, all research has to confront the crucial question of observers' positioning, that is: how much subjectivity and first-person involvement can be considered fair in making statements about the phenomenon the researcher is concerned with. In this sense, the positioning of the teacher/researcher within the context of a drama-based poetry classroom is indeed a critical issue.

To allow in the context of our poetry classroom an external researcher (or even the so-called 'critical friend' of the action-research tradition), taking just a third-person perspective of the event, would actually endanger the cohesion and balance of the group energy achieved through an intense physical and mental concentration. This would lead to distraction in the best cases, and to simulation in the worst, which would invalidate the collected data.

### 5.5.1. Protocol analysis

In the dialogic classroom, on the contrary, a protocol analysis of the various 'events' realized by the participants themselves, represents one of the most effective research tools. This would imply rather than a simple 'triangulation' (Long 1983), a 'multi-angulation' of first/second/third perspectives depending on the positioning of both teacher and students as *active participants* and *observing participants* in the 'event'.

This would allow the same event to be subsequently retrieved in different sources and analyzed from different viewpoints. In this way, the borderline between practical/metacognitive research and practical implementation of a teaching methodology is blurred. Actually, the participants' joint subjectivity and objectivity of observation induce them to reflect about their findings, and to feel responsible for their whole engagement in their cognitive/affective processes of poetic authentication.

In such a context, also data evaluation comes to coincide with the collective/individual evaluation of the activities: being the classroom a *scene* for self-conscious exploration, students themselves feel the need to monitor their own schematic, first-person response to poetic language by activating a simultaneous third-person perspective while acting poetry out. Protocol reports of their activities, therefore, together with teacher's reports, can constitute the material for data analysis as well as (self)-assessment for both teacher's pedagogic action and students' personal re-actions to it.

Also the parameters to be taken into account while analyzing data should be subsequently shared with students as aspects of the same methodological assumption which emphasizes the conscious process of self-discovery. Parameters such as personality/affective/gender variables, interaction with the social/psychological environment, and linguistic/cultural factors (but also, in L2 classes, variables related to degrees of (inter)language proficiency and accuracy) are all elements a teacher can raise as issues for classroom focus during the 'reflection' phase. The objective of such 'reflection' phase, in fact, is to elicit in students what Kant (1965) defines as a *reflective judgement*, which implies a reflection on "a given representation" (p.16) by activating imagination. This is not, therefore, a reflection based on previous 'given' concepts to be applied to a 'new' experience, but a conscious effort to organize a 'new' representational experience into 'new' concepts. The methodological implication of all this is that parameters can never be the same for every phase of the pedagogic development, otherwise the risk would be that, rather than activating imagination, we establish stereotypes and narrow-mindedness in the classroom.

Parameters of 'reflective judgements'. Also the parameters to be taken into account while formulating protocols could be adapted from Kant's four distinct operations of *reflective judgement*, which are:

1. 'Judgement of sense', based on the very first 'sense' impressions, including emotional and bodily involvement in the representational experience (to be implemented by means of the 'think-aloud' technique);
2. 'Judgement of quality', based on an exchange of points of view on the experience (debate protocols);
3. 'Judgement of purpose', based on a conceptualization of the aesthetic experience (retrospective protocols/reports);
4. 'Judgement of taste', or cognition of the representational experience (my interpretation of discourse analysis based on dramatic representation of poetry).

#### 5.5.2. Data collection in the physical-theatre workshop

The physical-theatre workshop is the classroom-format to be most extensively adopted while implementing a methodology of poetry teaching based on drama techniques; this would ensure the maximum involvement of students both as a group and as individuals (*Appendix A*). Such a choice is principally motivated by the assumption that the exploration of physical possibilities has the power of freeing the learners' creativity and also of stimulating, afterwards, their intellectual experience. Restoring the physical dimension of the words in the text, in fact, could disclose new and unpredictable discourse perspectives.

Of course, in a 'total' classroom-exploration as this, data should be collected in such a way as to encompass as much external/internal contextual details as possible. They have to include either all observable behaviours in dramatic performance (also attained - if the group is self-confident enough not to be

conditioned by it - through the use of a video recorder, which distances the acting reader from his own interpretation, making him shift from a first- to a third-person perspective) or subjective protocols, preferably achieved through a think-aloud technique (see, for example, McHoul 1978, and Kintgen 1983) - which would enable students to record on tape either a simultaneous externalization of their internal poetic-language processing - or, also, through a 'verbal report' (Cohen and Hosenfeld 1981, Mann 1983) of their retrospective/prospective considerations, with very little or completely without guidance provided through questionnaires or other tools. Subsequently, such data might be retrieved for classification, or descriptively reported for further analysis and confirmability. (\* see p.403)

### 5.5.3. Descriptive phenomenological research

By providing "descriptions of naturally occurring phenomena" (Seliger and Shohamy 1989, p.129), descriptive 'phenomenological' research, in our case, could be used for both heuristic as well as deductive purposes, insofar as it might start either in a qualitative-like way (Jacob 1987), from gathering data subsequently generating hypothesis (as I initially started myself, with my own students, by collecting data from case/group studies and observations), or, rather, in a quasi-experimental-like way, from testing hypotheses which are, however, always developed on the basis of data (usually by implementing pilot studies in the classroom - see Guido 1994c).

Moreover, such a research methodology could allow also a synthetic, holistic approach to the classroom dynamics; in this way, the teacher/researcher might focus on the description of the group action as a whole - which, of course, would not prevent any subsequent attempt to reflect analytically upon some specific aspect of the dramatic discourse process in poetry authentication. This is the only way, however, I can justify an analytical approach to this kind of phenomenological enquiry; in fact, I agree with Rorty (1979) when he attacks the analytic method by saying that:



"analytic philosophy is still committed to the construction of a permanent, neutral framework for inquiry, and thus for all culture." (p.8).

It is just to oppose this authoritative, manipulative kind of enquiry that I strongly advocate a pragmatically-based, applied phenomenological research.

What I have been claiming so far, then, is that research and teaching methodologies applied to our principled poetry-classroom are intrinsically connected, and often they come to coincide. Protocols and verbal reports could be considered as classroom activities, whereas the teacher/researcher data collection and analysis - conducted in any of the suggested ways - might correspond to the phase of classroom-procedure evaluation.

Now, let us examine in the following chapters how the pedagogic principles I have discussed and the actual implementation of activities come to constitute a research relationship carried out through the research tools and procedures I have just proposed.

## **5.6. Summary**

In conclusion, the model of poetry teaching I propose is grounded on the theory I have advocated in the first part of this thesis. In this chapter I have shown how such theoretical background underlines some post-modern theories of art, too. As in all post-modern art, also in our poetry-teaching methodology what counts is not the *message*, but the *medium*. It is, in other words, the medium (elicited by the teacher) what allows students to achieve their own meanings in relation to the poetic text. In our case, the medium is represented by the students' own bodies which transform thoughts into visual and vocal images.

The physical interaction of students/acting-readers in the chronotopic, external 'setting' of the classroom, allows also the schematic 'scenes' of their internal chronotopes to interact and create collective, virtual situations from poetic texts. This, I have claimed, enables them to develop their own dramatic

discourses of poetry. This is also what I have meant by establishing a 'dialogic' classroom grounded on the Bakhtinian notion of a *dialogic imagination* prompted by the presence of the 'otherness'. I have then maintained that the role of the teacher is crucially that of establishing an 'applied dramatology' in the classroom, enabling the free expression of the students' imagination, always, however, in reference to the effects poetic language exerts on them. To this purpose, the selection of particular research tools and procedures - all grounded on the theoretical rationale as well - is fundamental to the operationalization of either research cognitive observations, or classroom activities.

In the following chapters, therefore, I shall examine how this kind of approach might work out in practice; to this purpose, I shall propose the adoption of some 'principled' drama techniques which would subsequently allow students to 'perform' a stylistic analysis on their own dramatic discourse achieved from the poetic text, rather than on the poetic text as such. I shall start by the first, top-down, deconstructive phase of their approach to poetry, which will be the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6: APPLICATIONS - THE TOP-DOWN PHASE

### 6.1. Introduction

With this chapter I shall start a systematic enquiry into some principled pedagogic applications of the dramatic-discourse theory of poetry. The exploration will be carried out also throughout the next two chapters in such a way as that each chapter actually corresponds to one of the three phases of the methodological development ('top-down', 'bottom-up', and 'interactive').

I shall take, as my starting point, the premise that the basis of our thought is physical, therefore we abstract ideas principally through physical experience. As evidence of this assumption I shall try to pragmatically demonstrate that to be *conceptually* receptive to poetry the reader needs to be *physically* prepared to be receptive to it. The pedagogic rationale to my research, therefore, is founded on the assumption that encouraging students to 'perform' poetry could of itself allow them to explore their own physical/emotional experience through the images and sounds achieved from the poetic text, and to externalize it. This would make their experience conscious and, therefore, more powerful to them, without then actually seeking to make it explicit, anyway, by reference to the language. This, at least, during the first, top-down phase I shall discuss in this chapter.

The focus on the specific patterns of the language will be a subsequent stage of this process aimed at the achievement of a dramatic discourse in poetry (the second, bottom-up and the final, interactive phases I shall discuss in Chapters 7 and 8 respectively). In fact, once the conditions for 'performance' are created, students are led towards an experience of language as well, insofar as they will be gradually elicited to provide also linguistic ways into the physical/emotional representation of their experience.

Then, in the transition from theory to practice, I will also account for a 'middle stage' of enquiry into the

cognitive/affective processes adopted by acting readers while dealing with poetry. This middle stage (I shall deal with in each of these practical chapters in Part Two, before examining activities and protocols) would provide the basis for research implementation and classroom operationalization of the theoretical grounds.

Having summarized the pedagogical grounds, I shall now analyze some procedures aimed to help students activate the top-down phase in their approach to poetry. The chapter will be developed in this way:

In Section 6.2. I shall establish a method of enquiry into the peculiarly 'physical' nature of the cognitive, affective, and imaginative strategies employed to make sense of experience, in general, and of poetic experience in particular, during the first, top-down phase.

In Section 6.3. I shall provide a description of activities and some protocol analysis which exemplify the principles at the basis of my enquiry.

Finally, also this chapter - like the next two ones - is accompanied by some Appendices (B and C) with additional evidence of classroom operationalizations and protocol analysis relevant to my discussion.

## **6.2. Accessing poetry through body/thought creativity - A cognitive method of enquiry**

In this section I intend to pragmatically demonstrate two assumptions:

1. How the movement from the physical experience to the non-physical concept - postulated in my rationale - actually takes place;
2. How such a movement can be applied to the experience of poetry, which I previously theorized as an experience of iconic,

virtual displacement from actual contexts.

In this way, I intend to substantiate my objection to the absolute idea that the individual appreciates things - particularly artistic things - only in his mind, thus supporting my position that schemata are not merely 'mental' (as they have been traditionally considered), but also 'physical' ('body/thought' schemata). The following discussion, therefore, is crucial insofar as it defines the line of enquiry I am going to adopt in analyzing the students/acting-readers' cognitive/affective responses to the pedagogic applications of my rationale.

#### 6.2.1. The traditional body/thought dichotomy: A brief philosophical survey

In the previous chapters on theory I have been advocating the physical, emotional nature of mental schemata, also claiming that the distinction between the *cognitive* (intellectual, rational) and the *affective* (bodily, imaginative) spheres, applied to the process of achieving our meaning from experience, is only a fictitious one.

Actually, such a dichotomy has been supported by a whole philosophical tradition: Plato, for instance, in his *Republic*, makes a clear discrimination between a superior 'realm of Intellection', of pure Ideas and Reason, and an inferior 'realm of Imagination' which is mutable and illusive, dependent on senses and perceptions, and, therefore, not a reliable ground for achieving knowledge. This dichotomy is present also in Descartes's (1911) principle according to which man can reach a world of mental substance (rationality) only by transcending a world of physical substance (the body).

Even Kant, in his first two *Critiques* (*of Pure Reason* - 1963 - and *of Practical Reason* - 1976) keeps the distinction between the rational and the bodily spheres, by advocating a notion of schema essentially founded on abstract concepts (1). Such a tradition founded on the body/thought dichotomy can be traced

also in philosophers such as, for example, Frege (1966) (who distinguishes between 'sense' (*Sinn*) - the objective meaning of the sign - and 'reference' (*Bedeutung*) - the physical world, which is also in a totally objective relation with the sign), and Searle (1983) (who asserts that the meaning of an illocutionary act is defined by the purely mental condition of "intentionality") (2).

In this Section, therefore, I intend to demonstrate the absence of such a dichotomy (affective/cognitive; body/thought) in reference to everyday experience. Then, I shall describe the crucial role played by such metaphysical dimension of the unified body-thought experience in the acting reader's process of interaction with poetic language. I shall frame my assumption and contextualize my experiments against a background of pre-existing cognitive research and theoretical enquiry, in order to emphasize the salient points of my postulate I intend to verify.

#### 6.2.2. 'Propositional' expression versus 'analogue'

The traditional objectivist view that bodily experience is represented within our mind only in a rational, propositional format - so as to be meaningful in a widely shared context of communication - is supported, in the field of Cognitive Psychology, by theorists such as Pylyshyn (1973; 1981). He asserts that visual imagery is cognitively accessed in exactly the same way as verbal information is accessed, that is, propositionally. The implication of such a position is clear: experience, to be meaningful, has to be formulated in such a way as to be propositionally 'described' and communicated. Other modes of analogue communication are not only considered too subjective and elusive, but also totally inconceivable. If we want to apply this theory to poetic style, for instance, we could relate it to some Romantic poetry meant as a 'lyrical ballad', that is, a 'propositional description' of 'emotional, physical experience'. Here is an example from Wordsworth:

"I listened, motionless and still;  
 And as I mounted up the hill,  
 The music in my heart I bore,  
 Long after it was heard no more."

(from *The Solitary Reaper*)

In other words, this is an "emotion recollected (propositionally rationalized) in tranquillity".

On the other hand, however, theorists such as Paivio (1971), Shepard (1978), and Kosslyn (1981), argue that, in the field of visual imagery, visual information cannot be accessed in the same way as linguistic information is, insofar as images are perceived as analogue representations. This means that semantic systems based on verbal propositions cannot apply to a kind of semantic cognitivism based on visual, nonpropositional perception (3).

The same debate can be traced in the wider field of schema theory, where, on the one hand, there are those like Schank and Abelson (1977) who assert a concept of schemata as purely conceptual and propositional mental frameworks organizing every aspect of experience, like a 'script'. On the other hand, there are those like Neisser (1976) who include in the notion of schema also

"the entire perceptual cycle which is internal to the perceiver, modifiable by experience, and somehow specific to what is being perceived. ... a schema is ... some active array of physiological structures and processes: not a center in the brain, but an entire system that includes receptors and afferents and feedforward units and efferents." (p.54).

Although Neisser's position may appear less 'mechanical' than the notion of schema as it is formulated by Schank and Abelson, I would argue that it is quite reductive as well, insofar as it does not seem to acknowledge the 'emotional' dimension connected with the purely physiological one. So, in a sense, both positions - either the mind-based one, or the body-based one - share the same shortcoming: that of not recognizing feelings and emotions as fundamental components of the physical/intellectual experience.

### 6.2.3. Discovering body schemata

Johnson (1987), to a certain extent, tries to make up for the limit of traditional body/thought dichotomy, but he actually establishes a new dichotomy: in trying "to give more insight into how people actually do make sense of things" (p.11) he makes a crucial distinction between what he defines as *image schemata*, and their *metaphorical projections*.

According to him, an image - or *embodied* - schema is "a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence to our experience." (p.xiv), whereas, its metaphorical projections are the means by which "that structure (image schema) can be projected onto abstract domains" (p.xv). Image schemata, however, are not proper images present in our mind, but simple, generative and abstract structures - beyond any particular type of sense perception - organizing, in an analogue, nonpropositional way, our mental representations of physical experience. In this way, image schemata represent, for Johnson, "the bodily basis of meaning, imagination and reason". He concludes:

"To sum up my contention: I am perfectly happy with talk of the conceptual/propositional content of an utterance, *but only insofar as we are aware that this propositional content is possible only by virtue of a complex web of nonpropositional schematic structures that emerge from our bodily experience.*" (p.5, Johnson's italics).

Seen under these terms, Johnson's apology for a conscious recovery of the bodily, nonpropositional and *figurative* dimension underlying - and, indeed, allowing - a propositional, *descriptive* expression of rationality, could be a perfectly acceptable statement in the contest of my rationale. Yet, as I shall soon practically demonstrate, it reveals three main objectional points:

1. Johnson asserts that the image, or embodied, schemata are intrinsically gestalt structures which, nevertheless, do not belong to the individual, but "have a *public, objective* character" (p.196, Johnson's italics), insofar as they make 'reference' to a culturally shared environment producing a



"*public, shared meaning.*" (p.190, Johnson's italics). In this way, by rendering schemata prototypal, and situating them in the domain of a community-centred - rather than an individual-centred - meaning (and even imagination, in the Kantian tradition) he places himself in almost the same position that Fish occupies in the field of literary theory. Fish (1980) dispossesses the 'real' reader of his own active, affective role, identifying it with the "authority of Interpretative Communities". It is not a chance, then, if Johnson does not account at all for the affective, *emotional* body-based schemata; in fact, they cannot but be subjective and individual.

2. Johnson also maintains that the metaphorical projections of image schemata such as 'Force', for instance, or 'Path' (among those ones he himself refers to) are to a certain extent constrained by the schematic gestalt structures which exert a close control over meaning and inference. "Since", as he asserts, we "all humans have the same perceptual hardware" (p.79) we cannot but experience 'Force' or 'Path' - even metaphorically - as "interaction", in the first case, or "motion" in the second (p.43). In asserting this, Johnson denies again individual possibilities of divergence from conventionally shared schemata, a divergence which can be achieved, instead, by having different people inhabiting shared schemata in different, subjective ways.

3. Johnson, finally, in advocating embodied, image schemata, does not seem to put enough stress on sensorial perception, apart from the visual one - although he himself admits that no specific sense is involved in both *image* schemata and their metaphorical *projections*.

#### 6.2.4. The individual quality of embodied schemata

Having questioned some critical aspects in Johnson's theory, I shall now define my position, thus establishing the basis for my classroom approach to poetry. I intend to state five crucial points which can be demonstrated in both real, 'referential' as

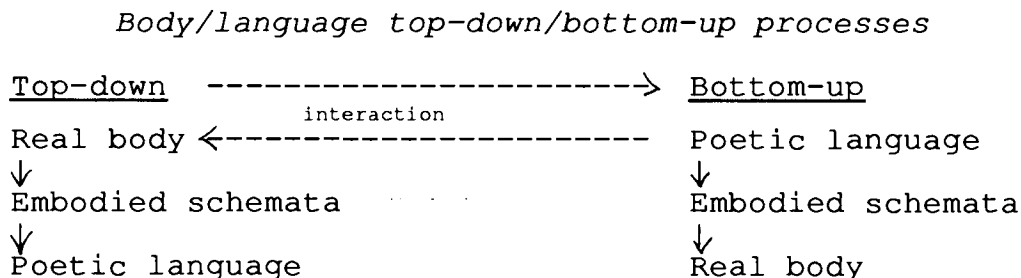
well as literary, 'representational' contexts:

a. Non-universality of gestalt structures. Gestalt structures (like image schemata) do not possess any 'universal' quality. So that, although some of them can acquire a conventionalized, literally-shared meaning, actually their very nature can only be referred to the individual's experience, and can only be accessed by the individual.

b. Embodied schemata accessed by the 'real body'. Each person possesses individual, body-based *emotional* gestalt structures he can access by physically and emotionally exploring his unconscious. Therefore, differently from Johnson, who in the context of his study uses the term 'body' just "as a generic term for the embodied origins of imaginative structures of understanding" (p.xv), I adopt this term also in its literal sense. In fact, in addition to the connotation Johnson gives to this word, *by 'body' I intend the 'real' physical body of the individual as the key to access 'emotionally and experientially' his own unconscious 'embodied schemata'.*

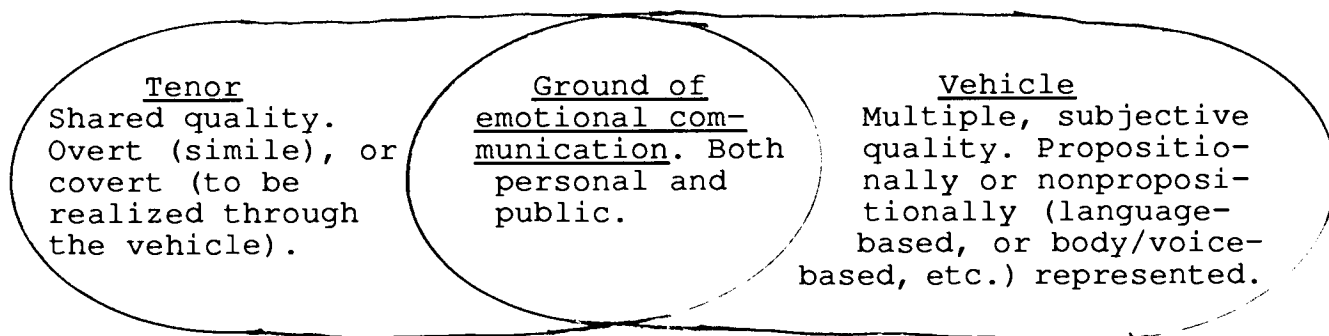
Moreover, in the iconic contexts of poetry, the real body indeed represents the means by which the acting reader activates his own schemata to access poetic language physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Poetic language, on the other hand, has the power of emotionally and intellectually activating the reader's embodied schema, thus eliciting his body re-action to it. These two top-down and bottom-up processes (which, eventually, come to interact), are exemplified in the following Figure 6.1.:

Figure 6.1.



c. Individual metaphorical projections. Metaphorical projections are (as Johnson also asserts) nonpropositional and experiential, though they can be propositionally and linguistically represented. However, they are - both in their propositional or nonpropositional representations - the exclusive creative expression of the individual person 'as a whole'. This means that their *vehicle* can be body-based, multiple and diverse. Nevertheless, this does not exclude the fact that the expression of such a subjective *tenor/vehicle* relationship is established on a shared, communicative *ground* of both personal and public intuitions. Figure 6.2. exemplifies my view:

Figure 6.2.

*Metaphorical projections*d. Embodied metaphors and embodied objective correlatives.

Metaphor (as I interpret it in this study), if meant as a nonpropositional, 'bodily' expression of a state of mind (on unexpected, physical levels of experience), can only have a first-person, *deontic* dimension. In fact, a 'living', or *embodied metaphor* emotionally involves the individual in the effects he himself produces in his mind while he physically creates the metaphorical representation by means of his body. (This *deontic* dimension can also include a second-person perspective, in an interpersonal process of dramatic interaction).

On the other hand, if the metaphorical representation is propositionally *described* from an external, or from a retrospective viewpoint, it acquires an *epistemic* dimension, insofar as the individual engages with it from a third-person,

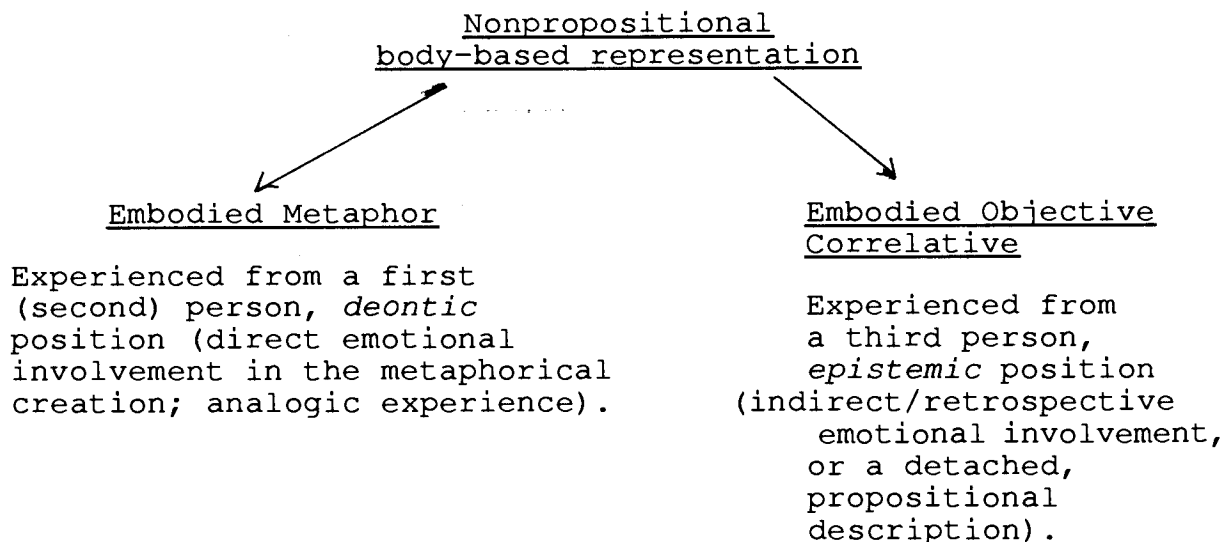
ideational, more detached position. In this latter case, however, I shall not define it as an *embodied metaphor* any more, but as a 'living' or *embodied objective correlative* of feelings and states of mind. In this way, I intend to expand on a physical dimension Eliot's (1986b) theory that

"The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." (p.100, Eliot's italics)

It is evident that here Eliot - in conformity to his 'pre-New Critical' view of the meaning as encoded in the text - is interpreting the illocutionary force as intended by the poet/Sender in terms of the perlocutionary effect as achieved by the reader/Receiver. Of course, as I shall demonstrate in my classroom activities, an objective correlative *cannot* be "the formula of that *particular* emotion", as Eliot emphasizes, but, I would say, just a formula for *intimating* different emotions in different readers (or in the perceivers, as in our case). Figure 6.3. summarizes my position:

Figure 6.3.

*Embodied metaphors and objective correlatives: The creative process*



In other words, if the physical representation is perceived from a first-person perspective, it is experienced as an analogic, nonpropositional *embodied metaphor*. If, on the other hand, it is perceived from a third-person perspective, representation is experienced as a detached, propositional *embodied objective correlative*, which, in its turn, can trigger new emotions in its Receiver.

e. Ideational and interpersonal poetic communication.

Communication is possible also within an apparently relativistic position, as it might appear the one I have advocated throughout the previous four assumptions. Actually, far from promoting an 'anything goes' attitude, I shall demonstrate the existence of a different type of 'communication ground', not just one based on 'objective' contents, but one based on individual, 'subjective' interpretations. Actually my argument is that it is possible to come to a shared *comprehension* on a rational, 'epistemic' level by sharing a physical and emotional 'deontic' level of *apprehension*. In other words, I maintain that *the mental, ideational dimension is always understood by interpreting it in terms of an interpersonal, body/emotion dimension*. This is even more emphasized in the experience of poetry, insofar as the normal mechanisms of abstraction, unconsciously activated in everyday experience, become conscious in the process of estrangement realized by the acting reader upon his own dramatic embodiment of the poetic language.

What I am going to verify in the next Section is how these cognitive procedures I have just formulated can be relevant in the implementation of a pedagogy of poetry. In other terms, I shall demonstrate how methods in cognitive psychology can become extremely useful tools for analyzing the acting reader's classroom process of poetic embodiment.

### 6.3. The top-down phase: activities and protocol analysis

#### 6.3.1. General operational objectives

In this Section I shall start my pragmatic analysis aimed to prove that the central idea of my rationale (that is: a *physical embodiment of the poetic experience can enhance the experience*) is demonstrable from two, interrelated, perspectives:

1. *The pragmatic perspective*: the physical embodiment of an experience first, and, then, of a 'poetic' experience, enables the reader to become aware of either the cognitive processes he activates in himself, or the way in which his whole self comes to be enriched by the experience of poetry. Moreover, the acting reader's being aware of his own reactions to a poetic work implicates an awareness of language as well.

2. *The psychological/cognitive perspective*: the devising of classroom activities as experiments in cognitive psychology - meant to demonstrate my (previously outlined) theoretical premises - is a guarantee for interfacing and verifying the principled foundations to my pedagogy.

So, this is, essentially, the position I have now reached: my theory of aesthetic response to poetry needs, at this point, to be implemented to consistent pedagogic activities. What I intend to make very clear, however, is that the status of the activities I am going to describe is only to logically exemplify the principles derived from what I have been produced so far. With this I mean that those activities are just examples of how I developed a certain kind of experience with my own students, but they are not crucial to illustrate how to actually pedagogically apply my principles in class, because there are also other kinds of activities which presumably will just suit it as well.

However, once accepted that I deal with my own particular experience and with my own particular students (during this first

top-down phase, with students in an Italian Linguistic High School, final class), then, it is possible to consider them as some sort of 'standardized' examples of the kinds of responses that might emerge from the activities wherever the students are, thus recognizing that the general approach I outline could be viewed as a general procedure.

In sum, what I shall try to demonstrate is:

- a. The extent to which the activities I propose are genuinely emergent from my theoretical position;
- b. The extent to which they apparently are effective in their operation.

Examples of protocols I shall provide in this and in the following two chapters, therefore, are only in evidence of both these two points, thus supporting the kind of conclusion I reach. This is the design of my argument:

1. I indicate what I think these activities are likely to induce in acting readers 'before' as well as 'while' they cognitively and physically process their response to poetry. In this way, I make assumptions about the output of the activities I design;
2. I provide examples of acting readers' actual responses;
3. I make a comparison between my predictions and students' responses. This might reveal that I have actually anticipated some responses, but that, however, some others I predicted are not always the same as the actual responses. Recognizing that there could be a mismatch between what I have intended students to do and what they actually do is itself incorporated in the 'post-modern' literature-classroom design, where the teacher has to allow for divergent, multiple and variable responses from the students.

The activities I am going to introduce here draw inspiration from different drama methods (some of them, actually, real physical-theatre études). The way I employ them, however, is totally original, insofar as I consider them as essentially

principled proposals (4): they either give form to the students' aesthetic experience, or they can enhance an understanding of what goes on in the students' minds while they embody poetry. In fact, on the one hand, such activities are informed by a particular notion about the nature of the aesthetic experience, so that they represent a completely logical and explicit pedagogic consequence of a certain position taken up about the aesthetic experience of the nature of verbal art.

On the other hand, they are also extremely useful tools in implementing observations on the cognitive/affective processes activated by readers upon their 'embodied schemata', while accessing poetry 'by means of their own bodies'. I would argue that, properly used in such a research context, drama methods are really unparalleled.

Let us examine some of them, in relation to the first, top-down phase. The top-down operationalization will take place in two steps:

1. First step: The acting reader accesses his own embodied schemata by means of his own body;

2. Second step: The acting reader accesses poetic language by means of his own embodied schemata. This would activate his own physical/emotional creative reactions to poetic language.

### 6.3.2. First step: Accessing individual embodied schemata through the *Psychological Gesture*

Objectives. The question concerning the public and objective nature of the embodied schemata (meant as universally-shared gestalt structures which also condition the individual metaphorical and imaginative expression) will be put under discussion now through an activity based on one of Chekhov's (1953) dramatic *études*: the *Psychological Gesture*. I shall contest this quite restrictive view of individual creativity by trying to demonstrate that, although it is possible to share some conventionalized, given-for-granted gestalt patterns of meanings,



we can actually discover our own, personal, totally individual connotations within them. This can be achieved by 'inhabiting' our body/thought schemata, exploring them in-depth, coming to disturb and to dislodge them, and finally deconstructing and reconstructing them through our physical/emotional metaphorical representations. With this, therefore, I intend to demonstrate the individual nature of the embodied schematic structures underlying experience, as well as the deep connection between body and emotion in the individual mind.

In the context of my pedagogical line, such an exploration would help students to physically and emotionally access their individual embodied schemata, meant as the source of their creative imagination. This will constitute the basis for a different, emotional and physical kind of shared communication. That is why, at this very first, warm-up stages, I would suggest to have initial text-free activities, totally based on self-exploration as a preparatory first step to their actual encounter with poetry which, already in itself, encourages a divergency from conventionalized thought.

Michael Chekhov's (1953) drama technique of the *Psychological Gesture (P.G.)* can be one of the most appropriate methods to prime students to undertake such a 'personal quest'. Chekhov defines the P.G. as a subjective "archetype" which "takes possession of our whole body, psychology and soul, entirely." (p.77). As an 'archetype', therefore, it can be considered as a structure of our embodied schemata. The role of subjective 'archetypal myths' is not new in both Jungian approach and in Gestalt psychotherapy. Jung (1953), for instance, is primarily concerned with how people can discover those personal myths which lie unresolved underneath conscience, and yet they emerge through gestures and behaviours people are not aware of. Becoming conscious of one's own gestalt structures, therefore, is the objective of our enquiry at this stage.

Prior deliberate systematic analyses of archetypal gestalt models, or 'prototypes', are those ones carried out by Rosch (1973), and McCloskey and Glucksberg (1978). McCloskey and Glucksberg actually confirm Wittgenstein's thought about the 'fuzzy' confines among 'natural categories'; Rosch applies the concept of prototype to her experiments, by requiring from her subjects the application of some concepts to their own 'natural',

prototypical categories.

In this context, the implementation of my classroom activity I am going to report takes place against the background of this previous research.

Operationalization of the classroom activity. I proposed to a group of my students the exploration of one of the preconceptual gestalts contemplated by Johnson: 'Force' (pp.42-3). Johnson actually asserts that, in both their literal and metaphorical projections, embodied schematic gestalts cannot depart from their "public, shared meaning" (p.190). That is why, in the context of his argumentation, they appear totally monadic and univocal. Therefore, as he asserts, 'Force' cannot but be expressed as 'interaction'. I shall try to demonstrate that gestalts do not represent such a strict constraint upon individual creativity.

The first step of the P.G. *étude* was focused on students closing their eyes and concentrating on the word in order to access the nonpropositional core of its image or embodied schema 'within themselves'. Then, they had to find a gesture true to their feelings aroused by that. The process, however, is also interactive, insofar as by concentrating on the gesture in itself students would activate emotion and sensation memory, as it is exemplified in Figure 6.4.:

Figure 6.4.

*The cognitive/affective process of accessing embodied schemata through the P.G.*

word --> feelings --> embodied schema --> Psychological  
 Gesture --> feelings --> emotion and sensation memory

The P.G. should actually be felt as a physical extension of the image and emotions generated by that word in accessing personal embodied schemata; that is, as an intrinsic part of the individual's body (5).

Chekhov suggests to add a sound while expressing the P.G., for example, by uttering the word itself; this should enable the individual to think: "I feel my body and my speech as a direct

continuation of my psychology. I feel them as a visible and audible parts of my soul." (p.81). Such a procedure is actually in line with Paivio's (1969) explorations of the *dual coding interpretations*, based on the effects produced by highly imageable words activating both verbal and visual codes. Such 'dual-code' patterns present in our mind are acknowledged also by Neisser (1967) who proves the existence of interrelated visual and auditory stores he defines as *iconic* and *echoic memory*.

My position in this study is that individuals can access their iconic-echoic memory through their own body and through the others' schematic embodiments, so as to produce their own personal metaphorical representations of gestalt structures.

Moreover, such a cognitive/affective process can contribute to individual's conscious aesthetic experience of subjective artistic creation, which would prepare the way for appreciating and physically/emotionally experiencing others' artistic creations.

These two points indeed constitute my predictions for the experiential outcome of this activity.

Protocol analysis and discussion. The responses of my students confirmed my predictions. From the 'judgement-of-sense' protocols, based on the think-aloud technique, it is possible to deduce that not all the metaphorical projections of the preconceptual 'Force' gestalt - as they are accessed through the Psychological Gesture - are experienced, from a first-person involvement, as 'interaction' ('Force' meant as more or less powerful impact of energies). Here there are some examples - by my Italian students - arranged from the more conventionalized ones to the more individually creative ones:

1) "I clench my fists. My feet become rigid. I shout /FFFO:s/ as if it were exploding from my mouth"

2) "I am becoming very heavy, I am going to pierce the floor"

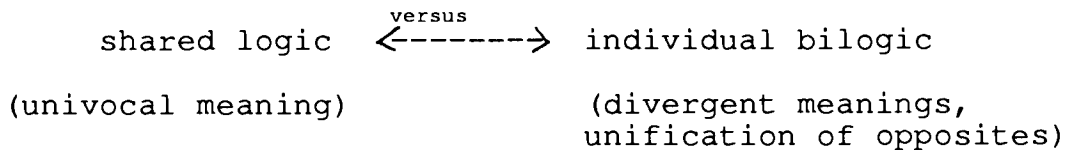
3) "I extend my arms like a big airplane and start floating in the void"

4) "I feel weak and relaxed. As I whisper the word /ffffo:ssss/ my shoulders go down and I slowly bend my head"

It is evident here that the first two Psychological Gestures (protocols 1 and 2) represent an almost conventionalized idea of forceful interaction ('internal' to the individual in the first case, and 'external' in the second). The other two Psychological Gestures, on the contrary, appear more interesting. They seem, in fact, to 'biologically' disrupt the accepted cause/effect logic conventions by conveying a sort of personal, oneiric experience in the condensation of two opposite sensations ('heavy/light' in protocol 3, and 'weak/strong' in protocol 4) (6). Therefore, we can assume that embodied schemata, far from having a univocal, preconceptual meaning in tune with a shared logic, actually may be said to appeal to individuals' different *bilogic*, the Freudian oneiric double-logic based on the unification of 'opposite meanings' in the unconscious, as exemplified in Figure 6.5.:

Figure 6.5.

*Divergent logic in individual embodied schemata*



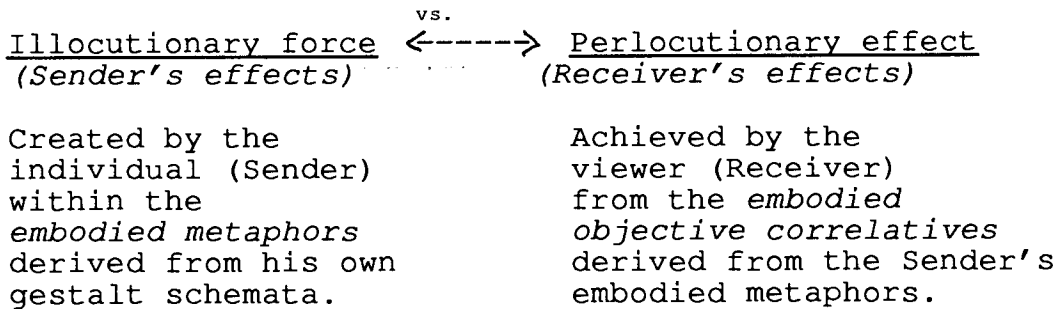
The assumption that gestalt structures and their metaphorical projections incorporate opposite preconceptual meanings is also demonstrated by an examination of the third-person-perspective protocols by students who viewed the *étude*, without knowing which gestalt the other pupils were embodying. The pedagogic objective, in this case, is that of making students aware of the body/thought relativity inherent in their *kineaesthetic* experience as 'Receivers'.

The sample of protocols I am going to introduce in this case (protocols 5 and 6), refers to the previous embodied metaphorical projection represented in 'protocol 2' (the student's conventional embodiment of the 'Force' gestalt, by feeling so heavy as to "pierce the floor" - a 'forceful interaction', then). Of course, as I have pointed out before, seen from a third-person perspective, such bodily metaphors acquire the value of 'embodied objective correlatives'. This implies that the *illocutionary force* (created by the individual student while he was

metaphorically embodying his personal gestalts) might not correspond to the *perlocutionary effects* (achieved by the viewer interacting with the same metaphorical representation as an objective correlative). The following Figure 6.6. might exemplify my argument:

Figure 6.6.

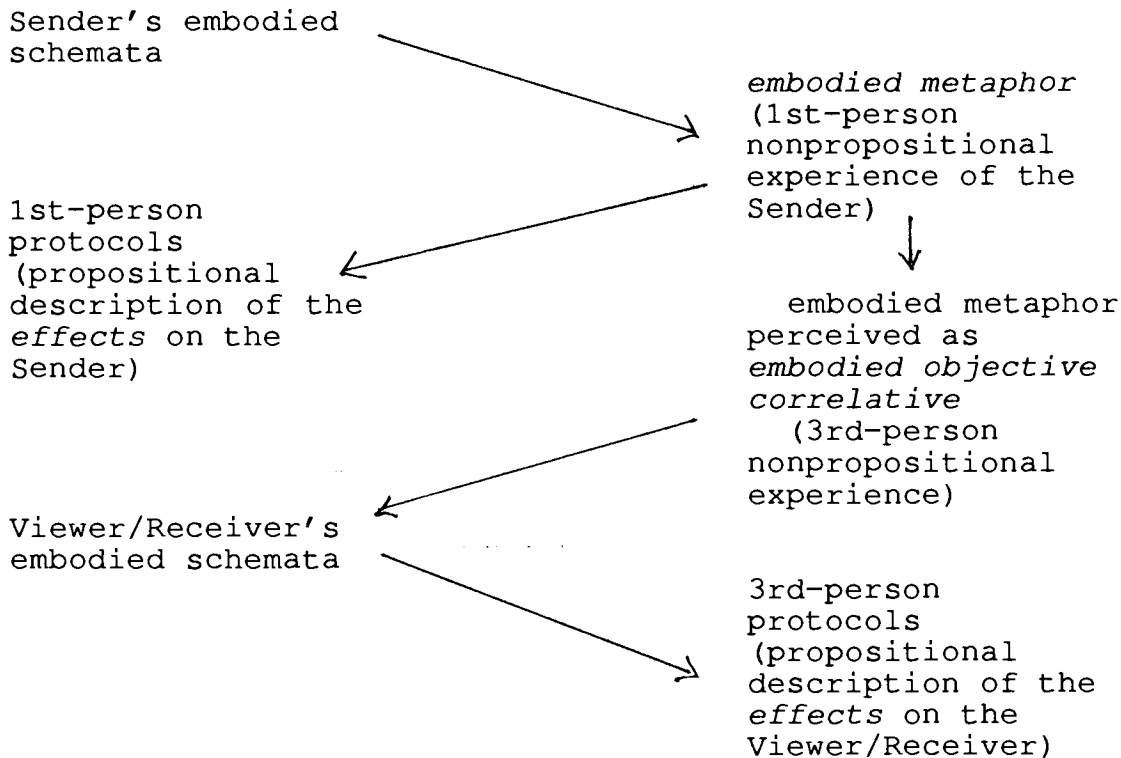
*Non-correspondence between 'force' and 'effect'*



What I intend to demonstrate by producing the following excerpts from two third-person-perspective protocols is that it is possible to have totally original interpretations of 'embodied objective correlatives' even when they refer to quite conventionalized 'embodied metaphorical projections' of gestalt schemata. This, of course, occurs because the effect on the viewer is the product of the interaction between the objective correlative he observes and his own individual and distinctive embodied schemata he engages in interpreting it. These, in fact, are different from the Sender's schemata producing the metaphorical representations perceived by the viewer/Receiver as objective correlatives. The process is exemplified in Figure 6.7.:

Figure 6.7.

*Shifting 1st/3rd-person perspectives in accessing schematic representations*



The following protocol 5 illustrates this process very well. So that, according to one viewer, the student producing 'protocol 2':

5) "stays for a very long time tense and motionless, his eyes shut. In an enormous concentration. His position is upright, firm. It seems as if terrible thoughts are destroying him inside."

In this case, both illocutionary force (the 'Force' gestalt metaphorically rendered by the Sender as 'interaction') and effect (objective correlative activating in the Receiver the idea of an 'internal' force destructively interacting with a quite calm appearance) seem to coincide. But let us consider this other protocol excerpt:

6) "A pure form, straight and compact. He is completely detached from everything and everybody. His life is all interior, he doesn't interact with the external world. He could start levitating at any moment."

In this second case, the idea of 'destructive inner/outer interaction' of the previous protocol has been replaced by 'inner/outer harmony'. Should this latter example be considered as a case of misinterpretation? I would not consider it as such. It is true that the standard meaning of "levitating" is in contrast with the idea of strength-interaction conventionally suggested by 'Force'. Yet, in this context, nobody would expect a shared, referential kind of logical communication. As nobody, for instance, would expect poems written under the effect of other works of art to be true to the original, as in the following strofa from a poem by X.J. Kennedy (1985) representing Duchamp's cubist painting *Nude Descending a Staircase*:

"One-woman waterfall, she wears  
Her slow descent like a long cape  
And pausing, on the final stair  
Collects her motions into shape."

The 'waterfall' metaphor, in fact, could not have been at all in Duchamp's mind while expressing his metaphorical projections in painting. Actually, with these activities based on the Psychological Gesture we are already within the context of artistic representation and experience. That is, within an iconic context of bodily, emotional communication. This will free the mind from the constraints of conventionalized thought, preparing the students to their encounter with poetry (7).

And it is exactly the students' first encounter with a poetic text which I am going to describe in the following second step of this top-down phase.

### 6.3.3. Second step: Accessing poetry through individual embodied schemata

Objective 1: Body dislocation. A way to help students achieve a sense of freedom from the conventional patterns of thought which normally organize experience consists in proposing activities devised to show in their design certain features in relation to the principle of dislocation essential in poetry. In other words, it is necessary to encourage students to represent reality on a different dimension. As I have stated in the previous chapters on my theoretical rationale, the interpretation of a poem crucially depends on recognizing its separation from actual situations and its dislocation into an iconic, virtual, imaginary context out of 'real' time and space. This, however, exactly corresponds to the experience of theatre where real time and space disappear as both actors and audiences are entirely absorbed by what is being dramatically represented on stage.

Therefore, in order to develop the kind of mind-set for the students/acting-readers' dramatic interpretation of poetry, it is necessary, in some sense, to create conditions for them to dislocate their own body and their whole mind into imaginative dimensions. (Some *études* designed to achieve this aim are provided in the *Appendix B*).

This imaginative experience of 'bodily dislocation' (meant as a preparatory step to the creative experience of 'poetic embodiment'), has to be considered in parallel with the notion of a chronotopic 'zero time' introduced in Chapter 5. In this context, the notion of a kind of neutralized chronology - implicit in Holquist's (1990) interpretation of the Einsteinian 'zero time', meant as the neutralization of the normal dimensions of time and place - is crucial. 'Bodily dislocation' by means of physical movement actually 'frames' experience into a timeless and spaceless dimension (in many ways similar to the 'stage' dimension) as - by paraphrasing Widdowson (1992, p.26) - the white space on the page 'frames' the poetic language, thus dislocating it from any reference to its conventional uses. In other words, the suspension of referential chronotopic categories allows bodily and emotional experiences to be reframed into a representational context and displaced from any real situation.



At this point, students are ready to become real *acting readers* familiarizing with poetry by creatively embodying its metaphors.

Objective 2: Poetic embodiment. I shall analyze now the acting reader's process of authentication-by-embodiment of the metaphors in a poetic text.

Again, as I have done in the previous sub-section (6.3.1.), I shall try to establish a principled relationship between theory and practice. In this particular case, I am going to focus on the connection between the cognitive/affective top-down strategies activated by the reader to access and familiarize with the poetic text, and the way in which such strategies become pedagogically crucial in the classroom methodology I propose for the achievement of a dramatic representation of poetry. I shall show how such a relationship actually constitutes research.

My intention, at this stage, is to demonstrate the essential difference between:

a. the individual's original creative process of metaphorical projection of his own embodied schemata (as I have analyzed it in the previous sub-section through the drama technique of the 'Psychological Gesture'), and

b. the acting reader's creative process of poetic embodiment of somebody else's (the poet's) metaphorical projections of embodied schemata, as they are re-textualized within the poetic text.

My claim is that the acting reader's process of dramatic authentication of the poet's metaphors is exactly as creative and 'original' as the process of metaphorical, bodily representation of his own embodied schemata.

Not only, but I also argue that authenticating others' metaphors by embodying them is a very powerful and challenging experience for the acting reader. In fact, he has to activate within himself a state of physical/emotional schematic openness and availability to access and accept others' (the poet's) metaphorical projections of their own embodied schemata. This process would lead the acting reader to that state of 'readiness

in apprehension' Lecoq (1987) defines as *disponibilité* (an essential prerequisite for the actor).

Allowing others' metaphorical projections to re-define his own embodied schemata is actually the major challenge for the acting reader. The rewarding result is that his own gestalt schematic structures are greatly widened and enriched by appropriating others' schematic representations. This aspect, therefore, actually marks the difference between:

1. The individual's purely psychodramatic authentication of his own embodied schemata by a conscious process of metaphorical projection of them (corresponding to the 'original creative process' exemplified in 'point a.' above, and demonstrated in the previous sub-section); and

2. *The individual's authentication of his own embodied schemata by means of another person's (the poet, in this case) embodied schemata as they are metaphorically represented and propositionally textualized into the poetic text* (corresponding to the 'creative-reading process of poetic embodiment' exemplified in 'point b.' above, which I shall pragmatically demonstrate in this sub-section).

As stated in this latter 'point 2.', the acting reader's embodiment of the poetic metaphors is the result of the creative interaction between his own and the poet's embodied schemata. This means that, by physically and emotionally accessing the poet's schemata, the acting reader actually authenticates *his own* embodied schemata by making them conscious to himself through dramatic metaphorical embodiment.

This process really illustrates in a more pragmatic way what I have defined in my theoretical part (Chapter 4) as the 'authorial' role of the acting reader. As I have said before, the acting reader has to free himself from the passive, silent role as a mere *Receiver* by appropriating both the *Sender's* (the poet) and the *Addresser's* (the poetic voice) roles. I intend to practically demonstrate, at this stage, how this process of total 'appropriation' actually occurs by means of the acting reader's physical, emotional, and then, intellectual embodiment of the poet's metaphors.

Therefore, before proceeding with the analysis of the protocols, let us draw an outline of the two processes exemplified in the two points I made above. This will help us to keep in mind their distinctive phases during the next stage of my practical discussion:

1. *The original creative process* (previous sub-section):

a. The individual bodily accesses his own nonpropositional embodied schemata (through, for instance, the technique of the Psychological Gesture);

b. The individual physically (propositionally and nonpropositionally) represents the metaphorical projections of his own embodied schemata.

This process is summarised in Figure 6.8.:

Figure 6.8.

*The original creative process of metaphorical representation*

Individual ---→ his own embodied ---→ his own metaphorical  
schemata representations

2. *The creative-reading process of poetic embodiment*

a. The individual acting reader encounters the poetic text, which is the propositional textualization of the poet's metaphorical representations of his own nonpropositional embodied schemata.

b. The acting reader appeals to his own embodied schemata to access the poet's metaphors and to overcome the sense of unfamiliarity felt at his first meeting with them;

c. The acting reader bodily deconstructs the metaphors in the poetic text by accessing them by means of his own embodied

schemata;

d. The acting reader inhabits, embodies, and dramatically represents the poetic metaphors he achieves in the text through his own schemata. In this way, he tries to authenticate them as a discourse he feels familiar with.

This top-down process is summarized in Figure 6.9.:

Figure 6.9.

*The top-down process of metaphorical authentication (8)*

individual acting reader ----> poet's metaphors ----> acting reader's embodied schemata

acting reader's deconstruction of the poet's metaphors ----> acting reader's embodiment of metaphors through his own schemata.

This initial deconstructive phase of dramatic representation of poetry can actually go on endlessly and creatively, by having acting readers re-textualize their own physical, metaphorical embodiments of the poet's metaphors into new propositional poetic texts which, in their turn, could appeal to other acting readers' nonpropositional embodied schemata, thus prompting them into new physical propositional and nonpropositional deconstructions and so on.

Actually, this is the first, playful top-down phase of my dramatic discourse theory of poetry which allows the acting reader to disrupt his own conventionalized schematic patterns and re-organize them according to the poetic metaphors he achieves in the text. By 'embodying' poetry in this way, the acting reader is able to disrupt also that aura of inviolability usually enveloping poetry.

But let us see how this cognitive/affective procedure is consistent with my pedagogical line of enquiry.

Operationalization of the classroom activity. The researcher's and the teacher's perspectives again come to coincide in the classroom implementation of these principles.

Becoming aware of how students' minds work while bodily accessing poetry is a fundamental condition for a successful pedagogic action. A principled pedagogic action, however, crucially implies the recognition of having to adjust expectations to the reality of the classroom - without, anyway, letting that particular reality direct expectations.

At this stage, then - after having physically explored his own preconceptual gestalt structures - the student is encouraged to become an *acting reader*. This means that he cannot access his own personal embodied schemata right away, as he did in the previous process of first-person original creation (when - as I have demonstrated before - individual students directly and physically interpreted, by means of the Psychological Gesture, their own particular archetypal gestalt structures, thus creating original 'bodily works of art').

Now, as a reader, the student has in front of himself a poetic text, that is, the retextualization of somebody else's metaphorical representations of private embodied schemata. One risk he could run, therefore, is that he might just become a passive Receiver, deciding to be submissive to what he believes the 'objective meaning' encoded in the poetic text is.

Another risk he could run is that of deciding to remain a 'silent reader', which is also another form of submission, a deliberate cutting himself off from so many other experiences he could undertake if only he decided to become physically and emotionally assertive upon the text. To become, in other words, an *acting reader*.

Therefore, I define the acting reader's first 'assertive' top-down phase of poetic embodiment as a phase of *practical, applied deconstruction*, insofar as the reader discursively and subjectively re-establishes within the text both 'presence' and 'perception' (which, as Derrida asserts, cannot be found in the text). Moreover, my definition is justified by the fact that the principles of the 'creative-reading process of poetic embodiment' outlined before (and founded upon a possible, infinite circularity of embodied metaphorical representations leading to re-textualizations leading, in their turn, to new representations

and so on) find a practical classroom realization in the form of a *physical hypertextual structure of virtual, iconic dimensions* allowing acting readers to access metaphors bodily and emotionally, and then to re-textualize them into either their own dramatic representations (that is, into first/second-person 'embodied metaphors' and third-person 'embodied objective correlatives'), or their own poetic creative writing. Of course, both written and physical re-textualizations are likely to be re-explored and re-authenticated through other acting readers' embodied schemata, until we lose trace of the original text (9).

Let us examine, then, how this hypertextual top-down activity works out in practice, by analyzing and discussing some of my students' protocols.

*Applied deconstruction on S.Plath's poem 'Metaphors': Protocol analysis and discussion.* I shall provide now an excerpt from my students' protocols on a poem by Sylvia Plath (1982) exclusively as a practical illustration of the physical hypertextual structure of this first top-down phase in the acting reader's approach to poetry. The title of the chosen poem is, emblematically, *Metaphors*. Actually, here Plath textualizes the embodied metaphorical projections of her own embodied schemata. This is the text:

#### *METAPHORS*

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,  
 An elephant, a ponderous house,  
 A melon strolling on two tendrils.  
 O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!  
 This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.  
 Money's new-minted in this fat purse.  
 I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.  
 I've eaten a bag of green apples,  
 Boarded the train there's no getting off.

The poetess's conditions of intention (unknown to the group of my Italian, High-school students, whose processes of authentication I am going to analyze) involve the activation of personal metaphorical representations of her experience of pregnancy. This element would help readers understand her

metaphorical reference in the poem to heavy, round, swelling forms, characterized by a contrasting coexistence of precious, stable, but also very fragile qualities ("a melon strolling on two tendrils"). Moreover, also the illocutionary force of Plath's metaphors could be recognized with a certain accuracy, knowing from her diaries her feelings about being pregnant: the sense of being 'acted upon' ("I'm a means, a stage") for the whole nine months without fully understanding the mystery of what was happening to her ("I'm a riddle in nine syllables"), and the sense of being entrapped within this passive state ("Boarded the train there's no getting off.").

If students had known this piece of information in advance, they would have found interpretations coherent to that, but they would not have felt those metaphors 'belonging' to *their own* experience.

On the contrary, the process each student/acting-reader is elicited to activate at this stage consists in deriving his own embodied metaphors from the poet's textualized metaphors. *The student/acting-reader has to find his own way for authenticating the poet's textualized metaphors according to his own conditions of interpretation related to his own embodied schemata.* This, I maintain, is also consistent with the acting reader's process of embodying the Sender's role.

Physical improvisation techniques - when 'technically' controlled by the teacher/researcher - are a useful methodological support to activate such a process in students, insofar as they help students access their own schemata through body movement. (Actually, *impro movements* could be considered as an extension of the 'Psychological Gesture').

My position in this context is that, by eliciting students to access and embody the metaphors in the poem through 'experiential' bodily improvisation (that is, through their own feelings, physical sensations and experiences), it is possible to verify the extent to which the individual acting reader's schemata are creatively and experientially stimulated and widened by poetic metaphors. Previous experiments in cognitive psychology, such as those by Tulving (1983) show that, in normal circumstances, words and concepts can be *available*, but not *accessible*. In this context, I claim instead that poetic metaphors can act not only as 'creative retrieval cues' for the

reader's accessibility of his own embodied schemata, but also as 'imaginative prompts' for the creation of new experiential domains available to him (see also Guido 1993b). This is evident, for instance, in the following first-person retrospective 'judgement-of-purpose' protocol:

7) "I felt like an elephant as I moved around, heavy and awkward. I imagined my body expanding, bumping into every piece of furniture of the room. I felt very sad. I thought I shouldn't eat so much. Then, suddenly, I imagined I was an elephant in a circus, a very special one, very big but very light, an elephant-acrobat who could walk on a rope on his thin legs like a melon walking balanced on two tendrils."

The interesting thing about this protocol 7 is that the student/acting-reader starts authenticating the poetic metaphors in the text by using them as a cue to access her own adolescent experience of 'feeling clumsy and fat' (thus creating a psychodrama effect). Nevertheless, the poetic quality of the metaphors in the text, together with her physical movement, prompt in her a non-realistic, imaginative hyperbolic 'flight': she experiences her body as "expanding" till, as it were, filling the room. With this she is already within a representational, iconic dimension. The subsequent 'imaginative leap' into the world of the circus, where the conventional opposites 'heavy/light' come to biologically coincide, marks her definitive entrance into the domain of artistic, creative imagination (10).

This, of course, represents only one of the many possible representations and re-textualizations creating the 'physical hypertext' during this 'applied deconstruction' phase. (Another example based on 'sense' metaphors applied to an excerpt from Milton's *Paradise Lost* is provided in the Appendix C).

#### **6.4. Summary**

In this chapter, then, I have analyzed the first, top-down phase of the dramatic-discourse process of poetry in practical terms.

By starting from an objection against the traditional



body/thought dichotomic way of considering schemata, I have asserted either that the nature of schemata is intrinsically based on a body/thought unity, or that the only way to subjectively access all the schematic creative potentialities is by means of the individual's body.

On the basis of these cognitivist premises, I have then operationalized my classroom activities and analyzed them by means of protocols.

I have focused at first upon the way individuals access their schematic gestalt structures through a process of physical concentration (the 'Psychological Gesture'), thus demonstrating that gestalt structures are not 'universally' or 'socially' shared, but they are inherently subjective and individual.

Then, I have centred my pragmatic enquiry on the way in which acting readers access and familiarize with the poetic metaphors by means of their individual body/thought schemata, thus emphasizing the multiplicity of subjective top-down responses such authentication-by-deconstruction (typical only of this first phase) can provide.

In the following two chapters I shall continue my pragmatic enquiry into principled classroom activities by examining the next two bottom-up and interactive phases. I shall focus at first on the bottom-up way the acting reader performs his 'imaginative leap' within the virtual contexts achieved within the poetic language: such contexts are, in fact, unfamiliar to his own schemata (Chapter 7).

Then, I shall describe how the acting reader performs another 'imaginative leap' into the other acting readers' physical interpretations of the poetic language, thus interacting and identifying himself also with other perspectives in order to create a dramatic discourse out of poetry (Chapter 8).

Both phases shall be centred on the establishment of an imaginative relationship between the body and the poetic language. What I shall try to demonstrate, therefore, is how the acting reader manages to achieve a non-propositional, bodily/emotional dimension from a propositional, linguistic one.

## CHAPTER 7: APPLICATIONS - THE BOTTOM-UP PHASE

### 7.1. Introduction: Bottom-up imaginative embodiments in macro- and micro-communication

It seems to me crucial, at this point, to pragmatically define the location of the bottom-up phase within the basic rationale behind the previously examined top-down phase and the next interactive one I shall discuss in Chapter 8. In this way I intend to substantiate my method of enquiry into the cognitive/affective bottom-up procedures adopted by students/acting-readers. Then, I shall operationalize this method in Section 7.3..

I shall begin my enquiry by pointing out again that, in postulating the empirical presence of the *Acting Reader* achieving his own dramatic discourse from a poetic text (Chapter 4), I have theorized an actual reader who 'physically' and imaginatively appropriates the text becoming the 'voice' of the Sender and the Addresser at the same time. In performing such an 'imaginative leap' into the iconic, virtual context of the poem - I have argued - even the role of the Addressee becomes a conscious, 'authorial' choice of the acting reader who, at the same time, still remains a Receiver by taking a third-person stance on his own dramatic representation of the poetic text.

My claim, therefore, is that the acting reader pragmatically and imaginatively appropriates the two speech-act domains of - as Carter (1989) defines them - *macro-* and *micro-conversation* (p.61). According to Carter, *macro-conversation* corresponds to 'the outer context operating between the poet (the Sender) and the reader (the Receiver)', whereas *micro-conversation* defines the 'inner context' of the poem within which 'at least two speakers' (the Addresser and the Addressee) come to interact. Carter's distinction between these two conversational domains is indeed crucial to the further development of my argumentation, because, as he asserts:

"(t)his adds an extra dimension to the nature of conversation in a literary context. However direct and

naturalistic the exchanges in the inner context may be, it should not be forgotten that this forms only a part of the total message (the poet) communicates to his reader. The competent reader overhears this conversation ... but he must be at the same time alert to the speech acts transmitted indirectly by the author himself. Much work has still to be done in this area of overlap between direct and indirect speech acts in literature". (p.66).

Although I agree with Carter on his distinction between a direct, more or less overt, conversation between Addresser and Addressee, and an indirect, almost covert, ongoing conversation between the Sender and the Receiver (a distinction he derives from Widdowson's (1975) 'dual-focus situation' in literary discourse represented as: /1 Sender /2 Addresser //2 Addressee //1 Receiver), there are some arguable points in his definitions. For instance, as I have already maintained in the theoretical part of this thesis, I would not delimit the scope of the Sender/Receiver literary communication in terms of "the total message (the poet) communicates to his reader", as Carter, instead, does. I claim, by contrast, that literature reading (and particularly poetry reading) is not a matter of messages the author encodes in the text for the reader to retrieve them, but it is a form of communicative discourse the reader achieves within the text by means of his own schemata. And since I have maintained that schemata are 'bodily', I have been asserting that one of the most effective ways for the reader to achieve his own individual, imaginative discourse from a literary text is to engage his whole physical/mental personality. Actually, what Carter seems to suggest here, is rather a passive reader; a reader who is "competent" only to the extent of being "alert to the speech acts transmitted indirectly by the author himself".

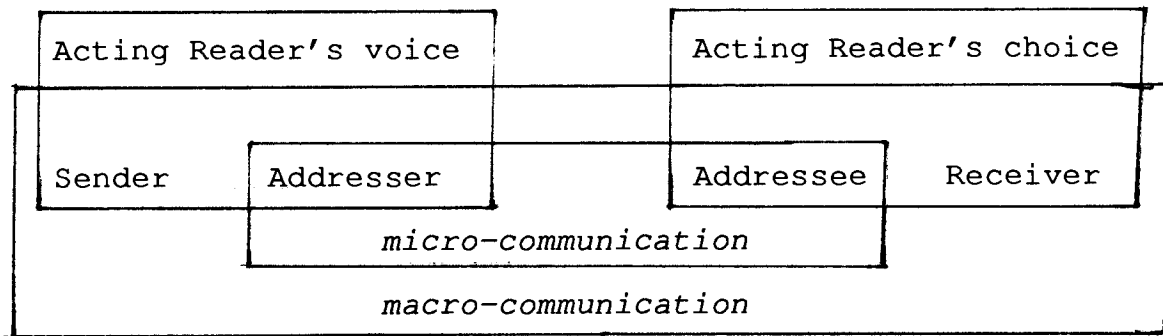
In my case, instead, I am advocating a Receiver who is not simply a passive, silent reader; on the contrary, he is an *acting reader* who appropriates both the Sender's and the Addresser's roles in a context of dramatic discourse in which propositional 'conversation' corresponds only to a part of the whole bodily, emotional, analogic as well intellectual communication. That is why I intend to re-define Carter's two speech-act domains as *macro-* and *micro-communication*, thus including the whole poetic discourse process as it is embodied and enacted by the acting readers.

To illustrate this process, I shall provide, in Figure 7.1.,

a version of my previous Figure 4.1.:

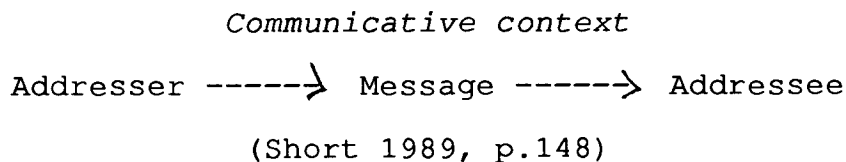
Figure 7.1.

*The Acting Reader's 'voices' and 'choices' in macro- and micro-communication*



In this way I intend to reiterate the centrality of the *acting reader* in the interactive, imaginative process of dramatic interpretation of poetry. This point, indeed, is crucial in the context of my enquiry. It represents, in fact, the basic argument of this study against a prevailing attitude in dramatic discourse analysis which does not seem to acknowledge at all the essential role of the acting reader in the creation of literary discourse.

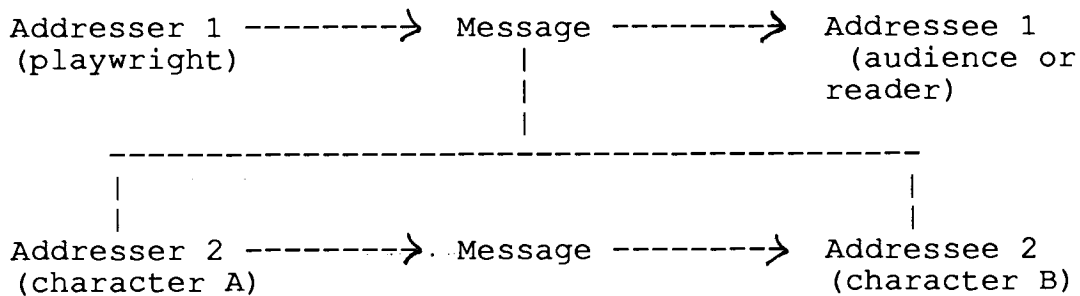
For example, the mere presence of an acting reader (or, more simply, of the actor) in dramatic discourse is not only not recognized, but actually completely ignored in Short's (1989) account of discourse relations in drama. By starting from the assumption that "(t)he canonical form of a communicative event is one in which one person addresses and gives information to another" (p.148) - a position which can be referred back to Jakobson's (1960) statement: "The ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE to the ADDRESSEE" (quoted in Burton 1980, p.175) - Short first introduces the Figure I reproduce below:



Then, he goes on asserting the same type of univocal transmission of a message also within the dual-focus situation

of dramatic discourse. Here, the creative presence of the actor - even as a mere 'interpreter' - is totally neglected in favour of the author's direct transmission of a message to the Receiver (that is, from "Addresser 1", as Short defines the Sender, to "Addressee 1", as he defines the Receiver) in the macro-communication context.

The same kind of one-way transmission is reproduced also in the context of micro-communication where "Addresser 2" transmits a message to "Addressee 2", as he outlines in the Figure I replicate below:



(Short 1989, p.149)

Short's example actually implies that an acting reader has no part to play either in the appropriation and interpretation of the Sender's role in macro-communication, or in the personal, original embodiment of the Addresser's voice/character in micro-communication. The conclusion is clear: the message the reader has to 'submissively' retrieve in the text is the message encoded in the text by the real author.

Contrary to Short's assumptions, I shall now try to pragmatically substantiate my argument concerning the acting reader's process of dramatic appropriation of the Sender's role and, subsequently, of the Addresser's role. This procedure will require a closer scrutiny within the three phases of poetry embodiment.

Moreover, since I assert that there is no phase which is totally top-down or bottom-up, but rather, each of them is characterized by one or the other prevailing component, I shall begin by focusing on the 'language-bound (bottom-up) aspect within the top-down phase'. Then, I shall examine the 'actual

bottom-up phase' and its pragmatical realization, to ultimately move to the final, interactive phase in the next chapter.

## 7.2. Appropriating the Sender's and the Addresser's 'voices' through figurative language – Cognitive/affective enquiry

### 7.2.1. Appropriating the Sender's voice through 'figures of speech'

In the first top-down phase – discussed in the previous chapter – I have demonstrated how *figures of speech*, such as metaphors, achieved by the acting-reader/Receiver within the poetic text, can be appropriated and authenticated according to his own schemata. I have defined such cognitive/affective process as the acting-reader/Receiver's appropriation of the Sender's role. Such definition needs now a clarification.

First of all, by stating that 'the acting reader appropriates the authorial role of the Sender' I do not mean at all that the real personality of the empirical author has to become the reader's subject of research during this initial phase. Either because, however, authors' subjectivities, as found in (auto)biographies, for example, are always turned into 'fictional characters'. Or, principally, because trying to infer from a 'poetic voice' the empirical voice of the author would imply diminishing the imaginative role of the reader in achieving his own interpretation through the interaction with the textual constructs.

What I mean by 'appropriating the Sender's role', instead, is the acting-reader/Receiver's schematic authentication of the Sender's 'authorial role' within the context of poetic macro-communication. In this way the acting reader, by embodying and dramatizing the 'Sender's voice' – as he perceives it within the linguistic, textual organization – actually draws that 'voice' within a fictional, iconic situation of macro-communication. As a consequence, the poem itself becomes a locutionary act set on

a representational dimension in which the acting reader plays both the Sender's role (by appropriating the illocutionary force of the 'poetic utterance') and the Receiver's role (by simultaneously experiencing its perlocutionary effect). This implies that the figures of speech - such as, for instance, the metaphors achieved within the text - are analogically experienced by the acting-reader/Receiver as an 'effect' caused by the propositional, textual arrangement he perceives and authenticates as the illocutionary 'force' of the 'poetic utterance' (thus appropriating the Sender's role).

In other words, the acting reader embodies the 'Sender's voice' by referring the metaphors he achieves in the text to himself, thus interpreting them according to his own schemata. The interpretation of the metaphors, therefore, involves either the acting reader's first-person embodiment of the 'effect' (as a Receiver), or his third-person realization of the textual cause for that effect. The simultaneous first-person authentication of such 'textual cause' as an illocutionary force in the speech-act context of a macro-conversation, marks the acting reader's embodiment of the Sender's role as well.

In sum, during the top-down phase (as I have already argued in Chapter 6), the acting reader becomes either a Sender, as he realizes a 'force' associated to the 'effects' he achieves in the text, or an active, assertive Receiver, as he authenticates those 'effects' by embodying them. After all, even the empirical Sender, while writing his poem, becomes a reader/Receiver, thus realizing his own illocutionary force only through the effects he subjectively experiences within the text he writes. In fact, I claim that an objective, illocutionary force placed 'outside the reader', and just encoded by the author in his text - as we find in the Austin/Searle tradition - does not exist (1). The author himself - especially as a poet - cannot account for his own unconscious intentions and references; he could assert something and not being aware of implying something else, hence effects to his illocutionary acts could be unpredictable. As I have said before, what a Sender may mean as the 'illocutionary force' of his text is only his own personal response to the effects the text he writes prompts in him.

In the context of my argument, therefore, *the illocutionary force represents the Sender's conditions of intentions and*

*propositional reference as achieved by the acting-reader/Receiver while he appropriates the text by enacting the authorial role.* In this way, the 'Sender/Receiver macro-conversation' comes to be pragmatically dramatized within the individual acting reader interacting with the poetic text. As a consequence, what has always been perceived as Sender/Receiver 'indirect' speech acts (Carter 1989, p.66) comes to be dramatically interpreted as 'direct' (2).

Metaphors, with their interpersonal *ground* of communication (a 'ground' which acting readers can access and appropriate), lend themselves very well to be interpreted as locutionary acts in an iconical context of macro-conversation. As 'figures of speech', in fact, they can be realized both analogically ('figures') and propositionally ('speech'). This implies the acting reader's embodiment of both the Sender's role (as achieved and appropriated through the propositional realization of a textual 'force') and the Receiver's role (as interpreted and rendered through the analogic 'effects' prompted by that textual 'force'), in a context of interpersonal macro-communication.

The acting reader's subsequent close-up scrutiny on the linguistic organization of a poetic text - involving the embodiment of the Addresser/Addressee micro-communication - represents the core of the second, bottom-up phase of his discursual exploration of poetry, as I shall demonstrate in the following sub-sections.

#### 7.2.2. Appropriating the Addresser's voice through 'figures of thought'

In the second, bottom-up phase, the acting reader's focus shifts from the Sender/Receiver macro-communication to the Addresser/Addressee micro-communication. The reader's objective during this phase consists in pragmatically appropriating and embodying the 'Addresser's voice', that is, the Addresser's own personal linguistic style from which it could be possible to derive his/her own (fictional) personality. To achieve this, the acting reader paradoxically has to distance himself from the



language of the text in order to take a third-person, more detached stance in his exploration of the linguistic structure.

However, when I talk about finding evidence of the Addresser's voice in the linguistic structure of the poetic text, I am not at all advocating a kind of structuralist analysis postulating the presence of a 'voice' encoded in the text by the author. My claim, instead, is that the acting reader's authentication of the poetic structure must occur by means of his own embodied schemata. This would allow him to access and interpret the Addresser's voice subjectively and imaginatively, though within the constraints set by the poetic text.

Yet, accessing the Addresser's voice might be a much more exacting task for the acting reader than his previous appropriation of the Sender's role through a prevalently top-down, deconstructive procedure. Appropriating the Sender's role, in fact, has occurred on the shared basis of an interpersonal, figurative, metaphorical *ground* of emotional communication (which is overtly actualized, in terms of dramatic discourse, by means of embodied metaphors/objective correlatives). In this second, bottom-up phase, on the contrary, the reader might realize that the Addresser's voice is characterized in terms of stylistic choices which need to be subjectively interpreted through his own embodied schemata. This means that *the acting reader appropriates the Addresser's voice by authenticating it through a bottom-up, ideational interpretation of the Addresser's personality achieved through a textual stylistic exploration of the figures of thought which 'characterize' it.* Indeed, it is the acting reader's subjective embodiment of the figures of thought in the text what characterizes the Addresser's personal style and, consequently, gives life to his/her voice.

The ideational nature of the figures of thought (symbol, allegory, litotes, hyperbole, irony, periphrasis, euphemism) is explained by the fact that they do not allow a direct interpersonal, communicative engagement of the acting reader by means of a shared *ground* for 'figurative' interpretations (as it happens with the figures of speech, such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche). The shared 'ground of emotional communication' is absconding, or even completely missing in figures of thought, insofar as they are linguistic constructs representing the Addresser's possible individual operations of meaning-transfer,

based on totally personal symbolic associations which are only in part propositionally rendered through language. The acting reader's appropriation and embodiment of these associations - which occur by means of his inference and decision-making strategies on 'implicatures' (Grice 1975) - imply the actualization of some symbolic possibilities as they are processed and re-generated through his own schemata. This represents the acting reader's own imaginative discursal interpretation of the Addresser's poetic voice.

Other textual features that - when imaginatively embodied - characterize the ideational, personal style of the Addresser as interpreted by the acting reader, can be considered some linguistic/figurative patterns, such as antithesis, puns, word-plays, and even sound and metrical patterns. Once embodied by the acting reader, they can reveal a great deal about the way he is interpreting moods, emotions, thoughts, temperaments, feelings and attitudes of the Addresser. In the next sub-section, therefore, I shall show how this process of discursal interpretation of the Addresser's voice might work when applied to both lyric and dramatic poetry.

### 7.2.3. The acting reader's embodiment of speakers' voices in dramatic and lyric poetry

It is important at this point - before pragmatically exploring some possible classroom bottom-up ways of authenticating the micro-communication within poetic language - to make the crucial distinction between dramatic and lyric poetry in the process of embodiment of the Addresser's voice. In both cases, however, the centrality of the acting reader's interpretation is unquestionable. In asserting this, I actually intend to object<sup>to</sup> that widespread theoretical position which considers the author as the 'key' for poetic voice/character interpretation, in either lyric/dramatic poetry, or in poetic drama. Such position is epitomized by T.S.Eliot (1953b) in his essay *The Three Voices of Poetry*:

"The first is the voice of the poet talking to himself - or to nobody - the second is the voice of the poet addressing an audience, whether large or small. The third is the voice of the poet when he attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse; when he is saying, not what he would say in his own person, but only what he can say within the limits of one imaginary character addressing another imaginary character." (Quoted in Guido 1992b, p.34)

In reply to Eliot's assertion of the centrality of the poet's voice in every context of poetic expression, I would argue that actually the 'three voices of poetry' are, indeed, the *acting reader's voices* as he realizes them within the texture of the poetic text. This implies that he authenticates the texture by making its stylistic components (i.e. figurative language, foregrounding, register, rhythm) and its morpho-syntactical components (i.e. cohesion, deviation) coherent to his own embodied schemata. So that, in relation to the voices achieved within the two genres of dramatic and lyric poetry, I maintain that:

a. In dramatic poetry (and also in poetic drama) the personality of the Addresser - as a particular character or an explicit 'voice' - does not exist independently from the interpretative discursal interaction between the reader and the poetic language he is engaged with. The discursal embodiment of a dramatic voice, in fact, crucially depends on the reader's textual inference and schematic choices. As Benveniste (1971) says:

"It is in the instance of discourse in which *I* designates the speaker that the speaker proclaims himself as the 'subject'. ... In some way language puts forth 'empty' forms which each speaker, in the exercise of discourse, appropriates to himself and which he relates to his 'person' at the same time defining himself as 'I' and a partner as 'you'." (pp.226-7).

Benveniste's position is actually crucial in supporting my claim - as exemplified in Figure 7.1. above - that, by embodying the Addresser's 'voice', the acting reader can also operate a 'choice' on the Addressee's identity. In fact, although Benveniste refers to normal, referential contexts of discourse, it is possible to apply it, to a certain extent, to poetic, representational discourse as well. Therefore, his 'speaker'

could be related to my 'acting reader' who not only finds evidence in the 'language of the text' for a subjective interpretation of 'who' the Addresser is, but also can make decisions and choices on 'who' the Addressee - his Addresser refers to - is.

According to Brown and Gilman (1960) the 'status' relationship between Addresser and Addressee can be developed from the given textual tracks of 'power' and 'solidarity'. This view is shared by Barthes (1977c) who, however, takes a more structuralist position by talking about relationships of 'reciprocal solidarity' encoded within the sequence of narrated events. Another structuralist approach tracing actantial roles on the axes of power and/or communication is also Greimas's (1983).

In the case of poetic drama, however, some interpretative problems could arise when it is dealt with by means of extracts - as it often happens in schools and universities. The difficulty of interpreting 'voices' and 'status' relationships within textual parts detached from a whole poetic drama could be tackled in two ways:

1. By allowing a playful attitude in embodying the Addresser's voice (which means disregarding the cataphoric/anaphoric cohesion of the extract in relation to the overall contextual situation of the play, thus recontextualizing the 'voices' within different virtual contexts and 'status' relationships - as, for instance, Stoppard often does in his plays);

2. By selecting - as Cook (1986, p.154) suggests - *introductory*, rather than *continuing* and *conclusive* types of extracts, or, also, "(e)xtracts whose mood is internally created", rather than those ones "whose mood is created by conjunction with the preceding text." (p.164).

However, I suggest of pursuing both stances: the former during the first top-down, deconstructive phase, and the latter during the bottom-up one. In both cases, however, it should always be the language that constrains either interpretative or contextual choices.

*b. In lyric poetry*, on the other hand, the acting reader's achievement of the Addresser's voice as related to a particular 'persona' is more difficult than it actually is in dramatic poetry and in poetic drama. And it becomes even more difficult as the acting reader moves from a 'descriptive kind of lyric poetry' - such as the Romantic one, prevalently aimed at a propositional sharing of recollected emotions - to an 'imagist kind of lyric poetry' - which rather aims at prompting analogic modes of experience in the readers. In both cases, however, it is very easy for the reader to confuse the Sender/actual-poet's voice with the Addresser's voice. An acting reader, on the contrary, just because he 'enacts' poetry on a different, iconic level of 'virtual' reality, is aware that such Sender/Addresser identification can never take place. Even in the most autobiographical poetry, the Sender himself knows that he is opening a 'gap' between himself and his own Addresser by displacing his own personal experience into a representational context to be shared by readers according to *their own* experience.

Differently from dramatic poetry and poetic drama - where the acting reader's discursal identification with the Addresser's voice occurs within the context of a 'story' - in lyric poetry such identification paradoxically occurs through a 'process of static apprehension', which allows the acting reader to embody and enact the analogical experience prompted within him by the associations he achieves from the figures of thought in the text. More than 'interpersonal' (as in dramatic poetry) the embodiment of the 'voice' in lyric poetry is rather 'ideational', insofar as it deals with schematic representations. As Widdowson (1986) notes:

"(L)yrical poems ... depend for their effect on the static elaboration of perceptions and thoughts ... What such poems appear to do is to explore a third dimension of depth, so to speak, from a fixed point, and in this sense they are essentially paradigmatic expressions which establish non-sequential associations ... They are inherently metaphorical in character."

Then, by introducing the pedagogical dimension of his argument, Widdowson adds that students can be persuaded

"to adopt a different perspective and see significance in the third-dimension associations represented in lyrical poems. Since such metaphorical associations are of their very nature unconventional and unique to particular poetic contexts, this will perforce call for a close attention to the language through which they are represented. Every poem is, in this sense, a tracing of untrodden ways by means of language." (p.136).

In the following sub-section I shall pragmatically explore (through samples of classroom drama activities and responses from my students) exactly the pedagogical implications - as suggested by Widdowson - of language representation, meant as an imaginative prompt for the student/acting-reader's authentication of both dramatic and lyric poetry.

### **7.3. The pragmatic process of language embodiment: Achieving the Addresser's intentions, objectives, and characters within metrical pattern and figurative language - activities and protocol analysis**

#### **7.3.1. General operational objectives**

At this point I shall examine how the student/acting-reader can practically perform the 'imaginative leap' within poetic language, in order to 'inhabit it by estrangement'. With this paradox I actually intend to indicate the reader's imaginative process of analogical first-person embodiment of figurative language, followed by a third-person propositional linguistic deconstruction (3). This will lead him to the final phase of interactive, discursal re-construction on a collective, dramatic and iconic dimension within which both the interpersonal first/second-person stance and the ideational third-person stance come to reconcile.

The bottom-up phase of language embodiment in fact requires from the reader a simultaneous third-person, detached and estranged 'Brechtian' perspective which can enable him to propositionally describe - and, thus, develop an awareness of -

the analogic effects poetic language prompts in him while he inhabits the Addresser's voice. To help students develop such an awareness, there are a number of classroom activities, so that those I shall describe in this Section represent only some among them. Their use - as I have stated before - is just illustrative of either the kind of principled procedures which could be adopted in the class, or the kind of responses students might provide.

I shall explore how metre/sound patterns, together with figurative language, can affect acting readers in their interpretation of the Addresser's voice as well as in their identification of possible Addressees. This exploration will be jointly carried out within either the 'more contextualized' poetic drama, or the 'less contextualized' dramatic and lyric poetry.

My claim, at this stage, is that a bottom-up classroom approach to poetry aimed to the achievement of the Addresser's voice within poetic language - and informed by the pragmatist principles I have been advocating so far - cannot rely on the traditional theory of prototypical characters applied to both narrative (Propp 1968, Frye 1957, Greimas 1983, Fowler 1977) and drama (Chekhov 1953). 'Flat characters' - in Forster's (1966) terms - imposed upon narrative, and upon poetry and drama as well, actually 'flatten' the language, obliging it to re-compose itself around pre-defined, external constructs meant by structuralist critics as some sort of gestalt structures or 'semes' (Fowler 1977, p.36) belonging to the collectively shared embodied schemata. This assumption, indeed, is still close to the New Critic, semiotic view considering meaning enclosed within the text (which means - as I have asserted in the theoretical part - that actually a particular group of critics belonging to a particular school of thought 'enclose' 'their own' meaning in the text).

This prototypical view, translated into acting practice, would lead to what Stanislavski (1981c) labels as playing 'on tears', 'on laughs', 'on joy', 'on alarm' etc. He says:

"The attitude of such actors toward human psychology and passions is naively one-sided and single-tracked: love is portrayed by love, jealousy by jealousy, hatred by hatred, grief by grief, joy by joy. There are no contrasts, no mutual

relationships between inner nuances; all is flat and monotone. Everything is done in one color. The villains are all black, the benefactors all white. For each passion the actor has his own special color, the way painters paint a fence or children paint pictures. The result is acting 'in general'. Such actors love 'in general', they are jealous 'in general', they hate 'in general'. They portray the complex components of human passion by means of elementary and mostly external signs." (p.70).

What Stanislavski advocates, instead, is the actor's search for the character's "creative objectives" (p.51). He adds:

"Conscious or unconscious objectives are carried out both inwardly and outwardly by both body and soul. Therefore they can be both physical and psychological." (p.54).

Applied to our classroom methodology, Stanislavski's suggestion can imply the acting reader's achievement of the Addresser's objectives 'within' the peculiar patterning of language of the poetic text. To this purpose, the acting reader has to use his own imagination to give life to the Addresser's intentions he infers from the textual organization.

One of the poetic patterns which strikes the acting reader on his first reading aloud the text is, undoubtedly, *metre*. As part of the *textual function* at the *level of discourse* (see Halliday, 1985), *metre* can be discursively realized by the acting reader as *rhythm*. I advocate the following distinction between:

1. *metre* (the textual pattern);

2. *metrical discourse* (vocal 'literal' actualization of the metrical pattern);

3. *rhythmical discourse* ('body/thought' emotional, vocal actualization of the metrical pattern - which can or cannot entirely correspond to the metrical discourse).

As I shall demonstrate now, *rhythm* represents a crucial clue allowing a subjective interpretation of the Addresser's intentions, objectives and personality, at both its functional levels of *interpersonal* (social interaction with the Addressee) and *ideational* (expression of the essence of his self) representation. A practical example of this



ideational/interpersonal rhythmical realization of metre can be considered the following activities I proposed to my students. Let us see, first of all, how such rhythmical actualization is pragmatically achieved by students/acting-readers in the context of poetic drama.

### 7.3.2. Activity 1: Shakespeare's *Henry V*

Objectives. The first text I asked my 'High-school' students to explore 'rhythmically' corresponds to a very brief extract from Shakespeare's *Henry V*. By detaching two lines from a 'contextualized' poetic drama (unknown by my students), I intended to demonstrate how different acting readers can achieve different figurative effects by vocally interpreting the lines in a subjective way. As a consequence, the personality and the objectives of the Addresser (Henry, in this case) are variable.

With this, I also meant to prove that gestalt structures in readers' schemata can be only conventionally shared, but their realization, when stimulated by an imaginative, iconic context, can be different and variable as well. These are the lines:

"Once more unto the breach dear friends, once more,  
Or close the wall up with our English dead!"

According to Barton (1984), an iambic pentameter scanned by strictly following its metre (a vocal actualization corresponding to my 'metrical discourse') "becomes totally unnatural" (p.27). I suggested to my students to read the two lines aloud according to their metrical pattern and to try to achieve a clue for the character's intentions and objectives from that. This is the metre:

$\overset{\cup}{\text{O}}\text{nce } \bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{o}}\text{re } \overset{\cup}{\text{u}}\text{nto } \bar{\text{t}}\bar{\text{h}}\bar{\text{e}} \overset{\cup}{\text{b}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{c}}\bar{\text{h}} \overset{\cup}{\text{d}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{r}} \overset{\cup}{\text{f}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{i}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{n}}\bar{\text{d}}\bar{\text{s}}, \overset{\cup}{\text{O}}\text{nce } \bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{o}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{e}},$   
 $\overset{\cup}{\text{O}}\text{r } \bar{\text{c}}\bar{\text{l}}\bar{\text{o}}\text{se } \bar{\text{t}}\bar{\text{h}}\bar{\text{e}} \bar{\text{w}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{l}}\bar{\text{l}} \overset{\cup}{\text{u}}\text{p } \bar{\text{w}}\bar{\text{i}}\bar{\text{t}}\bar{\text{h}} \overset{\cup}{\text{O}}\text{ur } \bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{n}}\bar{\text{g}}\bar{\text{l}}\bar{\text{i}}\bar{\text{s}}\bar{\text{h}} \bar{\text{d}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{d}}!$

In scanning the lines by following the metrical discourse (which does not necessarily correspond to the rhythmical - logical/emotional - one), students realized that, actually, it did sound somewhat unnatural. The crucial issue, at this point, consisted in the fact that they should come to an awareness of 'why' it sounds unnatural. In such circumstances, it is the teacher's task to get them to realize that the stress usually falls on the lexical items (that is, words which are semantically informative), rather than on the grammatical items (such as articles, link-words etc. - See also Haynes 1989), and that, as in this case, the metrical pattern can contrast with the rhythmical discourse. Allowing students to find their own rhythmical discourse within the metre of the lines, means giving them the possibility of creating their own Addresser, with his own motivations and his own character.

The pedagogical aim of activities such as this one, consists in making students find out by themselves if their rhythmical discourse, they realize within the verse-form, corresponds - or adds - to the inner, ideational nature of the Addresser as they achieve him within the text. In other terms, students should discover if what the Addresser says through those words in the text, and by means of that rhythm they achieve, is a coherent interpersonal realization of his ideational nature. I maintain, in fact, that it is impossible to negate the verse. It is impossible to negate an iambic pentameter, for example, because in an iambic pentameter there is the sense of the line, and the sense of the piece. However, I also claim that if we make students concentrate too much on the verse-form, they sometimes end up by just producing a beautiful sound only, thus using it in a way which is discursively ineffective.

At this point, I shall produce some protocols illustrating how two students/acting-readers managed to realize two different rhythmical discourse-actualization of the same line.

Protocol analysis. The following samples of protocols regard two of my Italian students' rhythmical interpretations of one of the two lines from *Henry V* they were dealing with, together with their retrospective reflections on the Addresser's voice they embody:

1.  $\overset{\cup}{\text{O}}\text{nce } \bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{o}}\text{re } \overset{\cup}{\text{u}}\overset{\cup}{\text{n}}\overset{\cup}{\text{t}}\overset{\cup}{\text{o}} \text{ the } \bar{\text{b}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{c}}\bar{\text{h}} \bar{\text{d}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{r}} \text{ fr} \bar{\text{i}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{n}}\bar{\text{d}}\bar{\text{s}}, / \overset{\cup}{\text{O}}\text{nce } \bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{o}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{e}},$

"I am a lazy soldier, one who doesn't want to join the other soldiers into a battle. I lay on the floor, looking at them who are so eager to go to fight again, and perhaps to die. I can't understand their enthusiasm. I use a mocking tone when I call them '/deeeear/ friends', and I stress twice 'more', to emphasize their stupid enthusiasm to fight again."

2.  $\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{n}}\bar{\text{c}}\bar{\text{e}} \bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{o}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{e}} \overset{\cup}{\text{u}}\overset{\cup}{\text{n}}\overset{\cup}{\text{t}}\overset{\cup}{\text{o}} \text{ the } \bar{\text{b}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{c}}\bar{\text{h}} \bar{\text{d}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{a}}\bar{\text{r}} \text{ fr} \bar{\text{i}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{n}}\bar{\text{d}}\bar{\text{s}}, \bar{\text{o}}\bar{\text{n}}\bar{\text{c}}\bar{\text{e}} \bar{\text{m}}\bar{\text{o}}\bar{\text{r}}\bar{\text{e}}$

"We are losing the battle. I strongly encourage my companions, who are discouraged, to return to fight."

It is obvious that, in the context of the play, the latter interpretation is the most suitable one. Nevertheless, my intention is to demonstrate, by means of these two examples, that:

a. The rhythmical discourse achieved by both students/acting-readers - by following their logical/emotional interpretation of the line - does not perfectly coincide with the metrical discourse;

b. The Addresser's intentions, motivation, and personality - as a consequence of different rhythmical interpretations - can be multiple, especially when the lines are detached from the context of the play;

c. The interpretation of the Addresser involves also a choice of who his Addressee is. This is evident in both protocols: in the former case (protocol 1) the Addressees who emerge from the Addresser's voice are brave soldiers ready to go to fight. In the latter case (protocol 2) the Addressees' personality is less evident, thus giving a larger scope to inference and interpretation. They might be, for instance - and by contrast with the previous Addressees - almost wavering, weary soldiers: this might be inferred from the vehemence of the Addresser's rhythmical discourse characterized by clusters of tonic syllables which can convey an effect of urge to action.

d. The gestalt structure conventionally underlying the lines (the idea of 'urge', which could be referred back to the already explored 'force' gestalt) can be interpreted therefore in two opposite ways: in our case, as both 'elicitation of interaction' (protocol 2) and 'rejection of interaction' (protocol 1).

Let us see, at this point, how metre, in association with the sound pattern, can prompt students/acting-readers to realize the ideational/interpersonal character of two voices interacting in Coleridge's 'lyrical ballad' *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

My aim is to demonstrate that, differently from poetic drama (where every interpretation - even when it is achieved from extracts - at the end has to be related to the global context of the play) in lyric poetry poetic voices take shape directly from the acting reader's achievement of a rhythmical/sound/figurative discourse exclusively 'within' the very linguistic arrangement of the textual pattern.

### 7.3.3. Activity 2: Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

Objectives. Also the sound pattern of a poem, together with the rhythm, can prompt in the acting reader suggestions about the ideational and interpersonal nature of the Addressers. So, for instance, in Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the identities of both the Addresser and the Addressee can be achieved 'synesthetically', that is, through the sound/rhythm/image metaphors poetic language evokes in the students/acting-readers. This is the part of the text the protocol I am going to report refers to:

"He holds him with his skinny hand,  
 'There was a ship,' quoth he.  
 'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!  
 Eftsoons his hand dropped he."

(Part I, lines 9-12)

Here students can be guided to realize the contrast in rhythm and sound characterizing the two participants in the micro-conversation (the Mariner and the Wedding Guest). As an illustration of this, I provide a 'judgement-of-sense' think-aloud protocol of two of my students interacting together to create a dramatic discourse from this poem.

Protocol analysis. The way the protocol is reported also accounts for the comments of an *external observer* (another student) who describes the scene from the outside. Therefore students A and B alternatively embody the Addresser's and the Addressee's voices in micro-communication; student C, instead, represents a third-person, more detached perspective of a Receiver. Eventually, in student C's description of the poetic action a whole group of acting readers emerges in the actualization of a rhythmical/sound discourse.

Now, let us examine this protocol:

A: "He <sup>U</sup> holds <sup>U</sup> him with his <sup>U</sup> skinny <sup>U</sup> hand,  
'There <sup>U</sup> was <sup>U</sup> a <sup>U</sup> ship,' <sup>U</sup> quoth <sup>U</sup> he.

the rhythm is quite monotonous, isn't it? Hypnotic".

C: She repeats the lines slowly, stressing the /h/ and the /i:/ sounds while she performs the action of holding her partner with her hand. The other one reacts fiercely, stressing the /u:/ sound:

B: "'Hold <sup>U</sup> off! <sup>U</sup> unhand <sup>U</sup> me, <sup>U</sup> grey-beard <sup>U</sup> loon!  
<sup>U</sup> Eftso<sup>U</sup>ons his <sup>U</sup> hand <sup>U</sup> dropped <sup>U</sup> he."

Yes, here the rhythm is much faster. I'm very angry indeed! I'm menacing you!"

C: She repeats the /u:/ sounds. ... Then, the whole group joins in the scene and encircle him (student B, the 'Wedding Guest'), slowly repeating and beating out the first two lines (the Mariner's lines) over and over again, stressing the /i:/ sound. At the same time, he (student B) reacts with his lines frantically, stressing the /u:/ sound and trying to break the circle and escape. But he can't. He is in a cage of hypnotic sound, in a magical circle. It's just like in the other poem by Coleridge: 'weave a circle round him thrice' (in *Kubla Khan*). (The parentheses are mine).

What the two students realize here is not only the ideational/interpersonal personality and the intentions of the two speakers, but also how the same, regular pattern - the Ballad metre - is experienced as two different rhythmical realizations in accordance with the personalities of the speakers.

However, it is also very important to notice that the two rhythmical discourses (the Mariner's and the Wedding Guest's respectively) do not differ in their metrical realization but, rather, they differ in the 'pace' of their dramatic actualization. In other words, in this case, the 'rhythmical discourse' and the 'metrical discourse' coincide in both the Mariner's and the Guest's dramatic performances. Differently from the previous 'Henry V' example - were the stresses changed their position in the line according to the two different ideational/interpersonal interpretations - here the 'Ballad metre' is respected, only that it is performed in a slower, 'hypnotic' tempo by the Addresser/Mariner, and in a faster 'frantic' tempo by the Addresser/Guest. This contributed to the creation an emotional and physical iconic context - subsequently emphasized by the students/acting-readers' collective representation (the 'cage of sound' or the 'magical circle', which also disclosed intertextual associations with another poem by the same author) - thus revealing different moods and physical attitudes in the two 'poetic voices' of the Mariner and the Guest.

The 'dissonance' between Ballad metre and its emotional/physical realizations, moreover, could be used subsequently to focus on the contrast in macro- and micro-conversation between the Sender's voice - as it is lively, vivaciously appropriated by the acting-reader/Receiver through the jingling regularity of the Ballad metre - and the unsettling, fearful tone of the Addresser/Addressee dialogue. The effect of such 'ironical gap' between the Sender and the Addressers might resemble very much the telling of folk-tales, where tragic, awful events are told in a very light way, as if they were quite normal (4).

Also metrical infraction coupled with figurative language can be used to elicit students to find their own way within the ideational/interpersonal realization of micro-communication. In Donne's *Holy Sonnet n.X*, for instance, metrical infraction and

the use of antithesis can be adopted as cues to 'physically' explore the Addresser/Addressee ideational construction of characters, moods and objectives (thought/movement relationship), as well as their interpersonal realization (the Addresser/Addressee status-relationship - see also Guido 1992a, p.64). A report on a physical-theatre *étude* on this poem, carried out with my students, is provided in the *Appendix D*.

As for us, let us move to the final, interactive phase of our dramatic-discourse exploration of poetry.

#### **7.4. Summary**

In this chapter I have started my practical exploration into the second 'bottom-up' phase of dramatic representation of poetry. I have thus examined the cognitive/affective processes adopted by acting readers while they imaginatively embody 'voices' in both macro- and micro-communication, as well as in both poetic drama and lyric poetry.

Protocols, then, have shown the degree of textual constraints imposed by the metrical/sound patterns of the text, and the way in which students managed to 'violate' those patterns in the creation of their different, divergent discourses.

In the next chapter I shall explore the last 'interactive' phase of dramatic-discourse creation in poetry. The emphasis, this time, will be on the collective experience of a group of acting readers and their poetic texts, during which top-down and bottom-up strategies come to merge into imaginative dramatic representations, and the texts come to be diffused into a multiplicity of dramatic discourses. Nevertheless, I shall try to demonstrate how such multiple discourses are still held together by both the poetic language and the whole pattern of the text itself.

## CHAPTER 8: APPLICATIONS - THE INTERACTIVE PHASE

### 8.1. Introduction: The interactive phase in the context of the dramatic-discourse process of poetry interpretation

My intention, at this stage, is first of all to make clear how this last third phase of dramatic interpretation of poetic discourse relates to the previous top-down and bottom-up phases.

As I have illustrated throughout the previous two chapters, the difference between the top-down and the bottom-up phases of poetry exploration is not in 'response-type', but, rather, it is a matter of 'degree' in representational dislocation. I have demonstrated how in both the top-down activity on Plath's poem, as well as in the bottom-up activities on the *Henry V* and the *Ancient Mariner* extracts, the variation does not lie in a top-down type of response as opposed to a bottom-up type, but, instead, it is characterized by a *different degree of imaginative displacement* into an iconic, representational context which can be more or less new to the students/acting-readers in reference to their own actual experience.

However, even if readers indirectly recall their own real experience in interpreting a poem - as it happens when they activate top-down strategies - actually, the real experience comes to be imaginatively transmuted into the iconic context of poetry where real and imaginary personalities, events and emotions are all mixed up. This means that the reaction to a text can vary in greater or lesser specificity in respect to an imaginative scope: it is, in other words, a *continual movement* from top-down strategies (adopted by acting readers deriving their interpretations of a poem from their own experience) to bottom-up strategies (acting readers using the lines as a stimulus to allow their imagination to flower). However, it is always the text the actual verbal prompt for the activation of both top-down and bottom-up strategies.

This movement from top-down to bottom-up, then, ultimately leads to the totally imaginative displacement during the third interactive phase. This last phase, however, is not to be



intended as the 'fullest imaginative liberation from the text'; it can be rather described as a series of alternative, analogic and representational 'collective' embodiments of the poetic language, as I shall demonstrate in the course of this chapter. In other words, this means that a student/acting-reader activates an interaction either between the top-down and the bottom-up strategies he adopts, or between his own dramatic actualization of poetic discourse and the other acting readers' dramatic discourses.

An important issue in this pragmatic context is represented by the extent to which the acting reader manages to create, in each phase, an *active presence* within the poetic text, thus activating dramatic discourse. Therefore, I shall briefly return to focus on the previously-examined top-down and bottom-up phases in order to specify how such 'presence' was established by my students. This would help understand the different degrees involved in the establishment of 'presence' also during the third interactive phase I shall pragmatically discuss throughout this chapter, always in reference to the rationale that informs it.

### **8.2. Establishing a 'presence' within poetic language: from top-down and bottom-up to interactive embodiments - Cognitive/affective enquiry**

Let us consider, at this point, how reading strategies adopted by my students/acting-readers have procedurally influenced the representation of the 'presence' they established in embodying their discourse. I shall maintain that the way students experienced 'poetic presence' during the previous two phases constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for its establishment also within the last interactive phase.

### 8.2.1. Top-down embodiment

What I have so far defined as the reader's activation of top-down or bottom-up strategies, then, has essentially to do with various degrees of constraint allowed to the language of the text, so that, for instance, the greater the degree of constraint allowed to the text the more bottom-up the reading is. In the light of this procedural premise, the approach to Plath's poem *Metaphors* (see Chapter 6) may be defined as a top-down one insofar as the experience of pregnancy the poet intended to describe in it is not explicitly evident from the language of the poem. As a consequence, the students/acting-readers could only appropriate the *ground* of those metaphors by relating them to their own, totally different, personal experiences. In this sense, poetic metaphors acquire the character of a riddle to be authenticated through a sort of psychodramatic, top-down process of free associations.

This means that the 'presence' established within the poetic discourse achieved through a top-down interpretative procedure is almost exclusively derived from the acting reader's own familiar embodied schemata. Therefore, by referring poetic language to themselves, acting readers create a *representational present* by 'fictionalizing' and (re)enacting both their past experiences and future projections within a linguistic framework which is usually only schema-activator, and not yet imagination-activator and schema-challenging. Nevertheless, top-down embodiments are useful insofar as they allow acting readers to familiarize with poetic language by actualizing and giving 'dramatic presence' to their own experience. In this way, they also realize and inhabit the representational 'discourse time' of drama, which, in Szondi's (1956) words, "is an absolute succession of 'presents'" (p.15).

### 8.2.2. Bottom-up embodiment

On the other hand, the line from Shakespeare's *Henry V* (see Chapter 7) contains a specific lexical reference ("into the breach") which activated in my students/acting-readers a particular virtual situation which was totally unfamiliar to them, because it did not belong to their own direct experience (taking part in a war-action). Such lexical reference, therefore, acted as a prompt and a challenge for the students' various and diverging imaginative displacements into an emotional context they had never experienced from a first-person direct involvement. The different rhythmical discourse actualizations of the metrical pattern of the line only contributed to individual divergent emotional interpretations of that experience, but the basic 'battle setting' was not denied.

The state of 'I am'. Therefore, in this case, to overcome the sense of estrangement towards the unfamiliar representational context, students established exactly what Stanislavski (1981c) defines as "the state of 'I am'" (p.86) by displacing themselves into the imaginary context within which they could experiment their new 'embodied' self. The resulting experience was not dissimilar, for instance, from the one described by Whitman (1975) in *Song of Myself*, where he also imagines and 'evokes' himself within the virtual context of a battlefield:

"All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it  
 becomes mine,  
 I am the man, I suffered, I was there.  
 ...  
 I am an old artillerist, I tell of my fort's bombardment,  
 I am there again.  
 ...  
 I take part, I see and hear the whole,  
 The cries, curses, roar, the plaudits for well-aim'd shots,  
 The ambulanza slowly passing trailing its red drip,  
 Workmen searching after damages, making indispensable  
 repairs,  
 The fall of grenades through the rent roof, the fan-  
 shaped explosion,  
 The whizz of limbs, heads, stone, wood, iron, high in the  
 air."

(Lines 831-68)

Whitman's typical limitless creative identification with every form of life (and with every object, too) illustrates very well how the creation of the dramatic state of "I am" implies exactly the establishment of 'presence' within the language of the text: this is a necessary condition to invoke both voice, context and, consequently, discourse. Suggestiveness, in fact, is a quality inherent in the poetic language, requiring from the reader to be a poet and to imaginatively act upon the text in the same way as the poet imaginatively acts upon reality. In both cases, the result of the interaction is poetic representation.

Moreover, in a bottom-up context of dramatic reading, the acting reader's immersion of his own 'self' into different representational selves and situations would lead him to dig into the unexplored sides of his personality, and to imaginatively enlarge his own experience.

Of course, if the title of Plath's poem had been 'pregnancy', for instance, rather than 'metaphors', students would have had a bottom-up contextual reference into which performing their 'imaginative leap'; a virtual, iconic space to be inhabited by empathizing and embodying the experience of pregnancy that, in the case with my students - because of age and gender reasons - was alien to them. However, being 'referentially' estranged from a particular physical/psychical state suggested by poetry can be a challenging starting condition for the performance of the 'imaginative leap' into virtual experiences which could be considered as 'taboo' in real life. In this sense, the poetry workshop can become, to use Grotowski's (1969) words, a 'place of provocation', insofar as poetic language provokes a physical and psychological challenge to readers' schematic stereotypes. Caryl Churchill (1979), for instance, in her play *Cloud Nine*, has male actors explore and then embody female parts - and vice versa - thus asserting the cathartic role of theatre on actors and audiences, the same role which - as I advocate in this study - should also be relevant in the literature-classroom experience (1). Enabling students 'to stage' their 'hidden' selves within a textually-controlled iconic context, would give them the possibility of 'playfully' and 'safely' experiencing virtual alternatives, thus feeling allowed to say, together with Woolf's (1928) character Orlando: "I'm sick to death of this particular self. I want another." (p.308).

The poetic 'presence' of the past. Orlando not only gives imaginative 'presence' and 'voice' to male and female experiences by embodying both genders, but s/he also gives 'presence' to 'past', by having "seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once" (p.308). In classroom terms, this means that the student/acting-reader can embody and actualize past styles, thoughts, physical and psychological states and sensibilities as he achieves them within the poetic language by activating bottom-up reading strategies. As Barker (1977) points out:

"The activity of the actor is not the illusory *reliving* of an imaginary event, but the *re-enactment* in the present of an event which we accept as gone for ever, in which we personally had no part, and which is no longer a direct issue." (p.162, Barker's italics).

In this way, the Freudian notion of a 'relative self', then, comes to merge with the Einsteinian concept of a neutralized chronology, or 'zero time', a relative, 'psychological' time within which past and present coincide and are simultaneously actualized in the mind, as it happens, for instance, in Eliot's (1930) *Tiresias*, who simultaneously experiences his past and present lives and his past and present male/female identities:

"I Tiresias, ...  
 Old man with wrinkled female breasts, ...  
 ... have foresuffered all  
 Enacted on this same divan or bed;  
 I who have sat by Thebes below the wall  
 And walked among the lowest of the dead."

(*The Waste Land*, lines 218-46)

The co-occurrence of past and present time within a representational dimension of the mind is a typical mode of experience in poetry: Widdowson (1992) describes it in relation to Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, where the metaphysical simultaneity of temporal experiences is rendered through a peculiar interplay of past and present tenses. He says:

"The kind of reality which the ancient mariner carries with him, and creates by his presence, is projected by the use of simple tenses like frames in a film, with close-up and distance shots providing different perspectives on the 'same' event. The mariner is indeed a strange and ghost-like apparition: actual and

existing in both present and past time, here and now, there and then, here and then, there and now. And yet, because of such contradictions, he is abstract too, with no particular existence in time and place at all." (p.43).

The students/acting-readers' embodiment of different 'selves' by 'experimenting with tenses' within the poetic language actually resembles much more Widdowson's process of the Mariner's embodied/disembodied voice that actively "creates" a timeless time "by his presence", rather than Eliot's passive quality of his Tiresias, whose subjectivity is, in Spender's (1975) words, "acted upon by all that has happened in history between his Thebes and modern times. He has become its objective voice, with nothing left to his own subjectivity." (p.102). In other terms, my students/acting-readers do not employ any sort of *negative capability* meant, in Keats's definition, as an 'absence' of "any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (letter to George and Tom Keats, 21 December 1817). Actually, acting readers do not deny their subjectivity by passively and submissively waiting upon the revelation of the event. The poetic event, in fact, is not something outside them, something they have to 'receive' like a 'visitation of the Muses'. Rather, acting readers actively, 'bodily' assert their 'presence' within the representational event they themselves create by interacting with the poetic language. In this way, their very 'presence' prompts in them a *positive capability* of assertive, dramatic action. This means that they deny neither "fact" (as a bodily manifestation of their inner self displaced into the iconic context of poetry) nor "reason" (since the 'body' is also the 'mind', the 'embodied thought'). An example of how acting readers can give 'presence' to past events and sensibilities by activating such body/thought mode of experience is represented by the embodiment of the sixteenth/seventeenth-century poetry: the metaphorical, conceptual language was part of the Elizabethans' own embodied schemata, that is, of the way they physically, emotionally and intellectually experienced the world. Therefore, what acting readers can do to make that language 'their own' within a 'representational present' is to activate in themselves a 'positive capability' enabling them to re-experience that language as - in Eliot's (1953a) words - a 'union of sense and thought'.

This *positive capability* of consciously absorbing other selves in a representational context, and remaining referentially conscious of one's own self at the same time, becomes even more emphasized during the third interactive phase of poetry dramatization.

### **8.3. Interactive embodiment and the positive capability**

Having re-focused on the top-down and the bottom-up phases, let us see how the procedures that were adopted by students to establish their 'presence' in the iconic context they derived from the poem are now relevant to the establishment of 'presence' in a group interaction with the text. *During the final interactive phase of dramatic representation of poetry, the acting reader starts interacting not only with the poetic text, but also with other acting readers' dramatic discursal interpretations-in-progress of it.* Such a dual interaction would enable him to empathize with his own representational 'self' he discursively achieves within the text during the previous phases, as well as with the other acting reader's iconically displaced selves.

In this process, therefore, the acting reader comes to 'enter' the others' selves by absorbing their different artistic experiences within his own. This allows him to be, on the one hand, schematically activated by the others' discourses he empathically appropriates. On the other, however, he can also take 'fantastic', bodily action upon such discourses, thus re-interpreting the same poetic language in a multiplicity of ways according to the imaginative conditions he creates by physically and emotionally interacting with the group.

It is at this stage that students/acting-readers have to be guided to achieve that special artistic quality of being able to speak, as it were, 'in many voices', which means not only 'in those voices' they themselves discursively realize within the poetic text, but also 'in those voices' they appropriate and embody by dramatically interacting with other acting readers' discursal representations. In this new interactive context,

therefore, the *positive capability* is meant as the acting readers' capability of consciously 'shedding their own referential selves' in order to assume totally different, even 'impossible' roles, and to move from one to the other at the same time, taking different, simultaneous perspectives, without having to connect them to any sort of fixed, external semantic value.

The following quotation from Widdowson (1992) could illustrate very well my position if it is transposed from the bi-dimensional interaction (reader/text), taking place within the representational 'frame of the page', to the multi-dimensional interaction (acting reader/text/acting readers), taking place within the representational 'frame of the stage'. He says:

"(P)oems are re-created on each occasion of their reading and relevance read into them by association with the particular reader's own world. The first- and second-person pronouns in poems, for example, continually change their values at different readings. They represent the participant roles of 'I' and 'you' without fixed incumbents: vacant identities for the reader to occupy." (p.187).

However, if in interacting only with the poetic text, the acting reader (by 'giving presence' to both the Sender's and the Addresser's 'voices') can have a free scope in the 'choice' of the Addressee's and the Receiver's roles as "vacant identities for (him) to occupy", now, by also dramatically interacting with the other acting readers' 'iconically displaced selves' he realizes that they are no longer 'vacant identities to occupy'. Nevertheless, with their 'real, physical existence', those 'external identities' are imaginatively challenging insofar as the acting reader does not perceive them as abstract projections of his own mind, but rather he actually sees them as 'different' from himself and yet he comes to possess and being possessed by them. Furthermore, by appropriating and embodying the others' poetic representational selves, the acting reader realizes that he has to put under discussion also 'his own' first-person 'representational self', and to accommodate it within a collective, discursal, 'theatrical frame' (see also Bateson 1972, Goffman 1974, van Dijk 1977). In this context, the Sender's, the Addresser's, the Addressee's and the Receiver's voices become a matter of a collective, negotiable dramatic choice.



Moreover, I also maintain that, once an acting reader realizes another acting reader's second-person perspective in dramatic interaction, then he empathically absorbs it within his own first-person perspective. John Donne (1968) describes this metaphysical process of the individual displacing his own self into a different self - though still remaining conscious of the 'presence' of two distinct, first/second-person identities within his own being - when he says:

"Thou which art I, ...  
Thou which art still thy selfe"

(*The Storme*, lines 1-2)

Educational goals of the 'interactive' phase. In the pragmatical context of my argumentation, then, the educational goals students/acting-readers should achieve during this last interactive phase of dramatic representation of poetry are:

1. a recognition of many possible representational selves;
2. a recognition of many possible representational worlds.

As I shall practically demonstrate, the realization of these two goals, in its turn, entails:

- a. an awareness of many possible perceptions of the same representational phenomenon;
- b. an awareness of how discourse analysis on poetry works when it is realized upon the various dramatic interpretations of its language.

In the next sections I shall start by practically illustrating - through protocols produced by my Italian students while they were exploring extracts from poetic drama and dramatic/lyric poetry - how the acting reader's empathical shifting into the others' 'poetic selves' can actually take

place.

#### 8.4. Protocol analysis

My intention, at this stage, is to operationalize the interactive phase. In this section, therefore, I shall focus on the mode of operationalization I adopt throughout the analysis. I shall examine either the general objectives of the protocol analysis, or the method of analysis underlying my enquiry. Then, I shall also indicate the three basic areas of application of my methodology.

##### 8.4.1. General objectives of the protocol analysis

In analyzing the students/acting-readers' protocols, I shall take into account, on the one hand, the objective students should reach at this stage, that is, the analysis of their shifting embodiment of different discursal perspectives. On the other, I shall consider the objective the researcher should achieve at this stage, that is, the cognitive/affective analysis of students' experiential implications in discursal embodiments of poetry.

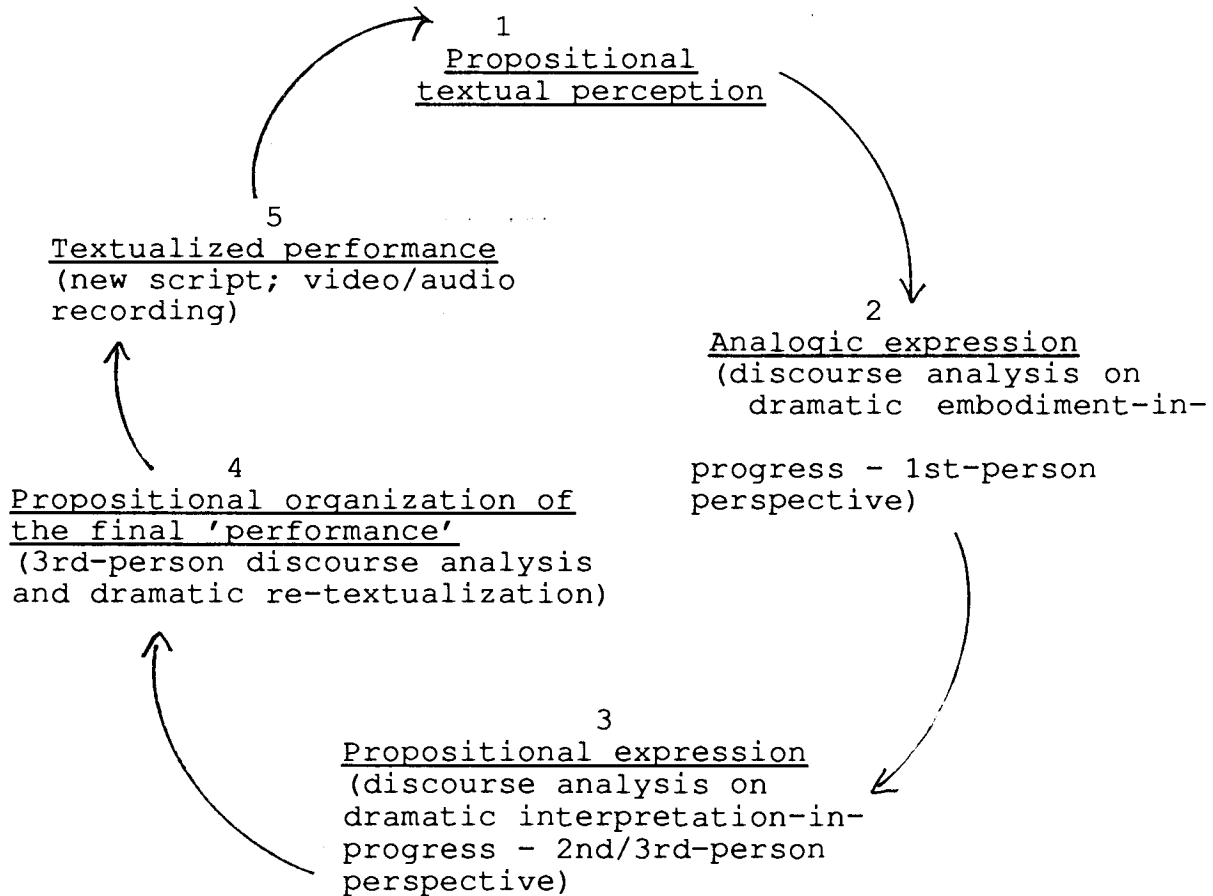
The way I present my data, therefore, is meant to reflect both students' and researcher's stances: the protocols reporting my students' discourse analysis will be followed by my own considerations about its experiential relevance. I shall focus mainly on students' shifting analogic/propositional experience of poetic dramatization in relation to their shifting perspectives as they allow their representational selves to be physically, emotionally and intellectually absorbed into the other acting readers' selves.

Moreover I maintain that such a process, at length, is a circular one, insofar as dramatic discourse, once established as a performance (i.e. a final set of discursal choices recorded

by the protocols), comes to be fixed into a new re-textualization which, in its turn, can undergo the whole discursal exploration again. I exemplify this process in Figure 8.1.:

Figure 8.1.

*The circular process of dramatic discourse analysis of poetry*



Finally, I want to specify that, in respect to the different kinds of activities students/acting-readers deal with, there are also a number of *sub-objectives* which contribute to the general ones. They will be considered in the implementation of a protocol analysis on each of those specific activities.

#### 8.4.2. Method of analysis

The method I shall formulate to analyze the protocols takes into account the concept of Moves in the interaction with a text (Burton 1980; Kintgen 1983). The notion of Moves, then, will also be related to the various kinds of protocol categorization which I have previously discussed (see Chapter 5).

As I shall soon demonstrate, one way of looking at Moves is 'top-down', another way is 'bottom-up', but neither of these is really adequate to my 'interactive' pragmatic purposes. My concern, therefore, is simply to recapitulate and re-state the basic points about Moves in relation to the use of protocols I make within my system of analysis based on the Kantian 'reflective-judgement' categorization.

'Top-down' and 'bottom-up' Moves: Basic points. I shall focus, first of all, on the distinction between Moves to be identified by the acting readers in the poetic text (bottom-up), and Moves to be actualized in the process of dramatic discourse (top-down). Then, I shall maintain that both types have to be considered as interacting.

In her structuralistically-oriented analysis of 'dialogue and discourse', Burton (1980) focuses on seven types of Moves to be identified 'in the text' (pp.140-59), and they are: 'Framing, Focusing, Opening, Supporting, Challenging, Bound-Opening, and Re-Opening'. Moves, in her view, "define the positions of the participants' utterances in relation to each other" (p.142), although she also acknowledges the difficulty in a clear textual identification of them when she says:

"Moves are often difficult to categorize, in that they can seem simultaneously to answer a preceding Move and open up the way for a new Move. An extreme analytical view would be to see multiple Openings, where anything that was not a simple appropriate response to a preceding Act, say a Reply to an Elicitation, or an Acknowledge to an ongoing Inform, would be seen as another Opening." (pp.141-2).

Kintgen (1983), on the other hand, focuses on the Moves performed by readers in their 'perception of poetry'. In this sense he seems to be more pragmatically oriented than Burton in

analyzing how readers achieve discourse. However, if Burton's identification of the Moves is essentially text-bound and bottom-up, Kintgen's focus on the reader's Moves in perceiving a text is prevalently top-down. By asserting that "we now understand so little about the actual operations involved in literary cognition" (p.22), he goes on defining a Move as "a textual unit" isolated by the reader who, then, "proceeds to figure it out" (p.29). However, the textual aspect of his analysis is barely evident, as he distinguishes six types of Move each characterized by a certain number of almost exclusive "mental operations" (p.28) performed by the reader, and they are: 'I. Read, Select, Locate; II. Comment, Narrate; III. Phonology, Form, Word, Syntax, Tone; IV. Paraphrase, Deduce:World, Connect:Poem, Connect:World, Connect:Literature, Connect:Figure, Generalize; V. Test, Justify; VI. Restate, Illustrate, Qualify, Recall'. Moreover, Kintgen asserts that also protocol analysis should be divided into segments "to separate different mental operations" (p.28) within each Move.

'Interactive' Moves. Differently from these two previous examples of 'Move-analysis', in analyzing my students' protocols I take into account the *continual pragmatic interaction* between Moves as achieved in the text (bottom-up), and Moves as dramatically actualized by acting readers in their collective interpretation (top-down). At the basis of my assumption there is the notion that discourse analysis on poetry is the analysis the acting readers themselves carry out on their dramatic interpretation-in-action (rather than the simple analysis of the poetic text). Therefore, in my protocol analysis I shall focus on three types of Moves:

a. Psychological Moves (PM)

b. Textual Moves (TM)

c. Conceptual Moves (CM)

These Moves are closely related to a *time/tense factor*, so that:

A) Both *Psychological* and *Textual Moves* (respectively 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' Moves) interact in the present of the 'dramatic event' in which they are applied, as it is evident from the protocols produced simultaneously with the dramatic action ('Think-aloud' technique);

B) *Conceptual Moves* are already the conscious result of a previous interaction; they correspond to a reflection on a 'past dramatic event' carried out by means of retrospective protocols.

Figure 8.2. exemplifies the cognitive/affective dynamics of these Moves:

Figure 8.2.

*Interactive Moves: Cognitive/affective dynamics*

|                                       |  |                         |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| <u>Psychological Moves</u> (top-down) |  | Interacting in the      |
| <u>Textual Moves</u> (bottom-up)      |  | present of the dramatic |
|                                       |  | 'event'                 |
| <u>Conceptual Moves</u> (interactive) |  | Past reflection on the  |
|                                       |  | dramatic 'event'        |

Moves in the Kantian categorization of protocols. At this point I relate each 'Interactive Move' with one specific protocol-type I have previously classified in my 'Kantian categorization' (Chapter 5), and provide:

1. 'Judgement-of-sense' protocols (JSP), by which I shall report the direct recording of the dramatic-discourse-in-progress as sub-divided into a sequence of *Psychological Moves* taken by students-acting readers from different perspectives.

2. 'Judgement-of-quality' protocols (JQP), by which I shall focus on students' identifications of the *Textual Moves* within the poetic language.

3. 'Judgement-of-purpose' protocols (JPP), by which I shall focus on students' *Conceptual Moves* within the 're-textualization' of their aesthetic experience.

Both 'judgement-of-quality-and-purpose' protocols justify their previous psychological interpretation.

4. 'Judgement-of-taste' protocols (JTP) correspond, instead, to the discourse analysis on the students' dramatic experience of poetry as a *whole*, which could be represented by students' retrospective reports, but they could also be carried out by the teacher/researcher.

So now, before analyzing the protocols according to these parameters, let us identify the three basic areas of their application.

#### 8.4.3. The three areas of application

The discussion of the protocol analysis, during this interactive phase, will be arranged into three main areas of application which aim to demonstrate how *interactivity with a poetic text within a group of acting readers actually involves the identity of the participants in the interpretative dramatic-discourse creation*. I shall use two parameters in organizing the discussion:

a. The first parameter is meant to focus respectively on four aspects of poetic language representation, and they are:

1) 'Overt' dramatic poetry written as 'poetry for performance' and arranged into the context of a *whole poetic drama*;

2) 'Overt' dramatic poetry written as 'poetry for performance' but approached as an *extract* in detachment from the whole context of the poetic drama it belongs to;

3) 'Internalized' dramatic poetry which is not written to be overtly dramatized, but, rather, it consists in a clearly recognizable *'dramatic voice' propositionally narrating an internalized drama;*

4) 'Internalized' lyric poetry which is not written to be overtly dramatized, but, rather, it consists of a series of *'images' seeking to render analogic emotional experiences by means of language.*

b. The second parameter is meant to focus on three different aspects of poetic embodiment as it is actualized by the acting reader's self shifting into the iconic dimensions of poetry. These three aspects are:

1) Embodiment of other 'human' dimensions of being within the Addresser/Addressee *micro-communicative* poetic interaction;

2) Embodiment of 'non-human' dimensions of being (animals, objects etc.) within the Addresser/Addressee *micro-communicative* poetic interaction;

3) Embodiment of both 'human' and 'non-human' dimensions of being within a *'metaleptic'* shifting from the Addresser/Addressee *micro-communicative* interaction to the Sender/Receiver *macro-communicative* interaction (or vice versa).

Now, in accordance with the parameters I have just outlined, the three Areas of application I intend to focus on (each Area corresponding to each of the next three sections) will be organized into the following sequence:

1. Area A. This Area - corresponding to Section 8.5. - will focus on the *students/acting-readers' process of identification with other human beings* while they interact with both the first-person *'poetic voices'* they achieve within the



text and with the other acting reader's embodiments of such voices.

I shall point out that the acting reader's shifting perspectives into other 'iconic' *dramatis personae* can be realized at its best within the context of a *Poetic Drama as a whole*, where the whole basic communicative situation is already textually structured, and where the 'actants' - as participants in the micro-communication - are usually all human beings with their particular motivations and emotions to be pragmatically achieved by acting readers in the text.

2. Area B. This Area - corresponding to Section 8.6. - will focus on *the students/acting-readers' process of first-person identification with non-human dimensions of being* meant as second/third-person participants in poetic micro-communication.

I shall point out that the acting reader's embodiment of non-human dimensions of being (such as objects, plants, animals etc.) can be achieved at its best when poetic language is inhabited 'outside' the set-context of a whole poetic drama. In this way the attention would be focused on an 'internal' dramatization of a particular poetic situation, unrelated to the wider context of the dramatic work which could make the acting reader neglect such inner 'subtleties'. Therefore, *Dramatic Poetry that is not meant to be 'overtly' performed, and extracts from Poetic Drama* will be used in discussing this Area.

3. Area C. This Area - corresponding to Section 8.7. - will focus on *the students/acting-readers' process of identification with both human and non-human dimensions of being within the shifting first/second/third-person perspectives achieved by 'metaleptically' moving from a dramatic micro-communicative level to a macro-communicative level or vice versa.*

I shall point out that the acting reader's embodiment of different dimensions of being within different levels of dramatic communication (shifting, for instance, from the position of the Receiver to that of the Addressee, or from Addresser to Receiver and so on - which is what I mean here by 'metalepsis') can be

achieved at its best especially when the poetic language adopted is of an imagistic, lyrical type. *Lyric, Imagistic Poetry*, in fact, would provide acting readers with a set of 'images' to be both metaphorically and analogically appropriated from either an authorial perspective (Sender's role), or a first-person experiential perspective (Addresser's role), as well as propositionally realized and experienced from a second-person (Addressee's role) and third-person (Receiver's role) perspectives. The metaleptic shifting from macro- to micro-communication could thus provide the effects of a Surrealist drama.

Having identified the three 'Areas of application' of my pragmatic enquiry in the context of the interactive phase, let us now examine how students/acting-readers come to recognize the representational multiplicity of their selves in dramatizing poetic discourse by analyzing some of their protocols.

**8.5. Area A: Poetic drama - The acting reader's transfer of identity into other human dimensions of being: Protocols on Hamlet as a 'voice/view shifter'**

**8.5.1. Objectives**

The abstract from the 'closet scene' in *Hamlet* (Act III, scene IV, lines 8-136) was selected with the purpose of guiding students to the awareness that an individual acting reader can experience a simultaneous total embodiment of the first-, second- and third-person perspectives while appropriating poetic voices with other acting readers in a dramatic context. I shall provide evidence of the extent to which my students achieved such shifting-perspective awareness by means of protocols reporting either the discourse analysis they consciously performed on the interaction between their own and the others' dramatic interpretations-in-progress, or the analysis they operated

retrospectively on discourse re-textualizations.

The choice of the text - Motivations. The choice of the poetic text from *Hamlet* was motivated by the fact that since the students/acting-readers knew the whole context of the play (*Hamlet* was one of their set-texts) they could exploit the characters' general motivations they achieved and embodied in the text.

Creating conditions for the students to embody precise 'characters' within a *contextualized poetic language*, as it is in *Poetic Drama* (rather than having to inhabit 'disembodied voices' in an iconic context which is not clearly, propositionally identifiable - as it is often the case with Lyric Poetry, for instance), entails three main objectives:

1. Enabling the students/acting-readers to shift their own identities into iconic, virtual ones, exploring all their facets and perspectives;
2. Widening the scope of their identification by acknowledging other dimensions of the self;
3. Enhancing their powers of iconic dislocation into different states of mind and sensitivities.

#### 8.5.2. The interpretative context of the analysis

The 'closet scene' between Hamlet and Gertrude, his mother, ending with the apparition of the Ghost of the King his father, was physically explored by my students through a focusing on the characters' possible shifting perspectives as they were collectively achieved within the poetic language of the text. We shall see, therefore, how, in a physical-theatre-workshop situation, students spontaneously came to identify their first-person 'I' with the second/third persons 'you' and 's/he', by empathically absorbing not only the different perspectives, but

also the different linguistic - and vocal - styles inherent in each character (as they came to interpret him/her), as well as each character's different 'body', movements and even image projections of his/her most hidden fantasies. In this way, it will be possible to notice that such a dramatic representation of poetic language is both *interpersonal* and *ideational*: for example, Hamlet's physical embodiment of his uncle, his father and his mother are all parts of his own subjective, ideational mode of representation of 'his own reality' (2). At the same time, however, such ideational side is interpersonally rendered in the iconic context of dramatic communication with the other characters as embodied by the other acting readers.

The acting readers are Italian University students (2nd year - 'Foreign Languages and Literature' Faculty) studying *Hamlet* as their set-text. At the stage we are going to consider now, they were already 'experienced' acting readers insofar as they had worked with me on *Hamlet*, in the way I shall illustrate here, also during other poetry workshops. I slightly edited the protocols I am going to analyze by adding punctuation, omitting some non-relevant parts (signaled by dots), and reproducing the stresses, obviously without altering the students' own words.

### 8.5.3. Protocol analysis on *Hamlet*

'Judgement-of-sense' protocol (JSP):

(*Hamlet*): "'Now, mother, what's the matter?' I am extremely tense, (I have nearly killed Claudius!) I want my mother to sympathize with me and understand me. But I'm too aggressive. I cannot control my tension" (*Psychological move - PM*).

'Judgement-of-purpose' protocol (JPP):

(*third-person observer*): "Hamlet comes running, stumbles and pushes everything on his way (the other acting readers placing him obstacles with their bodies). He gets to Gertrude, his mother, grabs her shoulders and shouts desperately 'Now, mother, what's the matter?'. This seems really a question he rather wants her to ask him. But she looks frightened and detached." (*Conceptual move - CM*).

JSP: (*Gertrude*): "I feel offended. Menaced.

'Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended'. It's safer if I say that the king, not me, is offended. I transfer my feelings to my husband." (*PM*).

JSP: (Hamlet): "She is shying away from her responsibilities. But I want her to share my view: 'Mother, you have my father much offended.'" (PM).

'Judgement-of-quality' protocol (JQP): (The two students discuss their roles):

A (Hamlet): "We must make it more effective. We are 'playing antithesis', aren't we?"

B (Gertrude): "We are also 'playing status'. I felt psychologically threatened. We must make the language 'aggressive'. The blank verse rhythm, perhaps, is not the right one:

'Hāmlet, thōu hāst thȳ fāther mūch ōffēnded.'

'Mōther, yōu hāve mȳ fāther mūch ōffēnded.'

Let's stress it differently. You push me and I oppose resistance as we did with the 'nunnery scene'. Perhaps this would help us stress our meaning. (They do it):

B (Gertrude): 'Hāmlet, thōu hāst thȳ fāther mūch ōffēnded.'

A (Hamlet): 'Mōther, yōu hāve mȳ fāther mūch ōffēnded.'

"Yes. it works. We stress 'Hamlet' as opposed to 'Mother', 'thou' as opposed to 'you': Hamlet is more formal, you see? He says 'Mother', 'You'. He keeps distances. Another antithesis: 'thy' and 'my' ...". (Textual Move - TM)

JSP: B (Gertrude): "... This 'shared line': you interrupt me: I want to reassert my voice and you want to deny it:

'Have you forgot me?'

A (Hamlet): 'No, by the rood, not so.  
You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife,  
And, would it were not so, you are my mother.'

I want to give you another identity. The identity I see in you.  
...

'Come, come, and sit you down, You shall not budge,'  
sit down! are you hurt?"

B: "No, it's ok. Be careful. ... Let's do it in another way. Just tell me calmly to sit down, do not use violence, and I'll do. I think it's more effective."

A: "It's in contrast with the words"

B: "it's more abstract. The tension is already in the words."

A: (*Hamlet*): 'You go not till I set you up a glass  
Where you may see the inmost part of you.'

B: (*Gertrude*): "'What will thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?  
Help, ho!'  
How shall we work on this? I feel like laughing. 'Murder' is exaggerated, isn't it? Is she teasing him?"

A: "I don't think so. You should be scared."

B: "Do something to scare me!"

A: "Look at me. I'm your mirror. I'll show you 'the inmost part of you'". (PM).

*'Judgement-of-taste' protocol (JTP). (Students' retrospective reports):*

1. (*External observer*): "In the scene of the mirror, Hamlet put his face in front of his mother's face, looking into her eyes. She started mirroring herself in it. She seemed pleased with her image. Each movement of hers was reproduced by Hamlet. Then, slowly his face changed into a horrible expression when they said together 'you may see the inmost part of you', and she screamed frightened."

2. (*Internal observer - Gertrude*): "I was absorbed into Hamlet's 'mirror', and he was reflecting back my image, distorted, as he was seeing it. I spoke his lines together with him, He was murdering my own identity to replace it with his view of me. I screamed 'Thou wilt not murder me?' I remembered reading about the Elizabethan metaphor of the 'mirror' replaced by the late-Renaissance metaphor of 'anatomy', dissection. He wanted to dissect my soul."

3. (*Internal observer - Hamlet*) "'Peace, sit down, / And let me wring your heart; for so I shall / If it be made of penetrable stuff'. While I said so with a cool, detached voice, I stepped behind my mother's shoulders. I think by this movement I wanted to take her perspective, I mean, I wanted to 'become' her perspective by imposing my perspective on hers. She fell on the floor ('What have I done, that you dar'st wag thy tongue / In noise so rude against me?') I did not imagine that she was going to respond to me in that way. I started telling my lines 'Such an act / That blurs the grace and blush of modesty ...' and I realized that she was repeating the same lines: she was taking my view. My tone was firm and cool, she was desperate on the floor. I was really her conscience. ...".

4. (*External observer*): "The scene of the 'two pictures' was really powerful ('Look here upon this picture, and on this, / The counterfeit presentment of two brothers'). I saw Hamlet becoming

the image of his father and his uncle. He actually became them, he behaved like them and used their same tones of voice. His father and his uncle were speaking in their own voice about their very essence, but their voices were filtered by Hamlet's voice. He was like a detached medium possessed by ghosts' bodies."

5. (*Internal observer - Gertrude*): "When Hamlet told me 'You cannot call it love; for at your age / The heyday in the blood is tame ...' I felt he really wanted to modify my self. He is very narrow-minded, he keeps stereotypes. I'm not old".

6. (*Internal observer - Hamlet*): "'You cannot call it love': 'You' is not addressed to my mother, but to myself: 'you' is 'I', and I am my mother. First, I became my father, and my uncle, now I'm her. ... Then, suddenly my voice became that of my uncle again, only that, this time - thanks to 'Gertrude's' physical response to my interpretation - my uncle's voice evoked my inmost fear in front of my eyes: the image of my mother in love with my uncle ..."

7. (*Internal observer - Gertrude*): "At Hamlet's words 'In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, / Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love / over the nasty sty' I realized that there wasn't Hamlet's voice in those lines. That voice was the voice of his uncle: the beautiful, inviting voice of my new husband, and I imagined being with him, I was making love with his voice and his words, till I whispered 'O speak to me no more.' Then I could realize Hamlet's hysterical voice shouting 'A murderer and a villain, / A slave that is not twentieth part of the tithe / Of your precedent lord, ...', but I was smiling at myself contented, completely detached from him, until I saw him collapsing on the floor like an old cloth at 'A king of shreds and patches!'. And his father's Ghost appeared to him. ... I don't know why, but I feel a bit embarrassed in reporting all this now that I'm not acting".

#### 8.5.4. Verification of the objectives - Discussion

My objectives in encouraging an activity like this, was to verify the way in which an acting reader makes overt his interpretative processes within a group of other acting readers who physically interact with him and with the text. I could clearly observe, therefore, that each of them allowed his/her 'self' (already displaced and embodied into the 'many voices' achieved within the poetic language) to be empathically and imaginatively absorbed into the other acting readers' 'displaced selves'. In this way, each acting reader became a third-person

*detached observer of his/her own and of the others' dramatic interpretation of the poem without losing his/her first/second person involvement.*

Such 'mystical', dual displacement of the acting reader's being into both his own 'iconic self' and the others' self-representations (within a virtual context collectively created by dramatizing poetic language) is well illustrated by Wordsworth's words:

"...I seem  
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself  
And of some other Being."

(*The Prelude*, 2, 31-33)

As Adamson (1989) notices, "Wordsworth frequently describes himself as possessing *two consciousness* or *two natures/The one that feels, the other that observes.*" (p.227, Adamson's italics); This 'split consciousness', actually, represents the very creative condition of the poet who consciously absorbs and gives voices to others' thoughts, feelings, emotions, and physical states. I argue that this same awareness of a poetic displacement and artistic absorption into the others' selves can be observed also in the acting reader, when he becomes the 'author' of his own dramatic representation till reaching a simultaneous bodily appropriation of the first-, second-, and third-person perspectives. In this sense, he physically and emotionally acts upon both the poetic text and the other acting readers' discursal interpretations of it in the same way as the poet imaginatively acts upon reality. This view is also described, in the field of acting method, by Michael Chekhov in terms which resemble Wordsworth's above-mentioned mystical dual experience of the self possessing and being possessed by poetic 'voices'. Chekhov says:

"My consciousness divided - I was in the audience, near myself, and in each of my partners." (Quoted in Gordon 1987, p.148).

The achievement of such aesthetic experience of the self physically and emotionally displaced into other selves in poetic enactment was, therefore, paramount when I designed classroom



activities for the dramatic exploration of poetry. The objective was to help my students explore two crucial issues:

1. The elusive and unstable nature of their own 'representational selves' which continually shift from their 'intrinsic referential essence' (i.e., the socially shared way the individual perceives himself, and is perceived by the others), into the others' selves, to be absorbed by them. In this way, students would realize how the representational self asserts its inherently unlimited freedom by defying any attempt to be referentially related to its own conventionally 'accepted' self-presentation (in this sense, the split-consciousness of the girl playing Gertude - 'feeling embarrassed' at reporting in a referential context her own previous representational response to the poetic language - is emblematic).

2. The elusive and changeable nature of the poetic, 'representational worlds' which resist any definition by reference to shared reality. The multiple dramatic actualizations of such representational worlds in a three-dimensional iconic space would encourage in students an 'unlimited semiosis' (Peirce 1974) depending on their different physical and emotional perspectives on the iconic contexts they achieve while cooperatively interacting with the poetic text. (This last point will become more evident in the last set of protocols I shall provide on a lyric poem by T.S. Eliot. In the previous 'Hamlet' protocols, instead, the degree of interpretative deviation between the speakers was almost negligible. They actually achieved a very high level of representational communication).

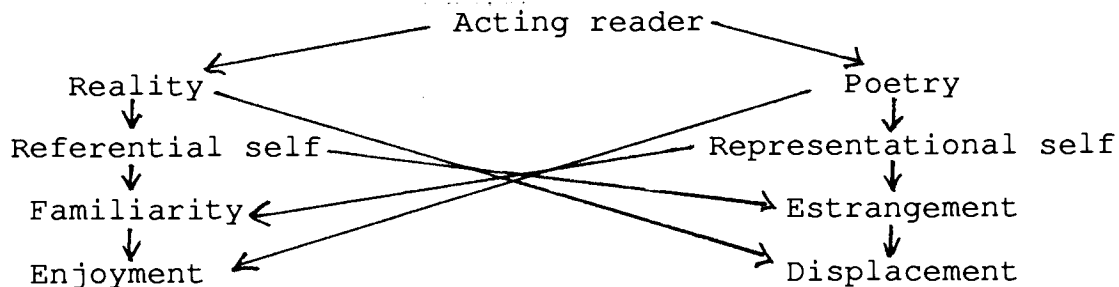
Long-term effects. My assumption in setting these two pragmatic objectives was that the students' reflection upon the 'iconic self' and the 'iconic world' - both resisting conclusive roles or definitions - would lead them to enquire, subsequently, into the socially sanctioned state of their selves-in-actuality. I presumed that by comparing referential and representational modes of being, students would come to realize the intrinsically 'diverting' nature of poetic experience.

'Diverting' is here intended in both the senses of the word, that is, as 'diverging' and 'enjoying', which actually describe

the essentially twofold experience of poetry. The acting readers who collectively explore their interacting selves in poetic contexts find themselves diverging from any certainty about their own referential selves: they in fact differ from their public image to come to be absorbed into others' states of being. This would lead them to find themselves, on the one hand, estranged from what they have always believed their 'real essence' is. On the other, however, they would paradoxically discover 'enjoyment' within self-displacement by just retaining the consciousness of 'role-playing'. Such 'split-consciousness' allowed by role-playing is what generates the peculiar poetic sensation of *familiarity within estrangement*. This is also what Jakobson (1960) refers to as 'split reference' in poetry, that is - as I pointed out in the theoretical part of this thesis - the reader's simultaneous perception of both his referential and representational selves. Figure 8.3. exemplifies this dual process:

Figure 8.3.

*The acting reader's split consciousness in role-playing*



When the acting readers come to realize this 'double awareness', they also come to realize the imaginative limits of their own referential self (the socio-cultural limits imposed upon their schemata) when it is not activated by poetry. To escape such limits, therefore, an acting reader allows his self to be at first referentially disembodied, and then re-embodied into the representational self he achieves from poetry as well as from the other acting readers' representational selves. Finally, his self is re-embodied again 'referentially': in this way, the acting reader expands his imaginative 'poentialities' also in real life, though respecting its socially accepted

limits. However, differently from real life, iconic reality grants the self an unlimited freedom of representation into a variety of virtual worlds generated by the collective interaction with the poetic language.

Summary. By encouraging collective poetic enactments, I intended to elicit in students a double awareness:

1. that in fictional drama interaction - as in any other kind of real interaction - a whole series of subjective and collective choices are involved;

2. that, differently from any real interaction, a cooperative dramatic realization of poetry requires putting under discussion not only any referentially accepted ideas about one's own individual self, but also any schematically shared relationships of the self with the others' selves.

In the light of such interactive dynamics, the acting reader's self resembles "the self of the Sartrean man" who - in Champigny's words - is constantly and innerly re-defined by "the Other": "it is the others" - Champigny says - "as well as ourselves who decide on what we are. This point of view is pure theatre." (*Stages on Sartre's Way*, quoted in Cinnamond 1990, p.9).

The achievement of dramatic discourses in poetry actually challenges any absolute notion about the essence of being, because it is in the nature of poetic language itself to challenge any schematically consolidated view of the world. The interaction with poetry discloses new 'untrodden ways' of reality, and drama can make them actual by eliciting acting readers to realize, from the poetic text, a multiplicity of physical, virtual worlds framing the multiplicity of their own virtual, representational embodied selves.

Drama methods, therefore, are useful insofar as they help readers become acting readers and collectively interact among themselves and with the poetic text. In this way, they would achieve their own representational dimensions of being which, in poetry, can also be the most unusual, unexpected ones, as I shall soon demonstrate in the next section.

**8.6. Area B: Dramatic poetry and poetic drama – The acting readers' transfer of identity into other non-human dimensions of being: Protocols on the Ancient Mariner and King Lear**

**8.6.1. The interpretative context of the analysis**

The same kind of identification process as the one explored before, happens, of course, also when the poetic voices achieved in poetic micro-communication do not belong to human beings. In poetry, we know, Addressers and Addressees can be all sorts of things: animals, objects, landscapes, natural elements and so on. As Widdowson (1974) points out:

"all kinds of curious participants enter into the communication situation: among addressers for example we find insects (in Gray) a brook (in Tennyson) and among addressees innumerable aspects of nature: mountains, rivers, flowers, birds and so on, as well as a Grecian Urn (in Keats) and, of course, McGonagall's immortal 'railway bridge over the silvry Tay'." (p.203).

Therefore, for instance, once the acting reader evokes and embodies one of these peculiar Addressees within a physical dimension, he at first imaginatively estranges and projects it into one of his inter-acting readers (embodying the second/third-person 'you'/'s-he' in dramatic interaction), and then he empathically absorbs it into his own iconic self. In this way the acting reader manages to take a simultaneous first/third person stance towards the embodied Addressee. The following lines by the Shakespearean clown Launce in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* can describe very well this kind of metaphysical displacement of the self into another 'non-human' one:

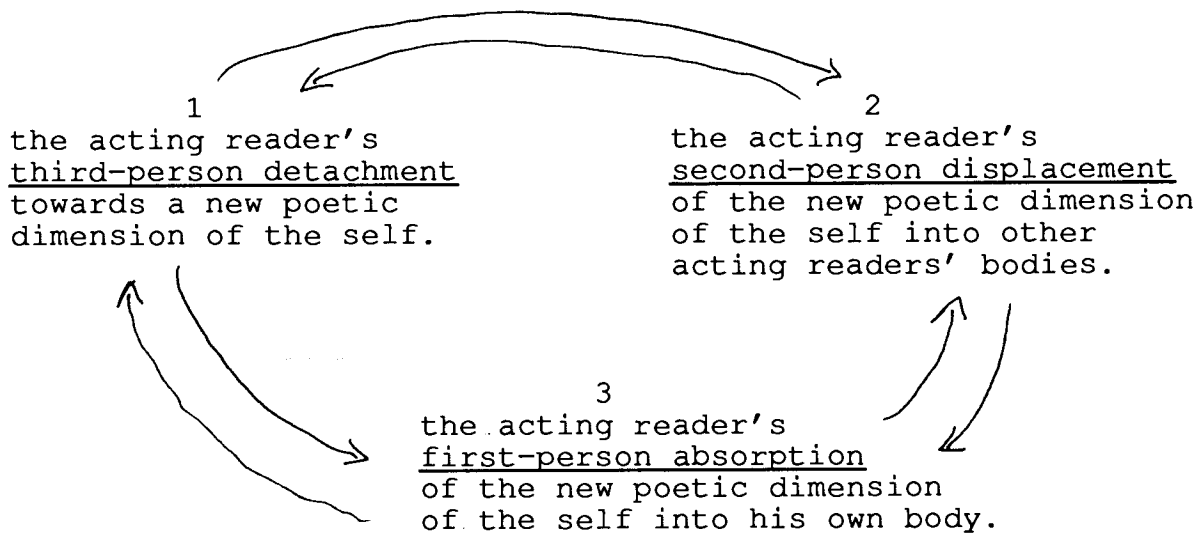
"I am the dog; no, the dog is himself, and I am the dog, - O! the dog is me and I am myself; ay, so, so." (Act II, scene 3, line 15).

As I shall practically demonstrate in a while, this means that, also in this peculiar interactive context of dramatic discourse in poetry, the acting reader continually shifts from

a third-person perspective of detachment in relation to the new dimension of the self poetic language prompts in him, to a second-person displacement of such a dimension into the other acting readers' bodies interacting with him, till coming to a first-person perspective by first familiarizing with this new representational self and then absorbing it within his own body. This process is illustrated in Figure 8.4.:

Figure 8.4.

*The interactive process of dramatic discourse in poetry*



I shall demonstrate at this point how such a process actually takes place within a group of acting readers who come to identify their selves with some unusual aspects suggested to them by the poetic language they interact with.

### 8.6.2. Objectives

The focus of my analysis will be centred on either the drama methods adopted by my students/acting-readers to 'personify' poetic imagery (as it is reported in their protocols) or the cognitive/affective strategies involved in their process of poetic embodiment.

Giving physical, analogue life even to the most surprising

linguistic and figurative peculiarities of poetry - thus refreshing and re-creating its experience - is the major objective to be achieved by applying drama methods to poetry. In the following sub-section I shall provide some examples.

My objective, at this stage, consists in pointing out the phases of the process of *dramatic personification* acting readers perform while interacting with the 'figures' they achieve within the poetic language.

The phases I intend to analyze in the protocols are:

1. Visual perception of the textual printed words;
2. Recognition of the 'figures of speech' on the page;
3. Physical embodiment of the 'figures' as both analogic and propositional experience of poetic discourse (by shifting first/second/third-person perspectives).

The choice of the texts - Motivations. The poetic texts chosen for implementing the drama activities I am going to report in this Section are two:

a. An extract from Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (Part I)* - a piece of Dramatic Poetry that students/acting-readers contextualized within the 'narration' of the whole poem (a 'Lyrical Ballad', in fact) which is not originally intended to be overtly dramatized;

b. An extract from Shakespeare's *King Lear* - a piece of a Poetic Drama (written to be overtly performed) which was unknown to my students/acting-readers, so that they considered it as decontextualized and detached from the rest of the play.

In both cases, poetic language is focused on under conditions which do not allow for a straightforward, conventional type of enactment: in the 'Mariner' case, an 'internal' poetic dramatization - already achieved by acting readers' individually interacting with the poetic text - has to be displaced from a mental to a physical space and made collective and 'overt', thus

'spatializing' and actualizing its iconic context.

In the 'Lear' case, a decontextualized dramatic speech has been detached from the context of the original poetic drama and displaced into a physical and mental space which has to be interpreted by totally relying on the students/acting-readers' interaction with its poetic language.

I maintain, therefore, that it is exactly the *sense of displacement* created in both cases what actually allows the students/acting-readers to be sensitive towards other levels of embodiment and interaction - such as the non-human dimensions of being we shall consider in this Section - which conventional dramatic enactment usually ignores.

I shall now provide some brief excerpts from my students' protocols followed by my own conclusions on either the *cognitive* strategies employed by students, or their *affective* investment in discourse analysis.

The dramatic poem they acted out at first is *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Coleridge. Let us consider only the eleventh and the twelfth stanzas:

'And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he  
Was tyrannous and strong;  
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,  
And chased us south along.

'With sloping masts and dipping prow,  
As who pursued with yell and blow  
Still treads the shadow of his foe,  
And forward bends his head,  
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,  
And southward aye we fled.

(Part One, lines 41-50)

### 8.6.3. Protocol analysis on *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

#### 1. *Visual perception of the printed text:*

A: "'STORM-BLAST' is wholly written in capital letters ('judgement-of-quality' protocol - JQP - Textual Move - TM). / Perhaps to emphasize the immense power it has on the sailors ('judgement-of-sense' protocol - JSP - Psychological Move - PM)."

B: "The twelfth stanza is longer than the others, it contains six lines rather than four (*JQP - TM*). / It's strange. I mean, I thought there was a mistake (*JSP - PM*)."

The question of 'perception requiring internal representation' (Marr 1982) seems to be confirmed by protocol A, where an initial textual perception (*TM*) prompts an immediate mental representation (*PM*) of an almost conventionalized type (The STORM-BLAST associated to the idea of 'immense power'). Actually, it is the text itself that prompts such an association with a conventional Gestalt structure ('The Storm-blast came and he / Was tyrannous and strong').

Protocol B shows how a deviation in the printed form can prompt in the perceiver a sense of displacement ("It's strange ... I thought there was a mistake").

## 2. Recognition of the 'personifications' on the page:

C: "The 'STORM-BLAST' is addressed with the third-person pronoun 'he' (*JQP - TM*), / as if it were a person (*JSP - PM*)."

D: "No. It's not a person: 'He struck with his o'ertaking wings' (*JQP - TM*), / it's rather a bird, a rapacious bird for the sailors who are alone in the ocean. All the natural elements become animate beings for them (*JSP - PM*).

E: "The ship runs away like a person chased by an enemy. The enemy, in this case, is the storm-blast (*JQP - TM*). The scene is really very violent (*JSP - PM*). / The storm-blast 'roars loud' like a ferocious lion. The sailors try to escape. They are terrified (*JSP - PM*).

Here it is possible to notice the ease with which students identify *personifications*. In protocol C, the reader immediately connects the visual perception of the third-person pronoun 'he' with a human form he relates to the 'storm-blast'. In this way, he makes use of those associative automatisms prompted by objects Gibson (1979) groups under the concept of *affordance*.

Protocol D shows the gradual departure of the readers from those conventional schematic associations with their perception. At this point, *cognition* and *affection* start interacting: textual cues are given a 'personified context' coherent with readers' affective reactions.



In protocol E, affective reactions are facilitated by the reader's use of *paraphrase* which speeds the working of his imagination. The rapid sequence of *active visualizations* (Humphreys and Bruce 1989, p.202) is prompted here by words providing visual and auditory contexts for subjective poetic effects (on visual contexts, see also Palmer 1975).

### 3. *Physical personifications in the dramatic discourse of poetry:*

*F: (External observer):* "The sailors identify themselves with the whole ship which becomes an animated character in this violent fight against the dreadful storm: they are actually sitting close one behind the other on the floor so that they create the shape of a ship. They are deeply concentrated in rowing desperately to escape the storm that is represented like a sort of big eagle by another group of students: they are really threatening: they do everything to push the 'ship' and overthrow it. Also the sea becomes an animated character against the sailors, blocking their movement: they actually 'row' by pushing and pulling other students (the sea) who sit firmly on the floor. The effort the sailors make in rowing makes their voices exhausted while they shout the lines of the poem: 'With sloping masts and dipping prow ...'" (*'Judgement-of-purpose' protocol - JPP - Conceptual Move - CM - dramatic-discourse retextualization*).

*G: (Internal observer):* "We were breathless also because of the widening of the stanza itself which, in terms of voice, requires a lot more breath than the other stanzas composed by much shorter sentences. Therefore, we had to spend three, four lines getting to the point of the stanza which made us almost breathless, reproducing the sailors' breathlessness and anguish under those dramatic circumstances." (*JQP - TM; JSP - PM*).

Protocol F reproduces the *optical flow* (Gibson 1950, 1966) of a student observing and re-textualizing the dramatic discourse collectively derived from the poem by the group of acting readers. Here, the close connection between visual perception and visual imagery in real space is propositionally described. From a third-person perspective, therefore, fantastic personifications - as the ones described here - become *objective correlatives* triggering fresh emotions in the viewer.

Protocol G may be paradoxically defined as a 'first-person detached report' of a participant in the physical, analogic personification. Actually, this is only the propositional technical reflection made by an acting reader about his own

analogic experience of physical absorption in an object (a ship). In fact, it would have been practically impossible to record the all-involving moment of dramatic personification, when imagination is experienced as energy in the whole body - through breath, sound and movement.

#### 8.6.4. A parallel dramatic discourse: Objectives

'Lear in the storm' (*King Lear*, Act III, scene 2) is the second piece of poetry students/acting-readers explored in the context of this Area of application. This is another piece of poetry which lends itself to a subtle interplay of self-absorption into other dimensions of being. In many ways, it is very close to the one on the *Ancient Mariner* examined above, and not only because in both poetic pieces a storm is evoked and embodied. The main similarity rests in the process of dramatic personification experienced as a continual transfert of a state of being simultaneously embodied into different selves.

As I said before (8.6.2.), this is a decontextualized extract from the Shakespearean poetic drama that my students/acting-readers did not know, therefore the interaction with the poetic language of the text and with the other acting readers' dramatic interpretation of it was indeed crucial in determining the achievement of a collective dramatic discourse of poetry.

Below I produce Lear's poetic speech followed by protocols reporting procedurally different interpretations by two groups of acting-readers. With this I intend to focus on two different 'internal experiences' of the same poetic language (both consistent with the text), which could appear almost irrelevant from a perspective external to the psychological group-dynamics, since it is only focusing on the outer rendering of the physical scene. The emphasis, in other terms, is on the group experiential interpretation, and not on the performance as such. This is the text:

"Blow winds, and crack your cheeks. Rage, blow.  
 You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
 Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks.  
 You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,  
 Vaunt courriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
 Singe my white head. And thou, all shaking thunder,  
 Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th'world,  
 Crack Nature's moulds, all germaines spill at once,  
 That makes ingrateful man."

(*King Lear*, Act III, scene 2, lines 1-9)

#### 8.6.5. Protocol analysis on *King Lear*

A: (*External observer*): "In both the workshops, Lear was shouting his desperate lines while a storm of human bodies (personifying wind, rain, lightening, the branches of the trees) raged around him, Kent and the Fool, assailing and hitting them. The physical effort Lear had to do to shun, parry and defend himself from the 'storm' made his voice more vigorous and emphatic. In both cases, that storm was the physical expression of his tormented state of mind. Actually, in both cases, there was a close relationship between the physical and the emotional involvement of the whole group." (*'Judgement-of-taste' protocol*).

Now, let us see how this third-person retrospective report (made by one of my High-School students - final year), can actually fit both the interpretations that it unifies under the same description.

#### *First interpretation:*

B: (*internal observer: 'Lear 1'*): "At the beginning I didn't realize that the storm outside had any connection with the storm of feelings inside me. While I was acting, I was mainly concentrated in avoiding my friends playing the rain the wind etc. I was speaking to them. Then I began to realize that the energy of the outside 'storm' was also into my voice and in my body. My movements were violent, and my mouth had to make a strong, violent effort to articulate those words: there are lots of consonants all together, in groups, and it was difficult to speak them under such conditions. I felt I was also one among the elements of the storm. Actually, my body was as one with the words I was speaking. I don't know how, but, at a certain point, I forgot about what was happening to me, and about my own movements too, and I started imagining I was abandoned by everybody, that nobody loved me, and I felt desperate." (*JTP*).

This is a retrospective protocol of a student/acting-reader embodying the first-person perspective of the Addresser (Lear). His interpretation is about a storm which is unconsciously embodied, disembodied, and then consciously re-embodied again by Lear. It proceeds according to the following stages:

(1) In embodying Lear, the acting reader is initially unaware that the 'storm' is inside his character.

(2) Lear's *diegetic*, propositional 'description' of the storm is, actually, an unconscious 'projection' of his inner, 'emotional storm' out of himself into a second-person Addressee (the 'physical storm').

(3) The 'physical storm' is, therefore, experienced, at this stage, as:

a. an *embodied objective correlative* from the second/third-person perspective of the acting-reader playing Lear;

b. an *embodied metaphor* from the first-person perspective of those acting readers who personify wind, rain, lightening etc.

(4) Lear becomes physically engaged with both:

a. the 'physicality' of the sound of the clustering consonants present in that poetic language (Eliot - 1933 - for instance, advocates the activation of the *auditory imagination*, which is "the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word", pp.118-9), and

b. the 'physical storm' as personified by the acting readers (Stanislavski himself - 1981a - asserts that by concentrating on a *physical action* "you will find that instantly, intuitively and naturally, an emotion will arise." p.148). In fact, the next stage is

(5) 'Lear becomes the storm'. By developing either 'physical action', or a sensitivity to the sound metaphors

prompted by the poetic language, the acting reader who embodies the Addresser/Lear comes to a conscious first-person re-incorporation of the second-person Addressee/storm. In this way, he recognizes it as an inner, personal, metaphorical storm of his mind (he authenticates it by using his own personal schemata). The initial unconscious, analogic experience, therefore, becomes now a conscious one, so that the language stops being simply *diegetic* and becomes *mimetic* and *imagistic* in its expression of an inner emotional state.

*Second interpretation:*

C: (*internal observer: 'Lear 2'*): "I felt the storm within myself, and I felt the need to give vent to my despair and to communicate it to the Fool and Kent who were with me. The storm, personified by the other students, illustrated my words and helped the Fool and Kent visualize how I felt." (*'Judgement-of-taste' protocol*).

If the first interpretation represented an inner, *ideational*, personal storm, this second interpretation represents a direct *interpersonal* communication of emotions which are also *exemplified* on a parallel analogic, physical level. Therefore, Lear's speech is explicitly *diegetic*, *indexical* and *deictic*. The interpretative process develops as follows:

1) Since the beginning, Lear mimetically 'is' the storm. He has already absorbed it, and consciously experiences it inside.

2) Therefore, his Addressee is no longer the storm (as in the previous interpretation) meant as an unconscious objectivation of his inner self in an attempt to rationalize it. Rather, it is represented by Kent and the Fool, to whom he propositionally directs the expression of his conscious state of mind.

3) Kent and the Fool, in their turn, receive and absorb Lear's emotional expression and reflect it back to him. In this way, the group of acting readers as a whole 'inter-absorbs' and personifies the 'inner storm', thus becoming a 'group

experiential metaphor' - from an internal first/second-person perspective - as well as a 'physical objective correlative' - from an external third-person perspective.

Widdowson (1993b) seems to summarize both the first and the second group-interpretations we have just analyzed when he comments on the conventional staging of this scene:

"If there is a staged visual storm raging *outside* him, on the same plane of reality, then what Lear is doing here, all he *can* do is to react to it as a patient (grammatically speaking). His speech, for all its exclamatory power and vocative address, is essentially *descriptive*: the words fit the world. But if these lines represent the verbal projection of a storm which is raging *inside* Lear, then it is the world which fits the words, which is created by them indeed and he is not patient but agent. In this case, the vocatives actually *invoke*: his speech brings the storm into being. He does not call *to* the winds and cataracts and hurricanoes, he calls them *up* as Prospero calls up the tempest." (p.3, Widdowson's italics).

Let us now attempt to reach a certain extent of generalization in the process we have just analyzed.

#### 8.6.6. Retrospective reflections upon the process of dramatic personification - Verification of the objectives and discussion

This process implies that, in order to establish the state of 'I am' to give presence to any representational aspect of being (a person, or an animal, an object, or whatever), the acting reader activates, first of all, that state Lecoq (1987) defines as *disponibilité*, that is, a physical/emotional openness and availability of the self to any creative elicitation coming from any source. To define this particular state, Frost and Yarrow (1990) make reference to Gide's notion of the "coming-to-be-aware of the body" (p.153), meant as a state of "sensory and sensual alertness", in other words, a sort of Keatsian 'negative capability', or an "armed neutrality" (152). Described in this way, Lecoq's notion could resemble Grotowski's (1969) drama

technique of the 'neutral mask' associated to his concept of the *via negativa*, that is, an impossible, total, negative capability the actor has to attain by, as it were, defusing, disactivating his own embodied schemata which could bias his incorporation of a role.

Differently from this view, I want instead to re-define Lecoq's notion of *disponibilité* as a sort of schematic readiness enabling the acting reader's physical/emotional background knowledge to be stretched and then transmuted into creative possibilities. The acting reader could potentially experiment all these possibilities by disseminating his self into a multiplicity of iconic, physical digressions. Lecoq (1972) himself, in fact, says:

"We play people, elements, plants, trees, colours, lights, matter, sounds - going beyond their images, gaining knowledge of their space, their rhythm, their breath through improvisation." (p.41).

In the light of the protocols I have reported and analyzed before, it is evident that all these physical conditions do not exist objectively, outside the acting readers' schemata, but, rather, once they are invoked by means of the poetic language, they *differently* engage embodied schemata within *different* people coming to give *different* physical expressions to them. In this way, acting readers become aware of the infinite connotative potentialities of their body (their *poetic*, or *iconic body*, as I define it, to distinguish it from the real, referential one, which denotes only itself) within a representational context. Every animate and inanimate aspect of being can be first submitted to an analogic process of - in Elam's (1980) term - *transcodification*, which means a realization "that the sign-vehicles are perfectly interchangeable" (p.14). This would lead the acting reader to embody such animate and inanimate aspects of being within an iconic space, so that, by this very embodiment, they can be schematically explored, and bodily deconstructed and re-constructed. In this way, it is possible to observe that, by transcending the referential body, the focus shifts from the *body as an indexical sign* to the *body as a multiple iconic representation* depending, for its meaning and relevance, on what it signifies to the acting reader as:

- 1) possessing and using it from a first-person stance,
- 2) interacting with it from a second-person viewpoint,
- 3) viewing its iconic representation from a more distanced third-person perspective.

Of course, as I have already stated before, each acting reader can take all the three stances together, either simultaneously or retrospectively.

In the next Section, I shall focus at first on some shortcomings of recent analysis on drama. I shall maintain that it usually fails to openly recognize the many dramatic discourses which a group of empirical acting readers may achieve by making their individual perspectives imaginatively interact among themselves in relation to a poetic text. My aim is to demonstrate, instead, how acting readers come to create a series of possible iconic worlds - all consistent with the text - even by making macro- and micro-communication interact in the process of dramatic interpretation of poetry.

**8.7. Area C: Lyric poetry - The acting reader's metaleptic transfer of discourse level and identity into macro/micro-communicative perspectives and possible 'imagistic' worlds: Protocols on *The Waste Land***

This Section focusing on Area C of application will be slightly different from the two previous ones in its argumentative organization. The difference lies essentially in the discussion about the 'interpretative context of the analysis' which will cover two sub-sections, instead of one. This is due to the fact that the grounds concerning the interacting macro-/micro-communicative perspectives - seen in the multiple iconic contexts of dramatic discourse in poetry - have been dealt with only in general terms in Chapters 6 and 7, whereas, in the context of this Section, they should need to be focused on in-



depth, insofar as such grounds are closely related to the objectives of the activities and the operationalization of the protocols I am going to present here.

8.7.1. The interpretative context of the analysis 1:  
Background

The background of stylistic analysis. Stylistic analysis on shifting and interacting perspectives in poetic texts (mainly at the level of syntax in the Addressers' speeches) has been extensively carried out over these last decades. Also semiotic analysis has emphasized the role of the actantial positioning in literary texts, especially in dramatic ones (see, for example, Elam 1980). Nevertheless, in most cases, textual analysis - of both stylistic and semiotic kinds - does not consider drama (and poetic drama in particular) in its actual physical, multi-discoursal dimension.

Recently, however, such textual analysis has focused more explicitly on dramatic voices' shifting perspectives within the discoursal micro-communicative interaction. An outstanding study in this sense is Widdowson's (1982) exploration of Othello's dislocated mode of self-representation in his poetic speech as it is appropriated by Iago with the purpose of manipulating him: Othello displaces the first-person experience of his self into second/third-person references to other selves; Iago makes this peculiar "mental disposition" his own to access Othello's mind and manipulate it.

Widdowson's study of Othello, however, is especially relevant to my pragmatic line of enquiry not so much in terms of the interpretation of the Iago/Othello dramatic exchange it provides (it is one of the possible interpretations - though a very fascinating one), as, rather, in terms of the 'real Addresser/Addressee micro-communication dynamics' such interpretation prompted me to elicit in acting readers interacting and sharing perspectives in poetic-drama workshops. Therefore, Widdowson's dramatic discourse analysis made on *Othello* is a seminal work for my enquiry in respect to the drama

*method* - applicable to empirical groups of acting readers - it suggested to me.

In *Appendix E* I shall demonstrate how the process of imaginatively embodying first/second/third-person perspectives in group creative interaction actually took place when students/acting-readers worked together on metre. I shall provide illustrative protocols concerning my students' exploration of the poetic dialogue exactly in *Othello*, in order to show how they managed to 'shift-and-share' dramatic perspectives even by means of the rhythmical discourse they achieved from the metrical pattern of the poetic text.

So far I have focused almost exclusively on a type of argumentation which is evocative of the Addresser/Addressee micro-communicative interaction. How about, then, the interaction between micro- and macro-communication as actualized in real contexts? This will be the subject of the next sub-section.

*The background of macro/micro-communicative interaction in dramatic discourse analysis.* Since my concern here is essentially pedagogical, the focus of my enquiry is centred on a kind of drama workshop which is more similar to a rehearsal situation rather than to a traditional performance. So that, although I do not account for the conventional type of theatre audience - meant as a detached entity in itself - I nevertheless advocate a dramatic inter-relation between micro- and macro-communication levels achieved by eliciting the components of the group of acting readers to simultaneously interchange first-, second-, and third-person perspectives. In this way, they also incorporate the audience's perspective.

Previous research focusing on a creative exchange between these two levels of dramatic communication - as the one I am proposing here - is almost scanty. So far, in the field of dramatic discourse analysis, a step in the direction of macro/micro-communicative interaction was taken by both Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Burton (1980). They advocate, in fact, that characters possess an inherent awareness of the audience whose third-person perspective they take into account while they interact in the context of a play. So that Sinclair and Coulthard

say:

"(T)here are situations where the speaker is conscious of two audiences, the one that is verbally interacting with him, and the one that is listening in to the situation." (p.115).

And Burton reiterates:

"(T)he addresser has two different categories of addressee - one in the microcosm of the play, one in the macrocosm of the theatre." (pp.177-8).

Although both positions seem to account for a true dramatic communication which transcends the limits of the 'text on the page' and takes into consideration the effects suggested by the 'discourse on the stage', actually either Sinclair and Coulthard or Burton are not at all explicit about variability of effects on 'real' audiences as third-person Receivers. The focus of their analysis is, in both cases, on the Sender/Addresser's message (*illocutionary force* in Austin's sense) which accounts for two different Addressees. In this way, they implicitly seem to advocate that also the real audience's perspective is, as it were, encoded in the text, thus asserting, after all, the typical principle of New Criticism that everything (even perlocutionary effects and Receivers' responses) are part of the 'planned' illocutionary force of the text. Seen in this light, the audience - like the Addressee - is considered as an 'implied' function of the textual organization.

Now, by keeping this background references in mind, let us examine how my argument in favour of an empirical creative exchange between the two levels of dramatic communication is placed within the context of the previous research in this field.

8.7.2. The interpretative context of the analysis 2:  
Dramatic discourse analysis 'in action' on multiple perspectives  
and possible iconic worlds

'Metaleptic' macro/micro-communicative interaction.

Differently from the Sinclair/Coulthard and the Burton positions, the focus of my analysis is on the variable effects of a dramatic discourse of poetry on real Receivers, since this is the only, subjective way drama - and, indeed, reality as a whole - can be perceived and experienced. Any message is a message in reference to a subjective interpretation not in relation to an objective encoding, since also the Sender's or Addresser's 'encoding' is a subjective interpretation (i.e. an interplay between language, individual schemata and the context of physical/emotional interaction).

This is particularly evident in those poetic-drama soliloquies where there is an explicit *metalepsis* (Genette 1976, pp.282-5), that is, a character-Addresser's shift from one narrative level (micro-communication, in our case) to another (macro-communication), by overtly addressing the actual Receivers (3). In this way the Addresser means to share his state of mind with the audience. Hamlet, for instance, in his famous 'to-be-or-not-to-be' soliloquy, could appear as if he assumed that audience could be in the position of sharing his views (thus giving the audience-as-a-whole an Addressee role, drawing it into his iconic micro-communication (4)):

"For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause. ...  
For *who* would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of dispis'd love, ..."

(Act III, scene 1, lines 66-72, my italics)

Even in this case of cross-macro/micro-communication (Addresser  $\longleftrightarrow$  Receiver) the Addresser cannot account for the multiplicity of effects his poetic speech has on real audiences. Real Receivers, to begin with, tend to *disambiguate* all the deictic and anaphorical expressions ('ideationally' - and

not merely 'spatially' - meant: i.e. 'in that sleep of death', 'this mortal coil', etc.) not in a 'model' standardized way dictated by the text (as argued by Eco 1979a, p.18), but by referring them to their own different, individual schemata. This subjective 'disambiguation', then, leads the real Receivers to substantiate their own interpretations in a multiplicity of different ways, thus paradoxically rendering that particular poetic speech even more 'ambiguous'.

Moreover, the actor/acting-reader who embodies the Addresser's voice has got his own subjective interpretation of it, as well (5). Not only, but by directly addressing the audience of real Receivers, he also finds himself in the 'ambiguous' position of being at once inside and outside that iconic context he inhabits as the character/Addresser he embodies. The embodied Addresser's deliberate metaleptic shift from his representational context into a real, referential context induces him to be both inside (1st-person perspective) and outside (3rd-person perspective) himself, viewing his own iconic situation in a more detached way, from the point of view of the audience. In other terms, the embodied Addresser - to adapt Eco's (1979a) expression to my argument - "has to deparenthesize his suspension of disbelief" (p.37).

This double positioning of the embodied Addresser can therefore generate in him also an ideational *ironic* representation of the 'ambiguous' situation he is in. Actually, seen in this light, the 'Hamlet soliloquy' I have quoted above may also be interpreted as full of irony, though remaining consistent with the text. I can even go so far as to say that all the propositional expressions of poetry might actually involve irony, since the Addresser, by rationalizing his emotions, gets detached from them, thus positioning himself, in relation to them, from the third-person perspective of the audience. His outside 'ironical', ideational positioning actually challenges both Grice's (1975) maxims of 'quality' - based on the speaker's assertion of truth against falseness - and Searle's (1969) 'sincerity conditions': by shifting into the referential world, in fact, the Addresser ideationally realizes the virtual, 'untrue' nature of his representational world. Such a 'difference-realization' (or 'ironic gap') is usually expressed in poetry through 'figures of thought' (irony, litote, paradox,

anthithesis, hyperbole), or *metalogisms* (Group  $\mu$  1970).

But what are the effects of the Addresser's metalepsis upon the real Receivers who suddenly see themselves directly addressed by the fictional characters? They are indeed drawn at once within as many 'possible virtual worlds' as the ones they subjectively manage to activate and actualize by interacting with the Addresser's own dramatic discourse. However, although they also acquire the status of Addressee within micro-communication, they still continue to retain their referentiality as actual Receivers, through that process of 'split-reference' I have advocated before (see also Urmson 1972: "The spectator who can distinguish drama from reality is constantly aware that his interpretation is counterfactual." p.339). In fact, also according to the 'theory of possible worlds' in logical semantics (van Dijk 1975, Pavel 1976, Eco 1978, 1979b) any virtual actualization is both *intensional* (possible, representational) and *extensional* (real, referential) (6).

The 'unlimited semiosis' of the possible virtual worlds.

It is obvious, however, that I am not asserting that the real Receiver alone is responsible for the achievement of what Barthes (1974) defines as an 'unexhausted virtuality': I maintain, in fact, that the embodied Addressees/Receivers and the embodied Senders/Addressers, inter-acting all together with the poetic text (and not only the Addressers as abstract 'Model Readers' encoded in the text, as Eco would argue), are responsible for the *unlimited semiosis* of the text advanced by Peirce (1974). Therefore, the process of 'actualization of virtual worlds from texts' that Eco (1979a) describes as to "blow up certain properties ... and narcotize others" (p.23) is totally to be ascribed to this imaginative and 'bodily' macro/micro-intercommunication. In talking about such 'virtual disclosures' Eco argues that:

"to remain narcotized does not mean to be abolished. Virtual properties can always be actualized" (p.23)

To this I add that, in our context of collective dramatic

interpretation, the acting readers' actualization of the 'virtual properties' of the poetic text implies the establishment of one *hypothetical presence* against a conscious background of multiple latent, 'narcotized', 'hypotetical presences' which, at any moment, acting readers could choose to actualize in their dramatic discourse.

Each established 'hypothetical presence', in its turn, variably interprets both anaphoric and deictic references - as well as all the propositionally-expressed perspectives - in relation to the variable *deontic* (interpersonal) and *epistemic* (ideational) positioning each acting reader takes in the course of the collective creation of dramatic discourse from a poetic text.

In fact, *positioning* (which includes proxemic relations of proximity and distance between individual acting readers, and even the kinesic and paralinguistic aspects of discourse based on voice-qualities and body motions in an iconic space) is always an expression of the interpersonal and ideational relations which come to be discursively established among the acting readers while they interact with the poetic language. And since poetic language in itself prompts a disruption of the conventionally established schemata ordering the perspectives on referential events and responses, it follows that the possible virtual worlds, ideationally and interpersonally actualized by the acting readers, might be unlimited.

I shall demonstrate, through the samples of protocols I am going to propose, how acting readers create 'possible worlds' from a poem by pragmatically activating a process of 'unlimited semiosis' consistent with both the language of the text and with their own embodied schemata. I shall focus on the process of *abduction* (Eco 1979a, pp.26-7) they set in motion every time they "feel something unusual in the *dispositio*" of the poem and try to find a "rule of regularity" which could give a significance to it. It must be said again that such displacing feeling occurs every time readers deal with poetry, because of its peculiar re-arrangement of language and reality. Therefore, the way acting readers choose to access and authenticate poetry consists, on the one hand, in the activation of their 'abductive schema' relying on intra-textual and inter-textual references and isotopies (the reader - Eco maintains - has to take *inferential walks* outside

the text "in order to gather intertextual support." p.32).

On the other hand, I would add, such 'inferential walks' are elicited by the poetic language itself; they are both *analeptic* (flash-back-based) and *proleptic* (flash-forward-based, Genette 1976, pp.96-127) walks into the acting readers' embodied schemata to activate referential hypothesis and implicatures on virtual worlds. These referential hypothesis, then, are immediately questioned and often subverted once they are referred back again to the poetic language, since it challenges the acting readers to re-explore and re-interpret it again and again.

Now, let us examine how the protocols I provide actually illustrate and substantiate my assumptions.

### 8.7.3. Objectives of the protocol analysis

First of all I want to reiterate that these protocols document the acting readers' discourse-analysis-in-progress, which is not a stylistic and discourse analysis performed by the reader directly on the text; on the contrary, it is simultaneously or retrospectively performed by *real acting readers* on their own dramatic interactive interpretations. This means that they take at once either the internal Addresser/Addressee micro-communicative stance (since they are directly, physically involved - from a first/second-person perspective - into the iconic, fictional context they achieve from the text), or the external Sender/Receiver macro-communicative stance (by embodying the external third-person perspective of the author of their dramatic creation, and of the audience as well).

Moreover, acting readers take also the 'metaleptic' stance of micro-communication suddenly shifting into macro-communication (psychodramatic incursions of the Addresser, for instance, into the Receiver's schemata, or any other cross-combination). This would give the dramatic creation a flavour of Surrealist, Futurist theatre.

The protocols I shall present here (on some dramatic discourse interpretations of an extract from T.S.Eliot's *The*



*Waste Land* - lines 60-76) will reflect all these stances. In particular, the points I intended to verify during the workshop were:

1. How the extension of the idea of poetic language to non-linguistic elements - such as the acting readers' whole bodies - can subvert the linear cognition of poetic images in favour of a spatial representation of the simultaneousness of poetic experience;

2. How acting readers can simultaneously experience their 'iconic bodies' as - to borrow Peirce's (1974) classification of the 'icon': *Image* (third-person objective correlative), *Metaphor* (first-person experience), and *Diagram* (first/third-person detached 'impersonation' of a 'shape': i.e. an animal, a plant, an object - even a 'bridge' and 'the fog', as we shall see in the next protocols).

3. How simultaneous, different experiences by individual acting readers actually come to interact.

*The choice of the text - Motivations.* The choice of a lyric, 'imagistic' poem - an extract from T.S.Eliot's *The Waste Land* - as the poetic text to be dramatically analyzed in this Section, was motivated by the assumption that the shifting perspectives from one communicative dimension to another (as well as from one dimension of being to another - in reference to variable subjective perceptions of 'iconic events') can be better demonstrated by having acting readers deal with both the analogic and propositional modes of representation of a lyric poem. The apparently decontextualized 'images' achieved in lyric poetry, in fact, can be appropriated and contextualized within the subjective, schematic contexts of each acting reader, as they are activated by each acting reader's individual perceptions of the same collective event. In this way, acting readers can authenticate 'poetic images' by assuming at once either an authorial perspective as Senders, or a mimetic, experiential perspective as Addressers; and then either a third-person, detached perspective as Receivers, or, simultaneously, a second-person involved perspective as Addressees.

I started from the assumption that in poetry (and especially in the Imagist, Metaphysical, or Surrealist poetry as the one by Eliot I selected), an image is not used to describe a feeling, but rather, it is inherent in the vigour of the poetic expression: it actually 'becomes' that feeling every time a reader authenticates it as his own poetic discourse. Therefore, once the acting readers come to embody and to experience it in the iconic space, their usual mode of emotional-intellectual-physical representation of experience in space changes completely, because the experience of poetry itself is different from any real one.

Moreover, the dramatic representation of an image of the poem can become a new imaginative departure once it is physically actualized in the iconic space through the interactive, simultaneous interpretations of a group of acting readers. In this way, the poem as dramatic discourse can start with any of its parts, and can be experienced, synesthetically, with any of the five senses.

The following lines from *The Waste Land* constitute the poetic text protocols are based on. It is interesting to notice how protocols themselves can become poetic texts parallel to the original ones. Some students, in fact, re-arranged and re-textualized their protocols into poems. The resulting effect of both dramatization and creative writing was very much like a hypertext (7). Here there are Eliot's lines:

Unreal City,  
 Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
 A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
 I had not thought death had undone so many.  
 Sighs, short and infrequent were exhaled,  
 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.  
 Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,  
 To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours  
 With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.  
 There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying:  
     "Stetson!  
 "You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!  
 "That corpse you planted last year in your garden,  
 "Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?  
 "Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?  
 "Oh keep the dog far hence, that's friend to men,  
 "Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!  
 "You! hypocrite lecteur!-mon semblable,-mon frère!"  
 (From *The Burial of the Dead* - *The Waste Land* - lines 60-76)

#### 8.7.4. Protocol analysis on *The Waste Land*

a. *Establishing the Sender's role (intertextuality and psychodramatic analepsis and prolepsis):*

A: (*'Judgement-of-sense' protocol*) "'Unreal City' for me is the technological metropolis of the future (*prolepsis*), it reminds me of the Lang film (*analepsis*) everybody lives in the virtual reality. It is the death of the soul." (*Psychological Move*).

B: (*JSP*) "Do you remember our reading Musil? He said that mysticism is impossible in the metropolis because man is incapable of experiencing reality in its global meaning, he is caught by the fragmentation of transitory things. Let's imagine we are in the hell of this metropolis." (*PM - intertextuality*).

b. *Establishing the Addresser's role (the 'iconic body' experienced as 'Metaphor' and 'Diagram'):*

C: (*'Judgement-of-purpose' protocols - re-textualization of a protocol into a poem - lines 60-8: "Unreal City ... final stroke of nine"*):

"I'm the 'brown fog' / I move 'oily' / I'm thick and dirty.  
/ I defile and envelop / Houses and people. / They move slowly,  
/ they wade through me. / They wade through / Their unreal city  
/ And they cannot hear - / Through me - the final thickened  
stroke / Of nine." (*Conceptual Move*).

c. *Establishing the Receiver's role (intertextuality):*

D: (*JPP - external observer*): "They are walking up and down behind the London-Bridge shape reproduced by the bodies of some others. The 'fog' is rubbing herself against everything, like a cat, as in the other poem (in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*). They are damned people in hell. like in Dante's *Comedy*. Hopeless. they look down shamefully. Some of them, one after the other, stop walking, look at somebody else and shout 'Stetson!'" (*CM*).

d. *Establishing the Addressee's role (the 'iconic body' experienced as 'Image'/'Objective-Correlative'):*

E: (*JPP - internal observer*): "I must be Stetson, he's calling me in this way. He shows me something on the floor. He mimes digging frantically. He cries. He tells me 'That corpse you planted last year ...'. He lies in the hole. He raises again, stretching his arms, slowly. And his fingers, one after the other. He smiles now. He looks like a tree. He tells me 'Has it begun to sprout? ...'" (*CM*).

e. *Establishing the Addresser's role (The intertextually-experienced 'iconic body'):*

F: (JPP - internal observer): "I have become a tree, I'm blooming while I ask Stetson 'that corpse you planted last year in the garden, has it begun to sprout?'. And, at the same time I feel my body full of energy while I extend my arms and all my fingers and in my mind I repeat Ezra Pound's poem I have learnt: 'the tree has entered my hands the sap has ascended my arms the tree has grown in my breast downward the branches grow out of me like arms'" (CM).

f. *Three parallel interpretations: the Addresser (Judgement-of-Taste' protocols):*

G: "While I was miming the digging of a grave I remembered some scenes of unburied dead soldiers I saw on TV. I felt very sorry and moved. I thought that my friend Stetson had died in the war and that I was burying him. Those people on TV were of my age and they were dead. I imagined they were coming back to life again happy like spring trees. And I mimed this." (*analepsis*).

H: "I was burying a body (a friend). I knew he was not dead, he tried several times to raise but I kept him down with a hand while I was digging with the other. He was smiling. He was the memory of the time I was happy. But now I want to kill him. I want to keep that memory buried. I finally buried him. But I couldn't keep him buried for a long time because he suddenly began 'to sprout'".

I: "I was burying Jesus. But he resuscitated like a tree in spring. I didn't mime it. I just saw him mimed by another friend (*the protocol-F one*) and my body, my whole self reacted to this joy."

g. *Metalepsis: Addresser addresses Receiver (JTP):*

L: "I was watching the scene: people were walking slowly on a bridge, and then round and round the room like damned souls in Dante's hell. Then, some of them started calling at each other and moved in the centre of the room: they started miming digging graves, crying, and some of them even 'bloomed' like plants. Then, suddenly, one of them, miming a dog, started coming towards me. One of those who 'had bloomed' began shouting 'Oh keep the dog far hence!'. They came to me, one put me down on the floor and the 'dog' started digging me up. The other mimed clearing the earth from my face and cried 'You! hypocrite lecteur!-mon semblable, -mon frère!', and started dragging me in the middle of the room where people were walking. I must say that I was a bit surprised. It happened all at once. It was unexpected. I'm not sure I wanted to be involved in their play."

A final observation of mine on this 'surrealist cognition' of an affective/collective dramatic discourse actualization of poetry is that students/acting-readers tend to activate first of all their own memory in order to compare it to the images they achieve from the poetic texts. The realization of the lack of coherence of poetic images in relation to their ordered memory of the real world (see also the experiments by Mandler and Parker 1976) actually unchains - rather than hindering - their imagination. This is why some acting readers even tend to push the surrealist game to its visionary extremes, which is, indeed, the major liberating effect poetic language can offer to those ones who are totally open to its challenges.

#### 8.7.5. The representational dissemination of the self - Verification of the objectives and discussion

Observations on my students' responses at this stage have brought me to conclude that, once acting readers engage themselves in acting poetry out, they immediately start achieving a sense of their selves acquiring a highly subjective character. In other words, they totally feel responsible for the choices they make about the representation of their selves in an unfamiliar framework, insofar as they cannot rely on any referential ground of shared values and behaviours.

This state of uncertainty and displacement is experienced, on the one hand, through a typically post-modern sense of elation at realizing the unlimited freedom of self representation especially within a micro-communicative dimension. On the other, instead, they might feel an existentialist sense of nothing-can-be-certain, an 'anguish', in Sartre's words, at realizing that representing one's own self - and the author's self - 'in a divergent way' - especially within a macro-communicative dimension - might imply being in 'bad faith'.

As I stated in the theoretical part of this thesis (see Chapter 4) encouraging only the sensation of 'elation' for an unlimited interpretative freedom throughout the whole reading process would mean eliciting in acting readers an exclusively

deconstructive attitude towards the text. This could be pragmatically realized through the Stanislavski's techniques of total, mimetic identification with a role, which means making poetry familiar by imposing one's own embodied schemata through a top-down procedure.

If, on the other hand, the other sensation of 'anguish' - for 'being in bad faith' while 'interpreting' poetry - is encouraged, the acting readers will experience only a Brechtian cerebral sense of alienation which, by seeking a sort of modernist quest for absolute truth to their own and to the poet's 'essence', would prevent any imaginative divergence. In this way, they would be cut off from any creative experiment and new interpretative discoveries.

My intention in planning the objectives for this third Area of application - in conformity to the general objectives of the interactive phase as a whole - was instead to help students find a balance between these two contrasting sensations of familiarity and alienation. For this purpose, I wanted to encourage in them a conscious 'split reference', a simultaneous suspension of belief and disbelief in the iconic context they achieve from poetic texts. The distance established between the 'self representing' and the 'self represented' would prevent any possibility of self-deception within the acting readers's minds. On the other hand, however, this distance would not prevent acting readers from either being totally absorbed within representational selves, or exercising their creative freedom of options, choices and changes in perspectives and communicative dimensions while they embody poetic language.

The advantage of a 'split reference' consists, also, in the elicitation of a mutual collaboration and support which can help students avoid getting out of control and being totally drawn into the virtual representation. Procedurally speaking, a mutual support and control within the 'inter-acting' group can be achieved by means of a whole web of iconic reflections: the acting reader defines and embodies his own representational self also by first disseminating it into the other acting readers' selves, and then by absorbing their different dramatic discourses and representations: in so doing, he opens doors to new, unfamiliar sensations. The other acting readers, in their turn, internalize, re-process and then reflect back his dramatic

representation by responding to him in a discursively coherent way. At the same time, however, each component of the group 'referentially' supports and trusts the others while they perform their 'imaginative leap' into poetic virtuality.

Actually, the assumption at the basis of my procedural plan was that the position of the acting reader interacting with the other acting readers is exactly the same as that of the actor interacting with the other actors in rehearsals: actors consciously slip into the skin of another, empathize with the other fellow-actors' perspectives, absorb anything and then reflect anything back to anybody. And yet, they remain estranged and perfectly in charge of their process of embodiment. In this sense, Hamlet's puzzling question: "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?" (Act II, scene II, line 552) - referred to the First Player who managed to be detached from his total dramatic embodiment of a poetic speech - is very emblematic.

### 8.8. Summary

In this long chapter I have first of all surveyed the final interactive phase of dramatic discourse of poetry in the context of the previous top-down and bottom-up phases. Then I have both explored in practical details, and justified in reference to my theoretical rationale, the processes activated by acting readers while they collectively interact with the poetic text, thus creating a dramatic dimension of poetic discourse displaced from any referential chronotopic categories.

In other words, I have demonstrated by means of protocols how I elicited them, on the one hand, to embody characters and other non-human 'participants' in the dramatic exchange in both a poetic drama they knew (*Hamlet*), thus providing a contextualization, as well as in an extract from a poetic drama they did not know (*King Lear*), thus having to re-create the emotional/physical context from the language. Then they embodied various dimensions of being and various perspectives either in a dramatic poem (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*), or in a lyric poem (*The Burial of the Dead*; from T.S.Eliot's *The Waste Land*).

On the other hand, however, I also elicited them to find in the language of the text discursual possibilities for body/thought emotional displacements into other characters' bodies.

My contribution to the context of discourse-analysis studies consists exactly in the recognition of a real, dramatic space to be 'poetically' inhabited by a group of real acting readers who analogically embody metaphorical language from a first/second-person interpersonal perspective, and simultaneously experience it propositionally, as a 'physical objective correlative', from a third-person ideational perspective. I maintain, in fact, that so far the pragmatic grounds of dramatic discourse analysis - meant as a physicalization of an iconic, poetic space for cognitive/affective interaction - has almost been a totally unexplored domain.



## CHAPTER 9 - CONCLUSION

### 9.1. Introduction

This thesis has been developed by starting from some specific assumptions about the nature of poetry as an imaginative dramatic discourse pragmatically achieved by the empirical *acting reader* within the peculiar structural and semantic arrangement of the poetic text.

The position behind these assumptions has been that it is precisely such 'peculiar' character of the poetic organization that contributes to the *acting reader's* imaginative, 'bodily' displacement into the multiplicity of iconic, virtual contexts of dramatic discourse.

Then, throughout the operationalization of the theoretical grounds into classroom practice, I have systematically returned to a *re-examination* of the hypothesis and to the formulation of a pedagogic rationale by means of a constant protocol analysis on some of my Italian students/*acting-readers'* responses to the activities I proposed.

The work, therefore, has been problem-oriented and has aimed at the production of principled pedagogic ideas which should be verified in other classroom situations and under different cultural circumstances.

Thus, in this final chapter I shall focus on three points:

1. In Section 9.2. I shall restate my theoretical line of enquiry;
2. In Section 9.3. I shall interpret the principled pedagogic outcome in terms of possible practical implications and difficulties;
3. In Section 9.4. I shall point out further possible developments in both theory and practice.

4. In Section 9.5., then, I shall briefly draw the conclusions.

## 9.2. Theoretical line of enquiry - Retrospect

The rationale I have sought to demonstrate both in theoretical and practical terms throughout this thesis has been that a thoroughly, 'body/thought' communication within a group of empirical *acting readers* can be one of the most effective ways to access poetry at all levels of experience. This, I have maintained, would lay the basis for either the individual's physical externalization of his own dramatic discourse, or his subsequent conceptual/experiential schematic internalization of the effects his own and the others' inter-acting dramatic discourses produced on him.

Therefore, the theoretical premises behind this rationale are fundamentally two:

1. On the one hand, I have claimed that the nature of schemata is essentially 'bodily', as the body is the experiential way to conceptualization.

2. On the other hand, I have argued that the nature of poetic discourse is inherently dramatic, subjective and, therefore, multiple, insofar as it always involves the readers' pragmatic achievement of 'voices' within the text.

The implication underlying these two premises is that *to achieve a total experience of the dramatic nature of poetic discourse the reader has to engage his own schemata in their body/thought entirety*, which means that he has not to limit himself to the 'sounding' of the 'voices' he achieves in the text just within his 'inward ear'; on the contrary, he has to 'embody' them, 'inhabit' them within a 'physical space of representation', letting them inter-act with other acting readers' embodiments.

All this also presupposes an interaction between top-down and bottom-up reading strategies which are determined by the

degree of textual constraint the acting reader allows into his own dramatic-discourse realization.

If he allows his *assertive* attitude towards the text to prevail - as it happens during the first *top-down* phase of *poetic familiarization* - he actually favours a kind of *affective* discourse which principally calls his own embodied schemata to 'make sense' of the poetic language he deals with. The acting reader's pragmatic achievement of 'his own voice' in the poetic discourse he creates is, then, almost schema-based and text-independent.

If, instead, the acting reader allows his *submissive* attitude to prevail - as during the second *bottom-up* phase of *poetic estrangement* - then he favours a cognition of the poetic language. This means that the reader's *cognitive* focus on the poetic language distances his discourse from his own schemata, thus displacing his experience on a different, representational level prompted by both the structural and the semantic arrangement of the poetic text. Therefore the reader's pragmatic achievement of 'a voice' within his poetic discourse is, in this case, essentially language-based and text-dependent.

However, I have also claimed that, eventually, these two top-down/bottom-up phases in the acting reader's process of dramatic authentication of poetry come to merge during the last *interactive* phase in which a collective dramatic embodiment of poetic 'voices' takes place within a *shared space of enactment*. In such a space, each dramatic discourse each acting reader achieves from the poetic text starts interacting with the others' discourses, thus coming to be absorbed and re-defined by them. This implies that also the acting reader's *iconic self* - as it is bodily and vocally represented within his own dramatic discourse - comes to be re-defined and re-interpreted by the other acting readers' 'iconic selves' interacting with him. In other words, *a multiplicity of poetic discourses, controlled by the same poetic text, interact to re-create selves, schemata, and contexts at every level of experience, within a representational, iconic dimension prompted by the unique quality of poetic language.*

At this point, however, we need to consider some of the possible difficulties and implications which might be encountered

during the operationalization of such a theory into classroom practice.

### **9.3. Practical implications and difficulties**

One of the major fallacies which might occur in the operationalization of my theory of dramatic discourse in poetry is considering the 'three phases' of the dramatic interpretation of poetic language as three stages of a process to be dealt with separately. Actually, boundaries between the top-down/bottom-up/interactive phases are not so sharply defined: what I have so far described as a three-phase process of dramatic discourse in poetry is, in reality, *a continuous, simultaneous, interactive interpretation-process in which particular top-down or bottom-up trends might prevail at a certain moment or another during the reading.*

Therefore, a design of classroom activities should not be done by having in mind the 'final product' of each phase in detachment from the whole process. On the contrary, the focus of the principled pedagogy of poetry I have proposed here should be *on the process of dramatic interpretation of poetry in itself, that is:*

- a. On the cognitive/affective strategies adopted by students/acting-readers;
- b. On students/acting-readers' real, 'physical' first-person embodiment and experience of poetry; and
- c. On how students/acting-readers finally communicate 'poetically' with the others by taking different body/thought positionings within a multiplicity of interactive, subjective iconic contexts.

The division into three phases, therefore, might be helpful to the teacher/researcher only if he uses it either to sharpen the focus of his ongoing enquiry into the nature of poetic

discourse creation, or to provide an appropriate elicitation at any moment during the students/acting-readers' interpretation process, and then to analyze such a process.

However, an implication which is also necessary to acknowledge in the methodology I have proposed is that any education has to be an investment in the abilities which are subsequently realized in unpredictable ways. My approach to poetic language, as I have argued in this thesis, is designed to provide people with a 'total' sensitivity to poetry, so that they can subsequently read the poem without any overt behavioural enactment.

Therefore, on the one hand, I have advocated a liberating methodology (based on a set of procedures which lead the reader to appreciate poetry through its enactment) which can really contribute to create a liberating classroom: actually, if students do not 'perform' their 'imaginative leap' into poetic, iconic contexts in the classroom, they will probably never have the opportunity of doing it anywhere else.

On the other hand, after having 'overtly' (that is, bodily, vocally and emotionally) experienced themselves in relation to some poems, students should be able to 'covertly' transfer their 'internalized experience' to other poems as well.

It is necessary to clarify, at this point, that what I am suggesting is not that the only way in which poetry can be subsequently appreciated is through this kind of enactment I have illustrated. Yet, the way literature in general is taught today in schools and universities does not seem to really get people very interested, excited or totally involved (intellectually as well as physically and emotionally) with the text and with the other readers who share the experience of the poetic language with them. So that, as my own teaching experience shows to me, the methodology I have developed here can be effective for developing in readers the potential for subsequent emotional investment and appreciation of poetry into the following years.

Of course, we have to take into account also the fundamental difficulty about all education, that consists in demonstrating which course is successful. In fact, we are able to say which course gives the best results at the end of it, but we cannot really tell which one has got long-term effects, so that we are

helpless as to how to realize if the course has fulfilled, over the subsequent years, all the objectives we planned.

However, as Virginia Woolf (1929) says: "when a subject is highly controversial, one can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold", and this indeed reflects exactly what I have done in this thesis: I have talked about the way I have come to develop my rationale, my line of enquiry, my classroom activities and observations, and, finally, my argumentation, basing everything upon my own poetry-classroom experience.

Therefore, what I intend to suggest in the next Section is what further theoretical and practical developments might follow to my research and what possible lines of enquiry might be pursued by taking my rationale as a starting point.

#### **9.4. Developments in theory and practice - Prospects**

No research is a conclusion. On the contrary, research opens out possibilities, some of which may be still unexplored. My intent in this Section is precisely to show possible developments of my work in both theory and practice.

##### **9.4.1. Theoretical developments**

A kind of theoretical development of my assumptions I would encourage to pursue regards the contextualization of my claim about the public/private nature of poetic discourse within a general theory of politics in education.

I have stated throughout my thesis that the enjoyment of poetry should not be considered as an exclusive privilege of an élite of critics who possess the 'interpretative keys' for accessing it. On the contrary, the aesthetic experience should be democratized to be accessible to everybody, which means that it has not to be 'diminished' to suit what it is conventionally

defined as a general low standard of artistic appreciation. The idea I have tried to convey, instead, is that the readers' level of 'aesthetic apprehension' has to be 'elevated' by eliciting individual, subjective responses to it, and one of the most suitable ways to achieve such an aim is to help readers engage in the experience their whole personalities, their whole selves. This is why I have been advocating the presence of real acting readers 'taking action' upon the poetic text and sharing their aesthetic experience with the others, thus creating their own dramatic, 'socialized' discourse out of it.

There are, however, risks of having my approach to *socialized poetry* labelled as another aspect of the left-wing-oriented theory of 'literature as a social discourse'. But, as I have stated in my early chapters (1 and 2), I do not consider the general trend in social-discourse literary studies as genuinely aimed at a democratization of literature meant as the reader's subjective appropriation and authentication of literary texts. There are many ideological choices (already made by the group of critics advocating the 'social' approach) which condition and indeed constrain interpretations into predetermined paths.

Moreover, in such theoretical context, the representational, imaginative character of the poetic experience - which leads the reader to displace his self into virtual worlds - is almost always denied in principle: generally speaking, in Marxist theories culture is considered as a sort of unsubstantial emanation of reality. Social, economic, and cultural factors are all in a close relationship in promoting the emancipation of humanity, but, in this way, literature - meant as a socio-cultural aspect of the emancipation process - remains constrained within a 'referentiality' which denies any sort of individual, 'representational' flight into the realms of imagination. In such a context, individuality itself, indeed, is reduced to a flat, conventionalized multiplicity.

Nevertheless, there are some positive possibilities to be explored even by contextualizing my approach within this theoretical trend in social discourse: for instance, it could be interesting to investigate how individuals can use collective, social experiences to affirm their individual, iconic identities within the virtual contexts they achieve from the poetic texts.

However, although at first sight the underlying assumption of such a development of my line of enquiry might seem that an exploration of this kind can lead to a strengthening of the group's social identity (within the safely institutional contexts of schools and universities), in reality its political implication could be socially undermining: it might in fact encourage fragmentation and relativism, even in spite of the unity that a literary text always provides within dialectic interpretations.

Moreover, contextualizing my theory of poetry as a 'socialized' discourse within the general 'social' trend would also mean that readers might decide to challenge their own official culture and even history, since also history is 'arbitrary'. By developing this research line even further, it would perhaps be possible to demonstrate that 'reality' is abstract and only 'representation' is real. This could become particularly evident by analyzing the way in which collective, 'socialized' dramatic representations of poetry create a multiplicity of virtual contexts acting readers achieve by interacting with the poetic text. Virtual poetic representations would, in fact, at first encourage the individual acting reader to iconically displace his self into other acting readers' iconic selves. Then, they would lead him to internalize different cultural aspects and identities he comes to embody and to empathize with during the dramatic inter-action. In this way, the acting reader asserts the 'presence' of a 'multiplicity of cultural realities' against an idea of absolute truth. Externalized language itself, after all, can represent neither an ultimate, objective truth, nor an objective, shared reality.

Finally, my approach might also be used to challenge a kind of right-wing, capitalistic view of a massified youth culture which regards young people as objects, end-products of a pre-constructed strategy of truth-creation which manipulates and monitors social identities and responses in every field of experience, art included. The appeal to conformism, in fact, is nothing but a way to exorcise young people who are in themselves a metaphor of social change and multiple breakdown. In this sense, the individual's will to re-organize his experience according to his own truth - even within the imaginative, representational context of dramatized poetry - and then to be



authentic to his 'individual social self' (a paradox which describes quite well his own rediscovered identity) in a world of mass-culture and fragmentation might be specially emphasized.

But let us see now what prospects of practical developments my theory of dramatic discourse in poetry might determine.

#### 9.4.2. Practical developments

I have to concede, at this point, that many literature teachers might find my principled pedagogic ideas quite unusual, certainly different from their customary teaching methodologies. The risk, in such a case, could be that, once they come to adapt my notions of dramatic representation in poetry to their own different classroom situations, they would probably fail to grasp the theoretical implications of my approach. One of the possible consequences of such an omission could be, for instance, that of coming to interpret my methodology as another aspect of that widespread humanistic, whole-person approach to literature lacking in any systematic theoretical rationale. This, indeed, would be totally in contrast with the principled pedagogic approach to poetry I advocate in this thesis.

The same kind of risk might be encountered if we presuppose a further practical development of my theory in terms of textbook reformulations. Efforts to make my assumptions more accessible to teachers might end up in a mere simplification of classroom resources, which could be, again, not too dissimilar from the various textbooks based on the humanistic approach.

Actually, there are lots of books around aiming to get people to be active in relation to literary texts (Maley and Duff 1978, 1989; Burgess and Gaudry 1986; Carter and Long 1987, 1991; Collie and Slater 1987; McRae and Pantaleoni 1990; McRae 1991; Leach 1992; to quote only some of them). Nevertheless, in the majority of cases they are developed in a theoretically unsystematic way, especially in those sections dealing with poetry or drama where it is possible to find only some incoherent reference - or none at all - to any kind of ideas on vocal and

physical embodiment as a way to literary/aesthetic appreciation.

Similar types of objection may be made, of course, to most of the canonical drama textbooks (Chekhov 1953; Linklater 1976, 1992; Barker 1977; Johnstone 1981; Stanislavski 1981a/b/c; Barton 1984; Olivier 1986; Berry 1989, 1991) which do not present any explicitly developed theory of the representational self underlying activities and études.

We might conclude, therefore, that, generally speaking, on the one hand, literature textbooks are usually too much language-centred, thus principally promoting kinds of bottom-up reading strategies which exclude readers from any possibility of body/thought schematic authentication. Any relation to the readers' own experience is usually made in referential or social terms, which means that they are not elicited to enjoy the imaginative representational discourse they achieve from the poetic text, but, instead, they are constantly required to explicitly refer it back to their previous 'real' experiences. In this way, any imaginative flight comes to be denied.

On the other hand, drama textbooks tend to be too much body/emotion-centred, thus promoting top-down approaches which rarely account for a cognition of the language in the text. This is especially true with general textbooks on acting, whereas books on voice-training are even too much language-conscious, to the extent that they encourage the idea that every meaning is already within the structure of the text, waiting to be vocally realized. In spite of such an emphasis on embodiment, however, drama books do not elicit actors to undertake any sort of systematic analysis on their cognitive/affective investment in representation.

It is obvious that the practical development I would advocate for helping literature and drama teachers access my principled methodology is totally different from the organization of both these kinds of textbooks. To develop an effective principled approach to poetic dramatization, teachers should be made aware first of all of just how proposals based on my assumptions are different from the resource of activities proposed by other books, insofar as they are rigorously principled ones. Theory, therefore, should be developed 'inside' teachers in such a way as to elicit them to subsequently inform the 'outside' classroom activities in terms of teaching literary

awareness.

This means that also students have to be made 'consciously principled' in the creation of their dramatic discourses from poetic texts. The assumption at the basis of the development of students' literary awareness is that they should move from an awareness of the shortcomings of Structuralist approaches - which advocate a language totally in control of interpretations - to an apprehension that meaning cannot be fixed.

Again, some might derive political implications from these pedagogic positions: making students aware that textual structures are just metaphysical, collective hallucinations meant to establish an order in the social reality, means making them either realize the danger of external structures imposed upon the individual by an abstract - as Fish (1980) would say - 'authority of interpretative communities', or recognize that structures acquire subjective identities as soon as they are actualized as individual discourses.

Nevertheless, achieving individual meanings from subjective discourses 'in collective action' might be in itself a representational experience of 'social' identity by means of the poetic language. In this sense, Bakhtin's (1986) argument (against De Saussure's - 1960 - opposite view) that the structure does not in itself determine the action, but the action might determine the subjective meaning of the structure has to underline such pedagogic implementations.

## **9.5. Summary**

In this final chapter I have recapitulated what theoretical assumptions I have sought to demonstrate in this thesis, and what I have meant to achieve from practical classroom operationalizations. Then, after having acknowledged possible difficulties and long-term implications of my principled methodology, I have pointed out some potential theoretical/practical developments in my line of enquiry.

So that, I have indicated a further theoretical development taking as its starting point the political view - implicit in my

assumption - that a dramatic discourse in poetry always aims to a 'democratization' of a total, representational experience of 'poetic sublime'. This is always a plural experience, realized within infinite possible worlds (acting readers may settle into and inhabit) and depending on the different interactive processes activated by different acting readers upon the poetic text.

In this way, I have asserted that it could be possible to argue against the unimaginative current of the 'social realism', a widespread critical trend which, with the excuse of promoting a democratization of art, actually flattens imagination to a merely referential level. This, as I have pointed out, constitutes also the social-discourse principle on which most textbooks are based.

Any textbook design which could be derived from the rationale I have advocated in this thesis, on the contrary, should necessarily take into account the theoretical grounds underlying classroom practice. In other words, I have claimed that students/acting-readers should be elicited to consciously experience the 'reality' of iconically represented feelings, thoughts, and selves and the 'unreality' of a conventionalized social structure which detaches people from the imaginative sources of their whole body/thought selves. The means to achieve such an experience is the liberating, virtual power of poetic language as it is discursively actualized through drama.

After all, it is poetic language itself what prompts readers to 'embody' voices, bodies, emotions, and thoughts within their iconic selves displaced into the representational contexts of poetry. Isn't it an almost spontaneous response to poetic language that of reading aloud, for instance, John Donne's love poems, rather than perusing them in silence and isolation? Those poems may give words to situations, evoke imaginative contexts, and, at the same time, they can enrich and give additional dimensions to everyday experience by 'dramatizing' it, and making it representational. Teaching this to students means helping them feel deeper and appreciate their own and the others' feelings and thoughts by 'physically' sharing them through the powerfully evocative images and rhythms of poetry.

In sum, the principled pedagogic position I have developed in this thesis is that a teacher should try to elicit in his students the experience of imaginative flights through poetic language into infinite possible, even conflicting virtual worlds they may inhabit bodily, intellectually and emotionally. In this way, a teacher may provoke in students/acting-readers the consciousness that the aesthetic experience of dramatic discourse in poetry may be even more real and true than reality itself. Therefore (to return to the poem I have started my thesis with) Keats' final lines of his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*:

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

might indeed epitomize very well the total aesthetic experience of inhabiting - physically and mentally, imaginatively and in actuality - the representational world of poetry.

## NOTES

### CHAPTER 1

- 1 (p.22) Linklater's (1992) distinction between 'which voice? The texts' and 'whose voice? The man' can epitomize very well the two bottom-up and top-down aspects interacting in my notion of 'voice', though she uses these two aspects in a completely different sense, since she highlights exactly that distinction between a notion of 'appropriate' vocalization of a text, and an abstract notion of a 'voice' encoded in a text (see pp. 204-214 in her book).  
I find also many affinities between my concept of voice as a reader/text interaction, and De Man's (1979) following definition of 'voice' which includes both the subjectivity of the speaker and the structural objectivity of the text:  
  
"The term *voice*, even when used in a grammatical terminology as when we speak of the passive or interrogative voice, is, of course, a metaphor inferring by analogy the intent of the subject from the structure of the predicate." (p.18).
- 2 (p.26) The reference here is to the computer-generated 'virtual realities': they provide people with subjective psycho-physical imaginative experiences which are, nevertheless, controlled by the computer program.
- 3 (p.26) In his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, Keats represents exactly man's efforts to transcend the limits of reality in order to identify himself with the 'virtual' world of art, an ideal world of beauty where the duality existent/non-existent is denied. Man's aesthetic experience, in Keats' poem, ends with the reconciliation within his mind of the real world and the ideal world of art, and this occurs through a sort of 'suspension of disbelief': man has to believe in the virtual reality the experience of art generates.
- 4 (p.26) Walt Whitman, for instance, very explicitly describes such poetic 'imaginary flights', allowing divergence from social codes, in his whole *Song of Myself*.
- 5 (p.28) An example of interpretation based on spoken discourse is, in the field of stylistics, the one Widdowson (1974) achieves from the 'intra-textual' onomatopoeic relations he identifies into some lines by Pope:

"... Or o'er cold coffee trifle with the spoon,  
Count the slow clock, and dine exact at noon ..."  
(*Epistle to Miss Blount, on her leaving the town after the coronation*)

Widdowson remarks how "the phonological relations between 'cold', 'coffee', 'spoon', and 'count', 'slow', 'clock' ... associate all these words in a pattern", and how "the words immediately preceding 'cold coffee' ('Or o'er') ... are the *onomatopoeic representation of a yawn*." (p.206-7, my parenthesis and italics).

Another discursal 'representation of a yawn' achieved by my students during a drama workshop on Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is based on either a 'metrical infraction' ( an opening trochee in a series of iambic tetrameters and trimeters) which slackens the rhythm, or an alliteration (the 'exhalation' in uttering the two /h/s, and the word 'over', again), thus giving the sense of solitude and boredom:

"Higher and higher every day,  
Till over the mast at noon -"  
(Part one, lines 29-30)

Obviously, examples of spoken discourse are more frequent in the field of acting training than in stylistics, though they are less systematically analyzed. In focusing on the alliteration she identifies in some lines from Shakespeare's *Henry V*, for instance, Linklater (1992) gives her own discursal interpretation of the alliteration she identifies in them. These lines represent Henry's reaction at the 'tennis balls' received as a gift from the Dauphin of France:

"And tell the pleasant Prince this *mock* of his  
Hath turn'd his balls to gunstones; ...  
... for many a thousand widows  
Shall this his *mock mock* out their dear husbands;  
*Mock* mothers from their sons, *mock* castles down;"  
(I.2. lines 282-7, my italics).

And this is the 'voice' Linklater achieves from the spoken discourse analysis she provides:

"The onomatopoeic device of the word 'mock' refers to the tennis balls Henry has just received. When the lips stongly explode the 'm' and the 'o' sounds, (and the final /k/ sound, we might add) the word makes the sound of a ball racquet.

If the actor is capable of putting together the exploding sounds on lips and tongue, the image of a hard-hitting tennis game with husbands and sons and mothers and castles as the balls, ... he will discover the character of this young man. Not just angry, ... but dangerous and witty at the height of passion." (p.80, my parentesis).

Of course, all these spoken discourse analysis refer to totally subjective 'voices' the readers achieve within the poetic text.

- 6 (p.37) In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967), Tom Stoppard has two of the characters of Shakespeare's play 'improvise' and create a parallel text to the 'original' one. In a drama workshop on *King Lear* (Guido 1992a) students attained similar discursal effects by improvising 'asides' on the unconscious facets of the characters' personalities as they were achieved by the students themselves from the text. This is an example: ...

REAGAN: (*conscious*) "I am made of that same mettle as my sister / And price me at her worth. ...  
 (*unconscious*) I've always felt excluded by my father, / There was always Goneril, and after Cordelia / The innocent Cordelia, and what about me? / I can't stand it! I want to take revenge! / I'll take my father's kingdom, so I can / Have all that love that I miss so much. ..."  
 (pp.56-7).

Also Edward Bond with his play *Lear* (1978) creates a parallel text to *King Lear*. In his case, however, the authentication of the original text occurs by the technique of 'expanding' a *privileged theme*. So that, for example, the following lines from *King Lear*:

"No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison.  
 We two alone will sing like birds i'the cage;"  
 (V, 3, lines 8-9)

undergo a process of 'expansion-by-hybridization', that is, the theme of 'the bird i'the cage' is intertextually mixed with the popular tale of the 'Emperor's Nightingale'.

Steven Berkoff, on the other hand, undertakes a process of 'poetry-authentication-by-actualization' in his play *Greek* (1980), where he sets the character of Oedipus (Eddy) in the corruption of contemporary society, making him expressing himself with a contemporary vocabulary though retaining the 'bloom' of the original rhythm:

"EDDY: Ten years have come and gone, scattered their leaves on us / drenched us in blazing sun and rain / toughened my sinews to combat the world. I improved the lot of our fair cafe by my intense efforts, aided of course by my sweet mate / got rid of sloth and stale achievement / which once was thought as normal / I made the city golden era time / ..." (II, 1, p.16).

The Greek poetic drama is also authenticated through a similar process of actualization by Tony Harrison (1985). Differently from Berkoff, however, Harrison experiments characters and situations of the original texts within contemporary rhythms and language.

- 7 (p.37) In *Travesties* (1975), Stoppard has the 'characters' of James Joyce, Lenin, and the Dada poet Tristan Tzara 'inter-acting' together; this situation allows him to 'experiment' with their peculiar styles by ironically deconstructing them.  
 A similar kind of technique was adopted during a creative-writing workshop based on poetic drama (Guido 1994b). On that occasion, my



students had the 'characters' of Keats and Wordsworth inter-act together, thus deconstructing and 'hybridizing' their styles into a mini-play. This led them to subsequent, more conscious, re-construction and discourse analysis of the original poems.

- 8 (p.37) The musical *Cats*, Lloyd Webber derived from Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939).
- 9 (p.37) Stoppard, again, arranges the opening scene of his play *After Magritte* as a deliberate, ironic reproduction of Magritte's painting *La Condition Humaine*, so that he lets his characters move and 'make sense' within such an 'absurdist frame'.

## CHAPTER 2

- 1 (p.50) Among the most interesting developments in Schema Theory there are those ones by:  
Rumelhart 1975, 1977, 1980, 1984; Clarke and Silberstein 1977; Schank and Abelson 1977; Mandler and Johnson 1977; Anderson 1977, 1978; Adams and Collins 1979; Coady 1979; Stein and Glenn 1979; Stanovich 1980, 1981, 1982; McClelland and Rumelhart 1981; Singer 1981; Johnson 1981, 1982; Downing and Leong 1982; Hudson 1982; Mitchell 1982; Rumelhart and McClelland 1982; Stanovich and West 1983; Taylor and Taylor 1983; Carrell 1983a, b, 1984a; Carrell and Eisterhold 1983; Anderson and Pearson 1984; Gough 1984; Samuels and Kamil 1984; Perfetti 1985; Waltz and Pollack 1985; McClelland, Rumelhart and the PDP Research Group 1986.
- 2 (p.50) Examples of 'divergent' words, stored within schemata which are different from the conventionally expected ones, can be found, for instance, in Dylan Thomas. The following lines are taken from one of his poems (my italics):

Who  
Are you  
Who is born  
In the next room  
So loud to my own

(*Vision and Prayer*)

- 3 (p.50) The reader's creation of subjective mental imagery, therefore, is determined by his allowing his own individual schemata to interact with the 'divergent' representation of reality in poetry. The two examples from Sylvia Plath and Emily Dickinson I am reproducing below, therefore, may have different effects on different readers, because the readers' own personal experiences and schematic expectations are different. These are the lines:

Let me sit in a flowerpot, / The spider won't notice. / My heart is a stopped geranium.

(Plath: *Who*, from *Poem for a Birthday*)

Where Ships of Purple - gently toss - / On Seas of Daffodil - / Fantastic Sailors - mingle - / And then - The Wharf is still!

(Dickinson, 1861).

- 4 (p.51) This assumption dates back to Berkeley (1709/1910) who asserts that the perception of a visual scene depends upon the positioning of the objects in relation to the different angles of inclination of the eyes. This, in its turn, provokes subjective degrees of focus/blurring of the perceived image. (On Berkeley's theory, see also Bruce and Green 1990, p.142).

- 5 (p.55) Applications of the PDP model to situations of English language and literature teaching, with L2 readers, have given fruitful results also in terms of language acquisition, as I have reported in a previous study - see Guido 1993a).

- 6 (p.57) In this sense, I do not agree with Elam (1980) when, by applying the notion of text and discourse to a 'semiotics of theatre and drama', he asserts that "it is legitimate to term the multilinear - but integrated flow of information theatrical *discourse* and the resulting structure articulated in space and time a *text*." (p.44, Elam's italics). The reason for my disagreement is twofold: first of all, by talking about a 'flow of information' in theatrical discourse, Elam seems to imply that information is already contained within the text, so that it is merely a question of a one-way transmission of information rather than 'the reader/viewer's pragmatical achievement of meaning', as I define discourse.

The second reason for my disagreement with Elam concerns the very distinction that he makes between *text* and *discourse*. If, for him, discourse is meant as a communication of information, then also the viewer's perception of the theatrical space and time within which dramatic communication takes place is to be ascribed to the domain of discourse, rather than to the domain of text, insofar as it is a

subjective achievement of space/time coordinates within which the reader/viewer articulates his own theatrical experience. In the course of this study, in fact, I shall maintain that in the field of semiotics applied to drama, both the actantial and the viewers' stances (macro- and micro-communication, as I shall define them - see chapters on 'practice') are to be referred to as *discourse*. The 're-textualization' of a dramatic discourse, instead, can be meant as a tape-recording, or a new script, that is, token of words on a page or photograms on a film. However, as textual 'inert objects', they are also ready to be discursively re-accessed and re-interpreted.

- 7 (p.84) Interestingly, also in translation (which is a mode of reading to produce a discourse interpretation), we get the same kind of model of *reference, force, and effect*, and the easiest thing to achieve in translation is reference (see Widdowson 1991a). It is easier to achieve a consensus as to how rendering a reference from one language into another. Force is more tricky, and effect becomes almost impossible. Anyone who deals generally in translation of literature, for example, and especially in translation of poetry, will know that it is the effect what is so elusive when he tries to render the actual reading into another language. Therefore, producing a translation of a text, which the translator believes will stimulate and create a certain effect on the reader, involves a total alteration of the force as well as a total alteration of the reference, and in poetic translation this is very common. If, in fact, the translator believes that really what the poet means goes, above all, for an effect, then he knows quite well that a literal poetic translation does not have the effect of the poem; it is simply another poem. A similar effect can be achieved only when he actually sacrifices any equivalent in terms of reference, by substituting it with some other element, because, if that new word referentially means something else, maybe it can produce the same effect.

### CHAPTER 3

- 1 (p.95) Examples of 'post-modernist' pastiches of various poets' styles can be found in Parrot (1990), who edits work from many literary competitions, based on "encapsulations of famous poems, replies from some of the personages, animals and so on, addressed in famous poems" (p.ix) as well as on having 'some particular poets' rewriting in their own style others' poems, such as, for instance: Dylan Thomas rewriting Wordsworth's *Daffodils*, or Geoffrey Chaucer rewriting Larkin's *Toad*, and many others (pp.36-45). Widdowson (1992, chapter 13), proposes a reformulation for pedagogic purposes of one of Roethke's poems into

Frost's distinctive style, and I (Guido 1992a) provide protocols of my students turning the Shakespearean blank verse of some scenes from *King Lear* into the peculiar dramatic styles of Sophocles, Coward, Ayckbourn, Beckett (pp.45-8). I also reproduce somewhere else (Guido 1994b) the script of a miniplay created by my students and based on a pastiche of some Romantic poets' styles.

- 2 (p.101) Queneau's variations on the very simple tale he tells go from the plain and explicit 'notations' to 'litotes', 'métaphoriquement', 'retrograde', 'surprises', 'reve', 'hésitations', 'précisions', 'negativités', 'animisme', 'anagrammes', 'onomatopés', 'ampoulé', 'vulgaire', 'olfactif', 'gustatif', 'tactile', 'visuel', 'auditif', 'comédie', 'hellénismes', only to quote some of them. as Eco (1983) remarks in the preface to Queneau's book, such variations resemble *Cyrano's* fantastic variations on the theme of his nose (p.xv).

- 3 (p.105) In the context of such a process of deconstruction and reconstruction operated by the reader on a literary text, it is worth mentioning the analysis carried out by Hassan (1986, 1987) on post-modern discourse as divided into two areas: 'deconstructive' and 'reconstructive'. Each of these areas is subdivided into particular categories summarized by Crowl (1992), who puts them in relation to Shakespeare's performances. Crowl recaps Hassan's categories in this way:

"On the deconstructive side, according to Hassan, are:

INDETERMINACY: All poststructural literary theories reject determinate meaning of the text.

FRAGMENTATION: Such theories trust only the fragment, rejecting all notions of organization or synthesis.

DECANONIZATION: For Hassan this term signifies the rejection of all master codes, conventions, and authorities and signals the critic's urge to 'deconstruct, displace, decenter, demistify, the logocentric ... order of things.' (Hassan 1987, p.445).

On the reconstructive agenda we find the following central terms:

HYBRIDIZATION: This denotes the mixture and mutation of genres in parody, travesty, pastiche, or the development of hybrid styles and forms - the nonfiction novel, paracriticism, paraliterature, mixed media, happenings, the new journalism.

CARNIVALIZATION: This is Bakhtin's key contribution to such criticism, which celebrates literature's ludic and anarchic qualities. Through its emphasis on play and carnival, Bakhtin's work has obvious affinities with Shakespeare, as already revealed in several recent studies (see particularly Bristol 1985, and Tennenhouse 1986).

PERFORMANCE: The very nature of the postmodern ethos invites participation. Indeterminacy insists that the reader-auditor-critic (as the rereader) is essential to the creation of the very text itself." (p.52).

4 (p.108) A sonnet that illustrates the way in which even all kinds of dramatic, multivocal interpretations are, ultimately, 'held within' an established metrical/rhyming pattern (thus exerting a control over the rhythm and the thought-movement of the poetic exchange), is the one which encloses the first dialogue between Romeo and Juliet (Act I, scene 5, lines 94-107). It can be interpreted in a multiplicity of physical and emotional ways, but the pattern of the sonnet cannot be denied.

5 (p.113) I reproduce an excerpt from Stoppard's *Dogg's Hamlet* (1980), the play Stoppard himself says he derived from a section of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations (p.7). Here, the association meaning/sound in the language of Shakespeare does not work anymore even for the people who are going to perform the Shakespearean tragedy:

"(BAKER fans himself with his cap and makes a comment about the heat.)  
 BAKER: Afternoons! Phew - cycle racks hardly butter fag ends. (\*Comment about the heat.)  
 CHARLIE: (Agreeing with him.) Fag ends likely butter consequential.  
 ABEL: Very true. (\*Needs salt.)  
 CHARLIE: Eh?  
 ABEL: (Putting out his hand.) Very true.  
 (CHARLIE takes a salt cellar out of his satchel. CHARLIE passes ABEL the salt.)  
 Cube (\*Thank you.) ...  
 (BAKER passes CHARLIE his salt-cellar. They eat their sandwiches. The explanation for the next passage of dialogue is that ABEL and BAKER, who are due shortly to participate in a school play performed in its original language - English - start rehearsing some of their lines.)  
 ABEL: (Suddenly.) Who's there?  
 BAKER: Nay, answer me.  
 ABEL Long live the King. Get thee to bed.  
 BAKER: For this relief, much thanks. ...  
 (They are not acting these lines at all, merely uttering them, tonelessly.) ...  
 BAKER: But look - the russet mantle ...  
 (He has gone wrong. Pause.)  
 ABEL: (Trying to help him.) Clad - walks ...  
 (ABEL and BAKER don't always structure their sentences correctly.)  
 BAKER: (Shakes his head and swears softly to himself.)  
 Bicycles!"

In cases such as this one illustrated by Stoppard's play, we might rightly talk about a 'symbolic fallacy', which is the term Johnson-Laird, Hermann, and Chaffin (1984) use to describe the continual disintegration of the network of symbolic interconnections in order to use the language meaningfully in the real world. In the world of the Stoppard play, the language of Shakespeare has lost its symbolic contacts with the real world, therefore its speakers (the players) behave like the aliens of Johnson-Laird et al.'s example, who attempt to learn the languages of the inhabitants of the Earth just by listening to the mere voices in radio broadcasts. As Baddeley (1990) remarks "they would never learn the semantics of the language, unless they could observe its relationship with the objects and the events to

which it referred." (p.335).

6 (p.114) There is another, parallel analogy to the game of chess which could relevantly illustrate the iconic disruption of the symbol/real-thing relationship in favour of the 'role' a symbol plays in a representational world: I refer to the Elizabethan theatrical convention of having male actors playing female roles. In that case, something which would have been considered odd in a real context, became totally acceptable in the representational context of the stage through a 'suspension of disbelief' which allowed audience to transcend the conventional Signifier/Signified association and consider only the iconic 'role' of the actor's body in the context of the play. Recent acting theories which refuse to consider the 'body-as-a-sign' notion, use this same Elizabethan discrepancy (and, actually, any other incongruity) either as a device to focus the attention on actual 'social roles' (as Caryl Churchill - 1979 - does in her play *Cloud Nine*), or, however, as a device to create irony. In this way they diminish, or indeed, utterly deny any sort of imaginative 'suspension of disbelief' in the audience.

7 (p.118) In his essay on Dylan Thomas, Treece (1949) underlines the way in which the poet creates surprising effects by inventing neologisms based on the bringing together of words from completely different semantic areas (i.e., what I define as 'fantastic pairs'). Treece carries out this analysis by making a comparison with Hopkins's similar way of 'composing' new words. These are some examples:

Hopkins

Womb-life  
Bonehouse  
Sea-corpse  
Waterworld  
Star-eyed  
Hornlight

Thomas

Womb-eyed  
Bonerail  
Sea-faiths  
Water-clock  
Star-gestured  
Owl-light

8 (p.119) The 'process of estrangement' of the two concepts forming the 'fantastic pair' can be brought to the reader's consciousness through the acting technique conceived by Linklater (1992). She suggests:

"As words are juxtaposed, new pictures flash into the mind.

Take the word EARTH ...

Let the word turn into a picture, breathe it in, let it speak.

Now take the word MOTHER.

Let the word turn into a picture, breathe it in, let it speak

Now put MOTHER in front of EARTH - MOTHER EARTH.

Picture; breathe the picture in; release the picture out through the words.

Now take the words EARTH MOTHER.

*Picture; breathe the picture in; release the picture out through the words. ...*

If your breath and voice are sensitive to the changing picture, the word EARTH will sound subtly different each time you say it because the feeling or mood that accompanies each picture is different." (p.45).

Linklater's practical suggestions and predictions find a foundation also in cognitive-psychology experiments: Baddeley (1982), for instance, demonstrates that 'feelings and mood' change in relation to any change in the combination of two 'independent' words (to be distinguished from the 'interactive' ones conventionally associated and then stored under different contextual encodings - i.e. 'strawberry jam' and 'traffic jam', whose recall and recognition are automatic). So that, for instance, combinations such as 'city-dirty' and 'city-village' produce effects on the readers which are not based on conventional 'storage', but, rather, on individual 'retrieval' (i.e. 'dirty' affecting the mental image of the city as 'polluted', or 'corrupted' etc., and 'village' influencing, instead, the perception of the 'size' of the city).

- 9 (p.120) The Surrealist games in visual and poetic art (see Alexandrian 1970) can be considered experiments in 'artistic estrangement' carried out through the technique of the 'fantastic pair': a number of people participated in these games, and each participant made a drawing or a sentence without seeing what the previous person had drawn or written. The final results of such 'blind' collaboration are both visually and verbally striking, just because the various unrelated parts are fantastically brought together and made to interact and to produce an effect. The most famous visual game is the *Exquisite Corpse*; the literary game is the 'poetry of chance', and these are some examples published by *La Révolution Surréaliste*: "The winged vapour seduced the locked bird"; or "The strike of the stars corrects the house without sugar".

#### CHAPTER 4

- 1 (p.133) This little poem by Emily Dickinson can perfectly express the idea I intend to convey at this point, in favour of a spoken poem:

A word is dead  
When it is said,  
Some say.

I say it just  
Begins to live  
That day.

(1872)

- 2 (p.136) In reference to the notion of the 'paradoxical' reconciliation of opposites (physical/mental, concrete/abstract, public/private) which occurs in the creation of dramatic discourse from a poetic text, it could be interesting to notice that, in his definition of the theatrical 'empty space', Peter Brook (1990) describes it as a space 'where the invisible can appear'. I would like to interpret the sense of the word 'invisible' as the 'sound in abstract', that is, as the 'voice/body' discorsal potentialities which can be achieved within the form of the poetic text. On the other hand, the word 'appear' may be interpreted as the 'sound in concrete', that is, as the acting reader's experience of dramatic discourse actualization of the poetic text. In reality, both *textual form* and *discorsal experience* are two opposites which come to be reconciled in the process of dramatic-discourse creation in poetry. To illustrate his concept, Peter Brook makes a parallel with music:

"Despite the absurd means that produce it, through the concrete in music we recognize the abstract, we understand that ordinary men and their clumsy instruments are transformed by an art of possession." (p.47).

A similar parallel with the 'Dionysial', all-possessing power of music can be found in two lines from Yeats's poem *Among School Children*, where the difference between the *abstract form* of music (corresponding to my notion of 'text') and its *concrete experience* (corresponding to 'discourse') are totally fused within the 'public' and 'physical' (and yet also 'private' and 'mental') involvement in a dance (corresponding to my 'dramatic representation of poetry'). These are the lines:

"O body swayed to music, O brightened glance,  
How can we know the dancer from the dance?"

Paul de Man (1979), in reference to this same poem, comments the impossibility of making "the distinctions that would shelter us from the error of identifying what cannot be identified" (p.11); he says: "There can be no dance without a dancer, no sign without a referent" which, we might add, would actualize that sign into one of its discorsal interpretations by means of "entities accessible to the senses such as bodies, persons, or icons." (p.12).

- 3 (p.137) It is interesting to mention, in this respect, Jakobson's (1960) remark on one of Stanislavski's actors who managed to evoke limitless emotional variations of the same utterance, even transcending the semantic denotation of the words:

"(He) told me how at his audition he was asked by the famous director to make forty different messages from the phrase *Segodnja vecerom* 'This evening', by diversifying its expressive tint. He made a list of some forty emotional situations, then emitted the given phrase in accordance with each of these situations, which the audience had to recognize only



from the changes in the sound shape of the same two words." (p.354).

- 4 (p.145) This would allow a process of authorial appropriation carried out by the actors, in many ways similar to the one I have just advocated for the 'acting reader'.
- 5 (p.145) The interconnection between 'abstraction' and 'physicality', which deconstructive critique tends to ascribe to texts by means of their 'discoursal' performance, becomes the subject of Stoppard's (1972) play *Jumpers*. Stoppard really uses such a notion for comic effects when he theatrically represents a kind of philosophical textuality - and indeed the most abstract, the less 'physically performable' one - by means of the somersaults and the tumbling executed by the group of the 'Incredible-Radical-Liberal-Jumpers'. The group of Jumpers include: "logical positivists mainly, with a linguistic analyst or two, a couple of Benthamite utilitarians, lapsed Kantians and empiricists generally, and, of course, behaviourists."
- 6 (p.150) Actually, Brecht derived the concept of 'estrangement' from Sklovski: it was the poet Tretyakov, one of Sklovski's and Meyerhold's friends who explained the concept to Brecht. The Russian director Meyerhold, in fact, formulated a theory of theatrical estrangement, or, in his words, of the actor's 'self-admiration', drawing inspiration from the emotional detachment he observed in the Chinese theatre (see Leach 1989).
- 7 (p.152) A concrete example of the self absorbed in the others 'experientially', is provided by Wilshire (1991):

"I cut myself on the leg. Others rush over and I see them grimacing as they see the wound. ... (F)or me the face of the other as he sees the wound reinforces and molds my grimace through my sight of his face, and indeed his face fills out the body-image which is mine: he supplies a visually experienced face for my body-image. ... It is my body-image in the sense that it is experienced by my organism, but it is not my body-image if by that is meant that it is simply and directly of only my organism's face. I am by-for-with-and-in others experientially." (p.26).

In *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty (1962) also asserts that our responses to the environment are mimetic: we embody shapes and rhythms; so that, for instance, we shrink and change the tone of our voice when we deal with something small; we smile or shout if the other does the same. Winnicott (1965) points out, however, that we mimetically involve ourselves with the others only by communicating our awareness of ourselves. He expresses this condition of conscious merging with the other in an interview with a poetess:

"She said: 'You see a cat and you are with it: it's a subject, not an object.'  
 I said: 'It's as if you were living in a world of subjective objects.'  
 And she said: 'That's a good way of putting it. That's why I write poetry. That's the sort of thing that's the foundation of poetry.'" (p.186).

In dramatic action it happens the same: acting readers give presence to absence through physical, emotional and perceptual ways of empathic expression. Moreover, poetic language itself, with its shapes and rhythms, prompts physical, mimetic embodiment in the acting reader: in a draft of a preface to *Fleurs du Mal*, Baudelaire (1955) remarks how the movement of the poetic line reproduces the movement of the body in space:

"(T)he poetic phrase can imitate (and in this, it is like the art of music and the science of mathematics) a horizontal line, an ascending or descending vertical line; ... it can rise straight up to heaven without losing its breath, or go perpendicularly to hell with the velocity of any weight." (p.xiii, reproduced in Wilshire 1991, p.41)

We can assert, therefore, that perception is not be considered as something just restricted to sight, but it unconsciously involves the whole self as it exists among the others.

8 (p.153) Locke (1975) exemplifies this predicament by asserting that a person can shift from one body to another and inhabit all of them. The Lockian idea of transferability of the self is argued by Strawson (1963) who claims, instead, that selves can be experienced only in a common contextual framework. Goffman (1974) takes the idea of 'frame analysis' to its extremes by asserting that every human manifestation is significant only if it is 'framed' within a socially acceptable situation. Of course, this assumption does not apply to divergent poetic contexts.

9 (p.154) This is also what Pirandello (1987) asserts in his *One, No One, One Hundred Thousand*. The protagonist of Pirandello's novel, Moscarda, actually, starts a conscious and constant discipline on his body aimed to encounter his self in an estranged, 'objective' "shock of decentredness". The famous 'mirror scene' in the novel represents the 'protocol' of the very moment in which the protagonist encounters his self out of himself.

CHAPTER 5

- 1 (p.161) I actually maintain that students have to be encouraged to develop 'by themselves' the capability of interrelating theory and practical stylistic procedures in the process of achieving their own dramatic discourse interpretation from the poetic text. In other terms, they have to be aware of either what theoretical assumptions are underlying their practice, or what is the methodological line they are following and what objectives they are going to achieve. My position is that not only teachers but also students have to be conscious of the cultural assumptions justifying pedagogical choices.
  
- 2 (p.162) In this sense, I do not agree also with Adorno (1978) when he asserts that "the work of art postulates the presence of a non-existent world that comes in conflict with reality" (p.100, my translation) because I claim instead that the alternative, virtual world, far from being hostile to reality, extends man's range of emotional experience. So, it does not constitute a limit, but the very greatness of art.
  
- 3 (p.162) This is really quite a critical question: it is possible, for instance, to find something quite close to the point I am raising now in the ongoing debate concerning how to experience the poetic language of Shakespeare. There is, in fact, a very common school of thought asserting that it is impossible to appreciate Shakespeare and to come to terms with his language by simply reading it, unless you actually see it performed. My position concerning poetry dramatization as a pedagogic procedure is that I am neither advocating a traditional silent, inward enactment, nor a 'theatrical performance' meant as the 'product' of a dramatic re-textualization - that is, as the rendering of previous interpretation, as an overt translation from page to stage. Instead, I claim a performance-in-progress, something similar to what goes on in the rehearsal room, where a multiplicity of interpretations interact and combine into a multiplicity of dramatic discourse possibilities.
  
- 4 (p.163) Meyerhold, the Russian director, defines such a displacing duality of self-perception - typical of the actor - as the 'first I' and the 'second I', or, rather, as the 'creative process' and the 'technique', or, also, as 'imagination' and 'biomechanics' (see Leach 1989, p.53-54).
  
- 5 (p.169) The authorial role of the acting reader, for instance, could take into account also the use he makes of tense/aspect choices, or

mood/modality choices to modify his perspective of the represented event, thus becoming aware of all the possible effects created, in terms of proximity and distance, by the use of a more or less formal register, but also in terms of style and tone of voice.

- 6 (p.173) This methodological approach develops, during the third, interactive phase, into a 'stage' (in both meanings of the word) of reflection upon mental operations in dramatic interaction. In this sense, it seems to me that a methodology of poetry teaching based on 'applied dialogism' has to recognize the influence of either Vygotsky (1972) - with his theory on the importance of interaction *with* individuals - during its first two phases (1. to do; 2. to observe), or Piaget (1952) - advocating an interaction *within* the individual - during its third phase (3. to reflect).

This process Vygotsky (1962) describes as developing "from the social to the individual" (p.20) is supported by Bakhtin (1986b) himself when he asserts either that "learning to talk" brings to cognitive acquisition, or that "the material embodiment of signs" brings to consciousness formation (p.11). In this, he seems to be close to Lacan's (1977) view that the self is brought into being with the language, insofar as the unconscious itself is structured like a language. However, differently from Lacan's reduction of schemata into propositional language schemata, Bachtin's theory implies rather clearly also the 'body/thought', analogic nature of schemata taking shape in social, mental/physical interaction.

- 7 (p.178) Such a stance is very much in tune with Foucault's (1977) definition of our post-modern condition as an age of interrogation of alternatives displacing an age of search for the ultimate truth. Moreover, the 'dramatization of alternatives' characteristic of my 'applied-dramatology' classroom is also a distinctive feature of all post-modern art. For example, Benamou (1977) says:

"the unifying mode of the post-modern is now what matters. One might ask what causes this pervading need to act out art which used to suffice by itself on the page or the museum wall. What is this new presence, and how has it replaced the presence which poems and pictures silently proffered before? Has everything from politics to poetics become theatrical?" (Quoted in Ulmer, p.230).

This new 'acting presence' that has replaced the previous silent one in a post-modern conception of poetics is, in our case, the *acting reader* who, in a poetry-classroom situation, can become capable of activating a 'total' mode of discursual communication beyond mere rationality. Thinking and emotions suggest physical forms, and physical forms generate thinking and emotions: this means that students' emotional responses to a poetic text can activate poetic possibilities of physical representations of emotions and viceversa, so that one level

really feeds the other. In this way, the non-arbitrary signifier/signified relationship in poetic language shifts from a textual to a spatial dimension. Students, therefore, can feel that their bodies and their voices could also be interpreted propositionally, like 'signs' in a dramatic discursal representation of poetry; in this way, they would create what Artaud (1977) defines as "spatial poetry" which is realized through "substantial imagery, the equivalent of word imagery." (p.28). And then he continues:

"this whole complex of gestures, signs, postures and sound ... this language which develops all its physical and poetic effects on all conscious levels and in all senses, must lead to thought adopting deep attitudes which might be called *active metaphysics*." (p.33).

8 (p.179) Stanislavski (1981b) asserts that a theory like this, applied to the scene of the class, would mean that "being surrounded by these things (works of art) for the better part of our hours in school we could not help but develop some standard of beauty." (p.36).

9 (p.180) On the other hand, however, in pursuing a pedagogic action based on principles such as those I have been advocating in this study, the teacher has to be so sensitive and careful in his elicitations as to avoid any unwanted psychological violence on the students' sensitivity. Activities resembling psychodrama, for example, are very complicated to be dealt with by the teacher; he has to be very tactful, and he has to know exactly when to avoid pushing for students' responses.

Moreover he has also to be constantly aware not to commit another type of violence on his students, which is that of creating just an illusion of dialogism, but in reality performing in front of the class a sort of outstanding 'one-man show'.

Then, once students/acting-readers create things in the poetry classroom, the teacher should be very careful not to reject them without allowing students to justify them, because in such a case he would over-exercise his power. The teacher should, on the contrary, take into account Maslow's (1943) principle that receiving esteem from the others is the only way to self-esteem.

CHAPTER 6

- 1 (p.189) However, although Kant recognizes the role of imagination in conceptualizing 'bodily' sensations (by imposing upon them a formal structure which gives them coherence), he still maintains that cognition - leading to 'formal', objective knowledge - transcends the physical, 'material', subjective dimension. In other words, 'objective knowledge' is constituted by a superior, transcendental, categorial structure which does not depend upon empirical experience. (It is, in T.S. Eliot's poetic terms: "...an abstraction / Remaining a perpetual possibility / Only in the world of speculation." - *Burnt Norton*, I, lines 6-8).
- Subsequently, however, in his theory of the 'reflective judgement', Kant (1965) recognizes a more active role of imagination - characterized by both abstract and physical components - capable of generating new schematic knowledge by differently re-organizing 'material' representations.
- 2 (p.190) In Searle (1983) 'intentionality' as expressed by the speaker - the "meaning intention" - actually reflects "the conditions of satisfaction of the speech act" (p.164) inherent in the language - the "sincerity conditions" - without any hint at actual, physical contexts of interaction.
- 3 (p.191) Actually, I assert that, in the context of my argument, the difference between the propositional stance advocated by Pylyshyn, and the analogue stance advocated by Paivio lies only in the acting reader's positioning in relation to the text, corresponding to the poet's positioning in relation to the poetic experience. By upholding the primacy of the analogic experience, Paivio positions the focus of his enquiry on the first-person perspective of the individual the moment he emotionally undergoes the experience. Pylyshyn, instead, by maintaining the primacy of the propositional experience, focuses upon the individual's recollection/rationalization - or verbalization - of the experience from a more distanced, third-person perspective. Therefore, I argue that poetry is the poet's and the reader's analogic, first-person experience which is propositionally rationalized - through the poet's verbalization and the reader's perception - from a third-person perspective. In other terms, my position is that the poem 'as received', cannot be received as an analogue. It can be re-interpreted as an analogue, thus re-processing and authenticating the original analogic experience of the poet who subsequently rationalized it into a propositional poetic text.
- Nevertheless, there are various poetic attempts at a diegetic,

propositional approximation to a degree of mimetic, analogic verbal expression. An example of this kind is represented by the Imagist poetry, which is pruned from any redundant word in order to convey the immediacy and the indeterminacy of the original analogic experience, like these lines by Ezra Pound, for instance:

And life slips by like a field mouse  
                                 Not shaking the grass.  
 (in Heaney and Hughes eds. 1982, p.31).

Another example of propositional approximation to the concentrated analogic experience can be considered the Japanese poetic form of the Haiku, like the following one written by Gregory Corso (1989):

Cosmos entire  
 enwrapped by the void  
 like a wheel covered tire  
 (*Haiku*, p.17)

Both the Imagist and the Haiku texts cannot but be propositional, though they manage to express the straightforwardness of the first-person analogic experience. Efforts in rendering the immediacy of analogic perception seems to be the objective of most of the Eastern poetry, as this translation from the Chinese - emblematically made by the 'Imagist' Pound - shows:

Blue mountains to the north of the walls,  
 White river winding about them;  
 Here we must make separation  
 And go out through a thousand miles of dead grass,  
 Mind like a floating wide cloud,  
 Sunset like the parting of old acquaintances  
 Who bow over their clasped hands at a distance.  
 Our horses neigh to each other  
                                 as we are departing.  
 (*Rihaku* - in Heaney and Hughes 1982, pp.415-6).

As for the Romantic poetry, instead, experience is deliberately described through a propositional, detached mode, with no attempt to communicate it in an analogic manner, as in the mentioned *The Solitary Reaper* by Wordsworth, where massive redundancy is in the manner of its propositional description ('motionless' and 'still'; 'mounting' and 'up', and then also: 'single', 'solitary', 'by herself', and 'alone' only in the first stanza. In reference to my discussion, see also Widdowson 1992, who turns *The Solitary Reaper* into a Haiku, pp.171-8). Moreover, this in part is also due to the use of the past tense - rather than the present tense - in the last stanza of *The Solitary Reaper* that I have reported ('I listened', 'I mounted', 'I bore', 'it was heard') - which creates a temporal, physical distance. It is, in other words, 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'.

A different kind of propositional description of analogic, physical and emotional experience is, on the contrary, poetic drama: here emotion is almost always analogically experienced by the 'dramatic voice' 'in the present tense', that is, the same moment it is propositionally

expressed. So that we have paradoxes, such as the one I report now from Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part I*, in which the character is taking both the first-person analogic perspective (he is dying) and the third-person propositional perspective, (he is commenting on his experience):

HOTSPUR:

O Harry! thou hast robbed me of my youth!  
 I better brook the loss of brittle life  
 Than those proud titles thou hast won of me.  
 They wound my thoughts worse than thy sword my flesh.  
 But thoughts the slave of life, and life, time's fool  
 And time, that takes survey of all the world,  
 Must have a stop. O, could I prophesy,  
 But that the earthy and cold hand of death  
 Lies on my tongue. No, Percy, thou art dust  
 And food for ... (Dies).

PRINCE HALL:

For worms, brave Percy. Fare thee well, great heart!  
 (V.4.)

What I am saying in reference to poetic drama is also true in reference to the acting readers' experience of poetry, insofar as, while embodying poetic language they develop the capability of being simultaneously analogically 'inside' the emotions (first-person stance) and propositionally 'outside' them (third-person stance). This is also what Hamlet says to the Players:

"for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness." (*Hamlet* III, 2)

Moreover, this would enable acting readers to acquire either a *procedural* knowledge of a new experience while embodying it firsthand (knowing how it is like), or a *declarative* knowledge of it while describing it (knowing how to talk about it).

- 4 (p.200) In providing a specific theoretical/pedagogical rationale for the drama techniques I propose here (for which I draw inspiration from the work of some particular practitioners in the field of acting method) I essentially place my pedagogy outside that widespread school of thought that develops the whole-person humanistic approaches with very little rationale, basing them simply on the assumption that developing a sharing and caring attitude in students is necessarily good.
- 5 (p.202) Chekhov, however, in spite of his claims for subjectivity of expression, at a certain point (pp.64-71) seems to admit the idea that the Psychological Gesture can be, to a certain extent, a stereotypical one. This can be deduced by the series of 'drawings' he provides, reproducing a set of specific Gestures for certain psychological conditions. In so doing, he actually seems to assume that such



Psychological Gestures, in the way they are physically expressed, can be 'sharable' by both actors and audience. The idea of 'Force', for example, is physically expressed through two drawings (2 and 5) which represent two specific degrees of intensity in the physical expression of such 'Gestalt structure':

Drawing 2 (p.66)



Drawing 5 (p.70)



In Drawing 2, Chekhov seems exactly to recognize Johnson's concept of 'Force' as 'interaction'. Chekhov explains Drawing 2 as an 'external' interaction:

"The character is completely opened to influences coming from 'above', and is obsessed by the desire to receive and even to force 'inspirations' from these influences. It is filled with mystical qualities but at the same time stands firmly on the ground and receives equally strong influences from the earthly world." (p.68, my italics)

Drawing 5 expresses, instead, the 'internal' aspect of the 'force/interaction' Gestalt:

"You might see the strength of this particular character in its protesting, negative will." (p.68, my italics)

Obviously, my interpretation of the Psychological Gesture is different from this one by Chekhov, as it will become evident from the protocols I provide. My notion of Psychological Gesture is essentially subjective and entirely relatable to the individual embodied schemata of each empirical acting reader.

- 6 (p.204) Such 'opposite sensations' represent those bipolar dimensions of conventionalized experience that Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957), in their study on the 'measurement of meaning', define as 'semantic differentials' which - as they assume - cover 'the whole range of meaning'. The Osgood-Suci-Tannenbaum position is an example of

those 'objectivist' theories of meaning (and language) which postulate external, universal, semantic categories, essentially based on 'archetypal' oppositions which are naturally shared by everybody.

- 7 (p.207) The creative-writing activities of 'poetic re-textualization' - which followed the production of the six protocols I have just presented above - clearly show how students, at this stage, are already experiencing a dimension of poetic representation. So, for instance, two of the students who experienced Psychological Gestures from a first-person position, that is, as 'embodied metaphors' of their own 'Force' Gestalt (respectively protocols 1 - a physical sensation of very strong 'bursting' energy - and 3 - a physical sensation of lightness), subsequently turned their individual artistic experience into poetry, by creating two Acrostics:

1 (see protocol 1)

Fierce  
Oppressing  
Remembrances  
Choke  
Energies

2 (see protocol 3)

Floating  
Over  
Regions  
Circling  
Eden

In their turn, two of the students/observers who experienced the Psychological Gestures produced by the others as third-person 'objective correlatives' (see protocols 5 and 6), subsequently created their own metaphorical poetry in reference to their aesthetic experience as Receivers - an experience in many ways parallel to the one expressed by Kennedy in the poem I have mentioned above, in reference to Duchamp's painting. The following poems refer, respectively, to the aesthetic experiences reported in protocols 5 and 6 (two different, third-person, detached perceptions of the first-person creation of a Psychological Gesture in protocol 2):

3 (see protocol 5)

A stony man, alone. Two fossil shells  
Encase his eyes, forever shut.  
Behind those stony shutters, a whisper tells  
of shattering blades which his brains cut.

4 (see protocol 6)

A man of compact snow  
Slowly becomes a haze  
And joyfully starts to rove  
Into the sky's maze.

Therefore, all these poems, together with protocols 1-6, represent all different 'top-down' first-person interpretations and third-person perceptions of the same 'Force' Gestalt. This demonstrates that Gestalt

schematic structures are not universally-shared concepts, but, rather, they are individually experienced in different ways, depending on people's psychological perspectives and physical positionings.

- 8 (p.212) It is interesting to compare the top-down process of metaphorical authentication, as I represent it in Figure 6.9., and the diagram provided by Linklater (1992, p.41) exemplifying the actor's technique of 'speaking the word out through his whole body': in both cases, textual authentication has to pass through bodily appropriation. This is Linklater's diagram:

word ---> solar plexus ---> image ---> breath --->  
 experience/memory/emotion --> spoken word activating the body as it releases out.

- 9 (p.214) The idea of hypertext as I interpret and apply it here, in the context of my study - i.e., as an endless, subjective discursual re-textualization - does not belong only to the domain of computer technology; actually, it can also be identified within some specific trends in literary theory. Barthes (1974), for instance, theorizes his 'ideal, multiple text' by adopting a typically hypertextual terminology:

"In this ideal text, the networks (*réseau*) are many and interact, without anyone of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are interminable ...; the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language" (pp. 5-6, italics in the original).

- 10 (p.216) The activation of a 'bilogic' imagination generating poetry becomes particularly evident when the student/acting-reader producing protocol 7 creates an original poem out of her experience of appropriation of the metaphors in Plath's poem. Such experiential re-textualization is essentially top-down insofar as the student resorts not only to her own embodied schemata, but also to her own 'intertextual memory' to render her analogic experience poetically propositional (she employs her emotional memory of Chagal's circus paintings). The following one is the poem she created in response to her physical interpretation of Plath's poem *Metaphors*: it is interesting to notice that as Plath talks about pregnancy without ever mentioning the word, so also the student/author of this poem identifies herself with a surrealist elephant-acrobat without mentioning it. Her poem, therefore, can be subject to new top-down physical appropriations and poetic re-textualizations. This is the poem:

*Acrobatics*

I'm a giant on a thread,  
 Large, big ears keep my balance,  
 People laugh at my thin legs  
 And I swell at their arrogance.  
 Now I'm bigger, now I'm lighter  
 I'm a rising grey balloon  
 Rolling up, higher and higher  
 Tightrope-walking on the moon.

CHAPTER 7

- 1 (p.223) By considering a poem as an utterance provided with illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects, I actually intend to place poetry within the Austin/Searle Speech-Act tradition, thus considering it as a 'social act' once it is dramatically 'appropriated' and 'embodied' by a group of acting readers. Nevertheless, (and in this I depart from traditional speech-act theories) differently from utterances considered as referential social acts, a 'poem as a speech-act' takes place on a divergent, non-referential, imaginative dimension of communication. Therefore, poetic communication diverges from a referential, linguistic one, insofar as it imaginatively relies on both propositional as well as analogic dimensions of interaction.
  
- 2 (p.224) Actually this procedure resembles, in a way, the overt dramatization of an inner double role of the speaker we can find in some Metaphysical poetry. The appropriation of the Sender/Receiver roles in macro-communication, for instance, can be achieved in many of John Donne's poems. Some of them, actually, take the form of real, transactional texts (such as private letters, prayers, live speeches) which, of course, are not, insofar as they are organized into a precise pattern of language which estranges them from any referential connection. And yet, in dramatizing them, the acting reader may experience exactly the sensation of appropriating not only the speaker's voice, but also the Sender's conditions of both 'formal' and 'emotional' intentions underlying that language, as well as the Implied Receiver's conditions of reception. The same speaker's voice in Donne's poetry often shifts from a first-person point of view to an appropriation, interpretation, and elaboration of the second-person point of view, thus 'enacting' an 'authorial role' also on the Receiver's possible reactions to his speech. This also illustrates my own definition, in Figure 7.1., of the Receiver as the acting reader's 'choice' while he appropriates the authorial role of the speaker's voice in a poem.

So, for instance, in poems such as *The Flea*, Donne's speaker not only conceptually and imaginatively elaborates his first-person perspective, but also he displaces himself into the second-person perspective of his Addressee/Implied-Receiver and imaginatively elaborates what her thoughts or her possible emotional reactions to his speech might be, thus becoming the 'author' of his Receiver's response as well.

In *The Message*, on the other hand, John Donne expands the idea of a first-person appropriation of a second-person response from the verbal to the whole bodily domain of emotional/intellectual reactions, by paradoxically seeking a first-person 'estrangement' from the second-person physical re-actions:

"Yet send me back my heart and eyes,  
that I may know, and see thy lyes,  
And may laugh and joy, when thou  
    Art in anguish  
    And dost languish"

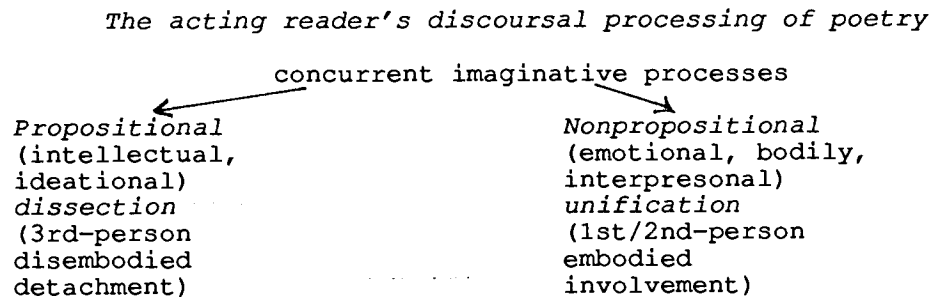
- 3 (p.230) It could be considered, in reference to the acting reader's deconstructive/reconstructive imaginative process of poetic embodiment, Coleridge's (1983) theory of Imagination as an illustration of the acting reader's cognitive/affective journey 'from analogue to propositional' in the activation of his imaginative powers in reference to poetic language. I would equate what Coleridge defines as *Primary Imagination* to the analogic schemata each individual possesses. Such unconscious 'imaginative bank' can be activated by the apparently exclusive 'mechanical' activity of *Fancy*, which - by reinterpreting Coleridge's thought in our terms - has the task of analogically associating and propositionally organizing knowledge and memory in iconic, representational contexts. However, the activity of *Fancy* (which in Chapter 2 on theory I have associated to the concept of schema in P.D.P. models) although may lead to the creation of original associations, still remains almost surface and 'lifeless'. *Fancy*, in fact, is merely instrumental to the activation of the truly creative, generative power of the *Secondary Imagination*, which is experienced both *analogically* (from a first-person total involvement) and *propositionally* (from a third-person, more cerebral detachment). The deconstructive/reconstructive activity of the *Secondary Imagination* is described by Coleridge in this way:

"(it) dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate ... it struggles to idealize and to unify." (chap.13)

Such imaginative process of the poet could describe, indeed, also the acting reader's bottom-up process of 'poetic dissection' in order to dramatically embody the language and creatively re-interpret it according to a personal, metaphorical, discursal unity. Such discursal unity, however, has to be regarded as strictly in reference to the contextual communicative situation achieved in the text (and not

exclusively to the acting reader's own schemata, as in the previous top-down phase). Actually, we might define this discorsal unity as an 'Organic Unity', by adopting Coleridge's own definition. However, unlike Coleridge (who idealizes the Organic Unity by placing it - after Kant - in an abstract domain 'outside' the individual), I would like to reinterpret it in Freudian terms. The Organic Unity, therefore, is the realization of an unconscious, 'bilogic' power for imaginatively inhabiting, dissecting, re-exploring and, ultimately, discorsally unifying conventionalized schematic opposites into 'new' fantastic contextual wholes 'within' the individual.

Moreover, since in the process of dissection/unification, poetry becomes embodied (from a first/second-person perspective), disembodied (from a third-person perspective), and then embodied again, it is experienced in both propositional (intellectual, ideational) and nonpropositional (emotional, bodily, interpersonal) modes of dramatic discourse, as illustrated in the following Figure:



In formulating a theory of Imagination which suggests an association of conscious deconstruction with creative intimations of possible new poetic unities, Coleridge, actually, is far beyond his fellow-poet Wordsworth. Wordsworth, by making a clear distinction between the domains of intellectual analysis and emotional apprehension, asserts:

"Our meddling intellect  
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things;  
We murder to dissect."

A kind of dichotomy like this one established by Wordsworth, based on the assumption that an analytical intellection destroys metaphysical apprehension, can be detected, in the field of acting theory, also in Stanislavski (1981c), who says:

"The word 'analysis' usually connotes an intellectual process. ... In art it is the feeling that creates, not the mind; ... (t)he analysis made by an artist is quite different from one made by a scholar or a critic. If the result of scholarly analysis is *thought*, the result of an artistic analysis is *feeling*. An actor's analysis is first of all an analysis of feeling, and it is carried out by feeling." (p.8).

Establishing feeling/thought boundaries in the field of embodied representation, as Stanislavski suggests, means diminishing the reach of *Secondary Imagination* as a body/mind expression, which is the way I

interpret it in the context of dramatic discourse in poetry. Contrary to Stanislavski's view, I advocate, instead, a kind of bottom-up, bodily 'exploration' (rather than 'analysis', at this stage) of the poetic language which is simultaneously experienced as - by adopting Jakobson's (1960) terms - *syntagmatic* (propositional, 'rational', based on metonymic contiguity), and *paradigmatic* (analogic, 'emotional', based on metaphorical similarity). This means that the acting reader's third-person 'mental' realization of a syntagmatic, propositional relationship within the poetic language he explores does not occur independently from a paradigmatic, analogic first-person involvement in the imaginative effects he achieves by 'embodying' that language.

- 4 (p.238) Another example of this 'ironical gap' between a lively metre established by the Sender and the tragic tone of the Addresser's voice can be found also in T.S.Eliot's (1969) poetic drama *Sweeney Agonistes*, where a syncopated jazz rhythm continually cuts across words of deep despair:

You dreamt you waked up at seven o'clock  
 and it's foggy and it's damp and it's dawn and it's dark,  
 And you wait for a knock and the turning of a lock  
 for you know the hangman's waiting for you.  
 And perhaps you're alive  
 And perhaps you're dead  
 Hoo ha ha  
 Hoo ha ha  
 Hoo  
 Hoo  
 Hoo

Nevertheless, this apparent contrast between metre and content can be solved physically, by activating a rhythmical discourse able to trigger in acting readers primordial emotions.

## CHAPTER 8

- 1 (p.244) The following lines reproduce the introductory cues of Churchill's *Cloud Nine*. The challenge for the actors to explore different physical and emotional states is evident since the beginning of the play:

CLIVE. *He presents BETTY. She is played by a man.*

My wife is all I dreamt a wife should be,  
And everything she is she owes to me.

BETTY. I live for Clive. The whole aim of my life  
Is to be what he looks for in a wife.  
I am a man's creation as you see,  
And what men want is what I want to be.

*CLIVE presents JOSHUA. He is played by a white.*

CLIVE. My boy's a jewel. Really has the knack.  
You'd hardly notice that the fellow's black.

JOSHUA. My skin is black but oh my soul is white.  
I hate my tribe. My master is my light.  
I only live for him. As you can see,  
What white men want is what I want to be.

*CLIVE presents EDWARD. He is played by a woman.*

CLIVE. My son is young. I'm doing all I can  
To teach him to grow up to be a man.

EDWARD. What father wants I'd dearly like to be.  
I find it rather hard as you can see.

(Act One, pp.1-2)

Pedagogic implementations of 'upside-down' gender-discourses achieved and devised from literary texts can be found in Guido 1991, 1992c.

- 2 (p.260) The character's 'ideational reality' is actually the reality the acting reader achieves by letting poetic language interact with his own personal schemata, or, in Kelly's (1955) definition, *personal constructs*. Kelly, in fact, asserts that people activate personal constructs, rather than collectively shared schemata, to make sense of reality. His view is that there is not an individual who shares the same construct with another. In commenting Kelly's theory, Rice (1993) provides an example which could be perfectly applied to the cognitive/affective processes students activate in dramatically exploring the 'closet scene', as we shall see in the protocols. Rice says:

"For example, if I use the word 'father', this will immediately trigger the reader's unique personal construct of 'father', a construct that will have been formed over a long period of time, based on the reader's experience of fathers. If they had a good, positive relationship with their own parents their construct would be very different to that of a person who had been regularly beaten and abused by their father, which in turn may be very different from that of a person who was orphaned at an early age. In other words your construct of 'father' is uniquely your own, and this will influence the perceptions, reactions and responses every time that word is used." (p.96).



- 3 (p.284) An example of the kind of 'metaleptic' address I am discussing occurs in T.S. Eliot's poetic drama *Murder in the Cathedral*, where the character of Thomas Becket (the Addresser) suddenly starts addressing the audience:

THOMAS: ... I know that history at all times draws  
 The strangest consequence from remotest cause.  
 But for every evil, every sacrilege,  
 Crime, wrong, oppression and the axe's edge  
 Indifference, exploitation *you*, and *you*,  
 And *you*, must all be punished. So must *you*.  
 (my italics)

In this case, the Addresser's metaleptic shift does not occur only on the narrative level, from micro- to macro-communication, but also on a temporal level, insofar as a voice inhabiting an iconic context set in a remote past starts addressing a twentieth-century audience.

- 4 (p.284) This assumption of a shared experience between Addresser and Receivers also applies to 'asides' and, sometimes, to choric characters as well, such as this one from T.S. Eliot's (1926/69) *Sweeney Agonistes*, where the 'direct addressing' from micro- to macro-communication domains is very explicit:

When *you're* alone in the middle of the night and  
*you* wake in a sweat and a hell of a fright  
 When *you're* alone in the middle of the bed and  
*you* wake like someone hit *you* in the head  
 You've had a cream of a nightmare dream and  
*you've* got the hoo-ha's coming to *you*.

(Part Two: *Fragment of an Agon*, my italics.)

- 5 (p.285) When we talk about the actor/acting-reader's subjective interpretation of the Addresser's voice to be communicated to his Receiver, we have also to consider that the Addresser's voice, as we know, can be either 'human' or 'non-human'. So, for example, the Addresser's voice (in Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper*) who invites the Receiver to "Behold her! Single in the field / Yon solitary Highland Lass!" is intrinsically different from the Addresser's voice in T.S. Eliot's *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*:

The street-lamp sputtered,  
 The street-lamp muttered,  
 The street-lamp said, "Regard that woman  
 Who hesitates towards you in the light of the door  
 Which opens on her like a grin.

The voice in Eliot's poem is not a human voice as the one in Wordsworth's poem. Therefore, the 'illocutionary force' of these two speech acts may be the same (an attempt to draw somebody's attention on someone else), but the 'quality' of those two voices has to be found by

the acting reader within himself. Therefore, through the street-lamp's voice, the acting reader could attempt to communicate to his receivers 'qualities' of 'stiffness', for instance, or of 'light'; all nuances he can physically explore within his own voice.

- 6 (p.286) Such metaleptic 'ironic gap' - experienced by both Addresser's and Receiver's sides as a sense of 'theatrical displacement' - is turned to comic effect by Stoppard (1980) in his play *Cahoot's Macbeth*:

*(Enter Macbeth carrying two blood-stained daggers.)*

LADY MACBETH: My husband!

MACBETH: I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

LADY MACBETH: I heard the owl scream and the cricket cry.  
*(A police siren is heard approaching the house. During the following dialogue the car arrives and the car doors are heard to slam.)*

MACBETH: There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried 'Murder!' One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other,  
*(Siren stops.)*  
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.

LADY MACBETH: Consider it not so deeply.  
These deeds must not be thought  
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

MACBETH: Methought I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murder sleep'-  
*(Sharp rapping.)*  
Whence is that knocking?  
*(Sharp rapping.)*  
How is't with me when every noise appals me?

LADY MACBETH: My hands are of your colour; but I shame  
To wear a heart so white.  
Retire to our chamber.

MACBETH: Wake Duncan with thy knocking! *(Sharp rapping.)*  
I would thou couldst!  
*(They leave. The knocking off-stage continues. A door, off-stage, opens and closes. The door into the room opens and the INSPECTOR enters an empty room. He seems surprised to find himself where he is. He affects a sarcastic politeness.)*

INSPECTOR: Oh - I'm sorry - is this the National Theatre?

(pp.52-3)

- 7 (p.290) Differently from all the hypertext systems implemented so far in the area of literature teaching, the 'physical hypertext' I intended to realize resembles much more the characteristics of a hypertextual literary work, such as Coover's (1970) or Joyce's (1989) hypertextual novels, or Dickey's (1991) hypertextual poetry. Such works can be recomposed by the reader into an almost endless 'lexia' combinations by following, for example, some particular character, or an image, or an action and so on. Bolter (1990), talking about Coover's and Joyce's interactive hypertexts, in fact asserts:

"there is no single story of which each reading is a version, because each reading determines the story as it goes. We could say that there is no story at all; there are only readings." (p.124).

And this is what Dickey himself says:

"The poem may be designed in a pattern of nested squares, as a group of chained circles, as a braid of different visual and graphic themes, as a double helix. The poem may present a single main sequence from which word or image associations lead into subsequences and then return. ... (It) may begin with any one of its parts, stanzas, images, to which any other part of the poem may succeed. This system of organization requires that that part of the poem represented on any one card must be a sufficiently independent statement to be able to generate a sense of poetic meaning as it follows or is followed by any other statement the poem contains." (p. 147).

Dickey's view on hypertextual poetry can be seen in parallel with what Ricoeur (1984) defines as the 'followability' of a literary story which, applied to our 'physical hypertext', clearly calls for simultaneous procedures of deconstruction and re-construction as the best way to analyze poetic discourse.

## APPENDICES

I provide here a set of papers which might be regarded either as appendices to their corresponding chapters (as I point them out briefly at the beginning of each appendix), or as a whole logical sequence of protocols and activities to be considered in itself (thus providing further practical evidence of a pedagogic implementation of my rationale).

APPENDIX A (Chapter 5: *A Principled Pedagogic Approach*, p.183)

### The workshop atmosphere

#### A.1. Use of drama techniques - the initial phase

Drama techniques in the classroom should be used in an atmosphere of relaxed concentration in order to establish a dialogue, a common group language. The establishment of such an atmosphere would allow, on the one hand, the development of students' interaction skills through the activation of mental and physical energies. On the other, it would allow them to access 'images' of the poem and to explore and actualize its sound and rhythm, thus starting to work out their own discursal interpretation.

This initial phase of the workshop has to be based on the absence of evaluation parameters establishing what is right and what is wrong: students have just to explore 'from their own centre' (that is, from their own schemata) physical and vocal possibilities capable of freeing their creativity and of stimulating, afterwards, also their intellectual experience. In this way, the 'three steps' of the acting readers' cognitive process - which I identify as 'to do, to observe, and to reflect' - begin to be realized. Such a methodological procedure is also, to a great extent, consistent with the assumptions of that particular pedagogic line of deconstruction suggested by Ulmer (1985), discussed in Chapter 5.

The kind of dramatic approach to poetry I am going to illustrate here is by no means formulaic, but eclectic, drawing inspiration from different drama methods. However, it fundamentally places itself in the tradition of Widdowson's

(1978) communicative approach insofar as it emphasizes - together with the achievement of a common physical dialogue - the exploration and the establishment of a linguistic/imaginative coherence in relation not only to the individual student's interaction with the text, but also to the individual's interaction with the others' interpretations in the communicative context of the classroom-workshop. This aspect of communication is regarded - consistently with the methodological foundations established in this thesis - as one of the most effective ways of achieving new and unpredictable discursual perspectives from poetic texts.

Let us consider now some preliminary exercises meant to create a new representational 'setting' of the classroom, estranged from any everyday context, thus changing it into a 'scene' for imaginative poetic enactments.

## **A.2. Discovering a new dimension of the classroom: warm-up exercises**

Since students have to work together as a group, they need to be physically and psychologically in harmony. Among the techniques initially used for this purpose, there are some exercises of psycho-physical relaxation aimed to receptiveness as well as to an opening towards the others (for example: they could walk round space, establish eye contact, smile, say 'yes', shake hands). Others are aimed at achieving group concentration and simultaneous action/suspension of action (each of them has to intuitively find the moment in which the whole group in movement stops, and the moment in which it starts moving again). Another set of warming-up exercises based on muscular and vocal training can be developed as students' physical and vocal exploration either of the space around them (they could throw a sound as if it were an object - a ball, or a stick - against a person, or a wall; leap at it and take it again, 'use' it, and throw it to another person), or of different states of tension (such as: feeling tired - 'fighting gravity'; feeling relaxed - 'Mr. Cool'; worried - 'Waiter with a problem'; till reaching the state of maximum tension - 'There is bomb!').

This series of preliminary warm-up exercises are necessary

to prompt in students a different perception of the classroom dynamics; by carrying them out they can go through contrasting feelings ranging from an initial estrangement from their usual surroundings, roles and relationships, to a sense of wonder and then excitement and playfulness at discovering new ways of either perceiving everyday situations afresh, or relating themselves to the others.

Moreover, in this way, they can create an atmosphere of collaboration and interaction through physical movement. However, they should not be 'forced' to 'feel the atmosphere', or, worse, to 'act' it. Its creation has to be spontaneous.

**APPENDIX B** (Chapter 6: *Applications - The Top-down phase*, p.208)

**Poetic body and poetic space**

**B.1. Discovering the 'poetic body'**

Objectives. The discovery of one's own *poetic body* (or one's own "double", in Artaud's (1977) words, meant as a liberation of conscious and unconscious feelings and sensations) is a 'principled' objective to be achieved during this phase. The *poetic body* is actually a physical and emotional state of 'poetic readiness' students create 'within' themselves as a means to explore a different physical/emotional dimension of poetry through dynamic forms. This might enable them to apprehend poetry and to express themselves 'poetically', on a different, representational level.

This also implies the acting reader's dissociation from his own referential self through the activation of a process of estrangement. As a consequence, he would acquire a sense of freedom from social and cultural constraints limiting his own creative expression. This new sensation would enable him to project himself into a new iconic space through a 'suspension of disbelief' which would help him become familiar with such a virtual, imaginative context.

The three activities I am going to introduce in a while were designed to achieve this objective in my classes. The sequence, therefore, reproduces the way I have employed them in the classroom. Of course, they are in no way formulaic, and they can be modified according to each class requirement. In conceiving them, I drew inspiration mainly from the eurhythmic and biomechanical drama techniques of Stanislavski's disciple, Michael Chekhov (1953), with their emphasis on the actor's gradual achievement of an imaginative awareness as a highly powerful - and even mystical - form of communication. By describing them I shall try to demonstrate the acting reader's cognitive/affective progress from a third-person perspective of detachment in relation to the new dimensions his body acquires,

to a first-person familiarization with them, till coming to acknowledge the second-person perspective of the other acting readers' bodies interacting with his own 'poetic body'.

The activities I am going to describe now are strictly principled ones. Therefore they should not be reproduced without an awareness of the theory underlying them, as I develop it in this thesis. In this sense, they totally differ from the apparently similar kinds of exercises typical of the so-called 'humanistic approach', almost completely devoid of any systematic rationale.

The following activities are three examples of my approach, to be interpreted in the light of my theoretical rationale.

### Activities.

1. The Feeling of Beauty. Students, like dancers, realize the beauty of their bodies through artistic motions. Movements are explored slowly, while repeating the sentence "I have a body!". The body has to be considered as an object of beauty, a work of art receiving positive energy from everything it enters into a contact.

In this way, the body is experienced not only from a first-person, but also from a third-person perspective, insofar as it is felt by the students as a medium to convey artistic expressions.

2. The Feeling of Form. With this exercise, students' previous sense of estrangement from their body - due to a split perspective - should gradually disappear. The objective is the achievement of a first-person sense of familiarity with their own imaginative power in order to achieve what Stanislavski (1981a) defines as the 'creative state of mind'.

With the addition of music, students can go on moving in the space (as if they were floating or flying, for example), thus feeling the weight and the lightness of their bodies. Then, using them, they make moulding movements in the space as if they were creating artistic forms in clay. Meanwhile they should think: "every movement I make is a piece of art".

3. Radiation. After the previous, totally private first-person exercise, students should now be elicited to project a 'communicative' energy outside themselves, thus becoming aware, on the one hand, of a second-person, external perspective



interacting with their own, and, on the other, of the artistic, iconic space surrounding them. This exercise, therefore, can be regarded as the first move of the students 'outside' their 'poetic body' towards the other 'poetic bodies' in a virtual environment.

The technique is that of the Prana Rays (the Sanskrit word for the waves of a universal life force): students have to let their 'inner self' radiate in different directions, first from their chest, and then from all the other parts of their body. They should concentrate at first on a sensation of light, as if it were inner energy flowing outside. Then, they can start radiating words, moods and whole atmospheres towards the other 'poetic bodies'. The lack of physical contact among students, at this stage, should paradoxically increase the awareness of the others' presence.

At this point, after having recognized the 'presence' of their own - and the others' - 'poetic bodies', students could start exploring the 'poetic space'.

## **B.2. Discovering the 'poetic space'**

Objectives. Once students recognize the possibility of other poetic bodies outside their own, they automatically realize also the possibility of fantastic, iconic worlds outside their own private imaginative space. The new activities I am going to propose now are devised precisely with the purpose of helping students overcome the sense of unfamiliarity towards their apprehension of these 'new virtual worlds' outside them. The cognitive/affective process such exercises should activate in students, therefore, is that of a gradual incorporation of these new 'chronotopic' dimensions within their own schemata, until they feel as if they were being possessed by them.

The virtual space, in our context, is a shared, collective one; it is a place in which poetic bodies come to interact to create works of art. This is, in Peter Brook's (1990) definition, the 'empty space' "where the invisible can appear".

Activities. Let us now consider two études devised through a series of activities aimed to help students become aware of their 'iconic' surroundings (the 'empty space' where their imagination can come into being). The sources of inspiration are

both the Chekhov and the Stanislavski techniques:

1. The 'Creative Circle'. This is an exercise whose purpose is exactly that of developing students' imagination. It requires a deep concentration, and, in my classroom I have always tried to follow a precise progression:

- 1) each student has to focus on a small imaginary circle surrounding him;
- 2) he has to allow the circle to slowly grow in size, thus concentrating on each person or object which it comes to include;
- 3) while freely moving within the circle, he has not to drop his concentration from the things;
- 4) he has to close his eyes trying to remember every detail of the objects or people and to describe them;
- 5) then, he has to pay close attention to each sound he hears within the circle, and to continue to 'listen' to it even when it stops.

2. The 'Fantastic Pair'. This exercise is actually a continuation of the previous one, insofar as it has to be done within the 'Creative Circle' evoked before:

- 1) still with closed eyes, the student has to select two objects within the circle (a 'fantastic pair') and try to slowly transform one into the other (for example, a chair turning into a person, and so on);
- 2) afterwards, he has to listen to some music and immediately create a mental image;
- 3) he has to try to incorporate that image, to be possessed by it, thus feeling it within his own body;
- 4) then, slowly, the student has to allow that image to transform itself into another one within his own 'poetic body', thus affecting feelings, emotions and impulses;
- 5) with his eyes shut, each student propositionally describes to the others his own analogic process of image-transformation (the others might supply him vocal/physical effects).

This activity is actually very close to the Surrealist and Metaphysical artistic tradition; Dalí's paintings of clocks melting and taking the shape of the rocks and branches on which they lay is a clear example of 'fantastic pairs' in art. This is also in line with the process of 'condensation of images' Freud (1953c) describes in analyzing the creative process of dreams.

- 6) As a follow-up to this activity, students could be asked

to write their own 'metaphysical' poems based on 'fantastic pair' associations, or, rather, to produce a painting of that. What is important in doing all this is that they should feel all the time they have never abandoned their 'poetic bodies' and the 'Creative Circle'.

Through these exercises students might realize that, differently from the real space, the poetic space, to come to life, has to be evoked within a 'magic, creative circle' (a real or imaginary stage) that 'frames' it into an iconic chronotope. The effect of the poetic space on the poetic body is that of activating all senses 'iconically', thus sharpening the acting reader's apprehension of the imaginative effects sensory experience can prompt in him.

The next set of activities will illustrate how this can work, for example, on the sense of hearing.

### **B.3. Exploring meanings in the words through vocal metaphors: the 'auditory imagination'**

Objectives. At this stage of our exploration the teacher should not yet introduce technical terms such as onomatopoeias, alliteration and so on, since they would distance poetic language from students, whereas the purpose now is that of making it 'bodily' and sensorily familiar to them.

The objective of the activity I am going to introduce is that of developing in students an 'auditory imagination' (Eliot 1933), that is, a sensitivity to the emotional effects of sound in language <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The process of achieving the 'auditory imagination' is then described, in a passionate tone, by Dylan Thomas (1966), who enlarges Eliot's concept by relating it to his own experience. He says:

"I wanted to write poetry in the beginning because I had fallen in love with words. ... What the words stood for, symbolized, or meant, was of very secondary importance. What mattered was the *sound* of them as I heard them for the first time. ... I cared for the shape of sound that ... words ... made in my ears; I cared for the colours the words cast on my eyes. ... The shape and size and noise of the words as they hummed, strummed, juggled and galloped along." (pp.195-202).

What Dylan Thomas seems to advocate here is the activation of a process of estrangement towards words in order to free them from conventional associations, and allow their sounds to prompt all kinds of fantastic images

Activities. The activity I am going to present aims to achieve this liberating sense of estrangement in order to allow students to feel sounds through a fresh sensitivity. For this purpose, I apply Linklater's (1992) vocal technique - designed for 'freeing the voice' - to an imaginative top-down exploration of vowel and consonant sounds. The subsequent internalization of the images created through vocal sounds, should lead students to a more sound-conscious exploration of poetic language. The activity is structured into three steps:

Step 1.: Exploring vowel sounds. - The role of the teacher, in this context, is that of suggesting techniques and procedures for releasing an auditory imagination, but in no way will he induce interpretations. As an illustration of the technique, I shall mention only two vowel sounds, thus adapting to my purposes Brazil, Coulthard and Johns's (1980) technique of the 'minimal pairs' as a means to focus on the effects each of them could produce on individual students. This is the sequence I usually follow with my own students:

- 1) To begin with, students can be asked to take a deep breath and then to release the open sound of /æ/.
- 2) They have to repeat the sound several times feeling it filling all the spaces of their body with the particular emotion they feel in relation to it.
- 3) By opening their arms, they have to radiate that sound from their chest, projecting - together with their voice - a bright colour they free-associate to it.

After this, they could pass to explore the /u:/ sound.

- 4) At the beginning, they have only to think of it and finding in their 'poetic body' the place which generates it.
- 5) This will lead them to discover the mood and the emotion that create that sound.
- 6) They should feel the sound circulating in the spaces of their body until they release it by radiating a dark colour.

At this point, by adopting the previously explored technique of the 'fantastic pair', students should slowly find the way to pass from one sound to the other and vice versa (from /æ/ to

/u:/and from /u:/ to /æ/). This would imply a slow passage from one mood to another, mentally represented by the image of a colour slowly fading into the other.

Now let us move to step 2:

Step 2.: Exploring consonants. Also in this case, I shall focus only on some consonants which will be useful in the third step of this exercise.

The focus, this time, is on the fricative sounds of /f/ and /θ/.

7) Also the sound of these consonants - as the previous vowel sounds - has to be let free to circulate in the poetic body, activating physical and sensory associations.

8) At first, it has to be 'thought' crossing the body unheard from the outside,

9) then, when students cannot resist any longer, they can make them explode from their lips. Students have to pronounce it by paying close attention to the physical effect it produces on them in uttering it, and also to the images it evokes in them.

Then, they can pass to explore the /m/ sound. The vibrations of this sound (the same of the 'sacred OM') have to fill the poetic body. Students have to reflect on what sensations and images it activates in them.

With this physical memory still in their poetic bodies, students might pass now to the third step.

Step 3.: Applying the vocal 'physical memory' to a poetic text. This is the first stage towards the student's achievement of a poetic language awareness. Let us consider the first line of *Kubla Khan* by Coleridge:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

The chiasm structure of the line is revealed in its sound pattern:

/æ/ /u:/ /u:/ /æ/

and these are exactly the vowel sounds explored by the students. What could we get them to do, at this point, is to activate their 'affective memory'. Through an operation of 'emotional recall' of the images and sensations those sounds produced in them, students should try to predict what sort of experience the poem is about.

They might notice, for example, that here it is implied a passing from one emotion to another and vice versa (from /æ/ to /u:/ and from /u:/ to /æ/) as the one they explored before by considering sounds as 'fantastic pair'.

Therefore, if they have associated, for instance, /æ/ with bright colours and /u:/ with dark colours, they might predict that the poem will be about a movement from light to darkness (which it is, in the imagery which can be achieved in the language of that poem - see Guido 1993b), and, in terms of images, from the open air to something closed and dark.

Let us take other few lines of the same poem:

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,  
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,  
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced;

Here the image of the fountain is already conveyed by the language. What students could do, at this stage, is to associate their physical sensations in uttering the sounds /f/, /θ/ and /m/ to the scene evoked in the the poem, thus trying to identify themselves with it. In this case, the poet himself seems to provide the figurative means to help students' identification: in fact, he uses here a personification (the earth as in child-bed).

Did students experience a physical effort in 'generating' fricative sounds? Can it be an image standing for some other experience students could achieve in that language? A creative explosion, for instance. So now they are already in the domain of figurative language, which is all to be explored, experienced and deeply enjoyed.

John Milton's Paradise Lost: Protocols of a physical hypertext

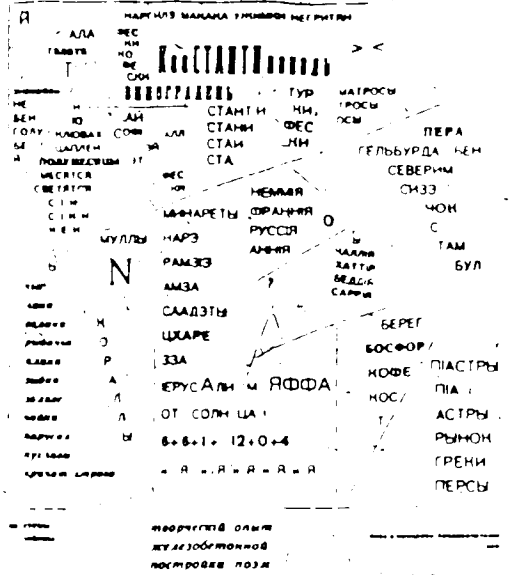
C.1. Objectives

My intention in this Appendix is to focus on a kind of 'physical hypertext' in which students/acting-readers come to embody and authenticate specific poetic metaphors which involve all the 'senses' except 'sight'. The objective is that of extending students' representational, physical experience beyond iconic visualization. It is obvious, for example, that the visual perception of poetic texts in general, and of the so-called 'concrete poems' in particular - as the ones I reproduce below - already prompt in the viewers an interpretative response, insofar as they cannot remain passive as if they were facing any piece of written text. The very arrangement of the printed words, in fact, can trigger a multiplicity of effects and emotions which will condition the discursual embodiments and the subsequent 'conscious' analysis of the poem. These are some examples of 'visual', concrete poems:

Who  
Are you  
Who is born  
In the next room  
So loud to my own  
That I can hear the womb  
Opening and the dark run  
Over the ghost and the dropped son  
Behind the wall thin as a wren's bone?  
In the birth bloody room unknown  
To the burn and turn of time  
And the heart print of man  
Bows no baptism  
But dark alone  
Blessing on  
The wild  
Child

(D. Thomas - *Vision and Prayer*)

Constantly risking absurdity  
and death  
whenever he performs  
above the heads  
of his audience  
The poet like an acrobat  
climbs on rime  
to a high wire of his own making  
(L. Ferlinghetti - *Constantly risking absurdity*)



(V. Kamensky - Costantinopolis) <sup>2</sup>

The activity I reproduce here, on the contrary, was meant to help my students/acting-readers access poetic metaphors principally by means of their own 'sensory' schemata, insofar as the Sender's own 'visual contextualization of the metaphors' could not be explicitly inferred from the text (moreover, students had to cope with only an extract from Milton's *Paradise Lost*).

As we have already seen in the activity on Plath's poem *Metaphors*, this top-down, deconstructive procedure in dramatic representation of poetry implies first of all an endless, creative 'hypertextual' exploration of physical, analogical embodiments of poetry within virtual contexts belonging, almost

<sup>2</sup> If the rhomboid shape of the first poem by Thomas may suggest an idea of a 'crescendo' to an emotional climax, followed by an anti-climax (perhaps reproducing the intensity of the moment of birth, as my students interpreted it in a drama workshop), and the poem by Ferlinghetti might visually reproduce the metaphor of the acrobatic jumps from line to line accomplished by the poet, the poem by Kamensky appears more difficult to be authenticated. This is in fact a real cubist painting which lends itself to a multiplicity of interpretations, despite the fact that the Russian poet himself explains that it reproduces some of his visual and auditory perceptions while he was walking on the Constantinopolis pier (mingled pieces of inscriptions and the seagulls' cries rendered by the repeated /i/ sound).

However, also more 'conventionally' printed poems may produce a very first visual impact on the reader's perception. On their first looking at the page reproducing the text of Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper*, a group of my students noticed how the words 'Highland Lass' and 'Vale' in the first stanza, were specially emphasized by the capital letter at the beginning of each of them. The subsequent focus on the language made them come to the conclusion that the solitary Lass is the protagonist of the poem, and the Vale is the co-protagonist: the figure of the solitary girl, then, stands majestic and alone in the vast valley, as the words 'Highland Lass' stand out on the printed page (see Guido 1994b).

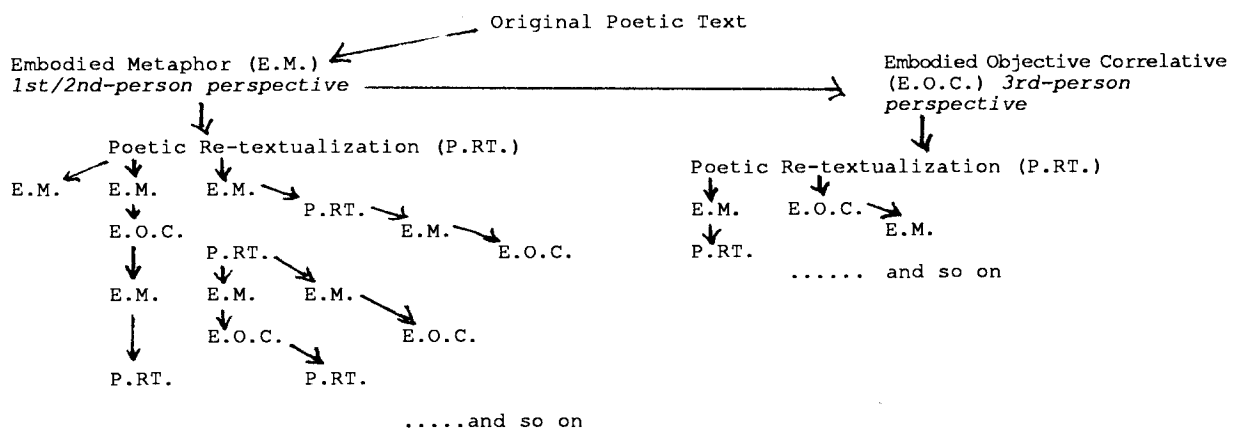


exclusively, to the acting reader's own schemata. In this way, the acting reader may assert his 'authorial role' on the poem he authenticates by appropriating the 'Sender's voice'.

This also means that, in the process of authentication, he turns analogic first-person metaphorical sensations in relation to the poetic language he explores into propositional third-person experiential verbalizations and embodied objective correlatives. These objective correlatives, in their turn, are re-textualized as new poetic texts ready to be re-embodied and metaphorically re-explored from a first-person perspective, and so on, as it is exemplified in the following Figure C.1.:

Figure C.1.

### Physical Hypertext Map



My intention here, therefore, is to describe in some detail this specific hypertextual procedure as I employed it with my High School students in order to elicit in them a top-down deconstruction of poetry.

## C.2. Methodology and protocols

In operationalizing a 'deconstructive/reconstructive poetic hypertext' based on physical improvisation and creative writing I took as my principled starting point Widdowson's (1991b) distinction between a *conceptual elicitation* ("which seeks to probe directly into member categories of knowledge") and a

*contextual* elicitation ("which requires subjects to give instances of what language they would normally use in a given context."). In this way I meant to design a hypertextual model of discourse analysis which could take into account both instances of elicitation as a means to allow readers' increasing authentication of the literary text.

Of course, in our context of a poetic use of language, *conceptual* elicitations are rather intended as top-down free-associations. Therefore, since free-associations involve to a great extent imagination, I shall consider the word 'conceptual' in this case in terms of 'metaphysical concepts' inventively - and sometimes antithetically - associated in the readers' minds with the words of the poetic text. In this sense, also the *contextual* elicitations acquire a distinctive character in poetic 'use', which is not a 'normal' one, insofar as the 'given context' is not referential and socially shared as any other normal context of life. Contextual elicitations, therefore, have to be dramatically representational and imaginative. Moreover, since in the case with Milton's poem that we are going to examine the language of the poetic extract does not enable the acting readers to infer any specific situation, then they have to rely almost entirely on their own embodied schemata.

Therefore, at this point, I shall describe my 'poetic-hypertext-creation' project as divided into three phases (preceded by a warm-up activity).

### C.3. Warm up activity

Method. The warm-up activity was not based on Milton's 'set-extract' from *Paradise Lost*, but on Plath's poem *Dark House*. The only similarity between these two poems lays in the semantic use of words denoting lack of sight and, therefore, eliciting unconventional sensory discorsal directions in synaesthetic apprehension. The use of a different text for a kind of sensorial exploration was meant to provide students/acting-readers with a precise bodily experience capable of consciously accessing their background physical memory, thus activating their own body/thought schemata.

The objective was, on the one hand, to make them more sensitive to the physical 'prompts' they might achieve from the language of the text; on the other, to make students capable of subsequently and spontaneously *transferring* the physical experience attained in reference to Plath's poem (by externalizing/internalizing it) to Milton's poetic extract.

What follows is a retrospective third-person, detached protocol of a previous, first-person physical involvement in Plath's *Dark House*.

Protocol. Before proceeding with the retrospective report of an 'internal observer/participant', I shall report Sylvia Plath's poem together with the sensory effects its language can possibly elicit:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| This is a dark house, very big.<br>I made it myself,<br>Cell by cell from a quiet corner,<br>Chewing at the gray paper,<br>Oozing the glue drops,<br>Whistling, wiggling my ears,<br>Thinking of something else. | (LACK OF) SIGHT<br>TOUCH<br>TASTE<br>TOUCH/HEARING<br>HEARING/TOUCH |
| It has so many cellars,<br>Such eelish delvings!<br>I am round as an owl,<br>I see by my own light.  | TOUCH/SIGHT?<br>TOUCH<br>TOUCH/SIGHT?<br>SIGHT                      |
| Any day I may litter puppies<br>Or mother a horse. My belly moves.<br>I must make more maps.   | TOUCH<br>TOUCH  |
| These marrowy tunnels!<br>Moley-handed, I eat my way.<br>All-mouth licks up the bushes<br>And the pots of meat.<br>He is in an old well,<br>A stony hole. He's to blame.<br>He's a fat sort.                     | TOUCH<br>TASTE<br>TASTE<br>TASTE<br>TOUCH/SIGHT<br>TOUCH/SIGHT      |
| Pebble smells, turnipy chambers.<br>Small nostrils are breathing.<br>Little humble loves!<br>Footlings, boneless as noses,<br>It is warm and tolerable<br>In the bowel of the root.<br>Here's a cuddly mother.   | SMELL<br>SMELL<br>TOUCH<br>TOUCH<br>SIGHT/TOUCH                     |

I chose this poem for the warm-up activity because it seems to lend itself very well to physical theatre improvisation: actually it is a mine of physical/emotional sensations to be authenticated by the acting readers' first-person embodiments. The following one is a protocol of the activity based on pure sensorial evocations as they were consciously and collectively activated by my students/acting-readers:

*Retrospective report*

*Internal observer/participant:* "After a first reading of the poem, the teacher asked us to sit on the floor in two circles. She gave the word *darkness* to one group, and *light* to the other. Then she said neither to 'speak' the words, nor to 'illustrate' it. Instead, we to close our eyes and to 'find the sound' which the word evoked in us.

My word was *darkness*. I closed my eyes. I could not feel nothing at the beginning. Then I started hearing the other people's sounds. One was very sharp, and my skin crept. Once I had it cut with a blade and the blood was warm and thick, I remembered. I still could not find the sound for 'darkness'. I decided to make an effort. I remembered when I was a child, I lay in bed in the darkness and I could hear the wind blowing. That was the sound: /uuuuu/.

Then the teacher told the group that was exploring 'light' to enter our 'darkness' group, still with closed eyes. Two other of us, in the meantime, were whispering the words of the poem. I heard 'chewing' and I felt the taste of the chewing gum, and I imagined the muscles and the bones of my face moving; then 'whistling', I think I heard somebody doing it but not in the way I wanted to do it, I wanted to whistle like a bat, and then I did that sound. 'Oozing', and I thought I was becoming thick, iridescent oil, expanding on the floor, 'eelish', and I started moving eelishly on the floor, 'oozing' (repeating /uuuuzzzz) in the dark."

Interestingly, the group of students with the word *light* tended to use much more visual metaphors (with 'chewing', for instance, they 'saw' the movement (thus distancing it from themselves), but they did not 'taste' anything; with 'eelish' they visualized an eel and then 'became' it, and so on. The purpose, however, was that of having them experience themselves 'wrapped in darkness', a sensation that reactivated their body/thought schemata and was supposed to remain in their physical memory to be remembered later on, in connection with Milton's poem.

Let us examine, therefore, the first phase of their hypertextual exploration of the extract from *Paradise Lost*.

#### **C.4. First Phase**

A: Method. During this phase I adapted the electronic technique of the 'word-association-mapping' method (Preece 1976) to the cognitive/affective initial physical exploration of the poetic language of the text.

This *conceptual*, top-down method required students/acting-readers to tape-record as quickly as possible all the free-associations they might have in reference to the textual words or lines as they came to their mind while they 'physically' concentrated on them by means of 'psychological gestures'. The procedure was that the first words that occurred and were recorded were considered as the strongest associates. If similar concepts or sensations associated to a particular word recurred also in relation to other words, then they appeared as conceptually linked to more than one semantic area.

The subsequent protocol transcription of these free-associations constitutes a semantic map of 'concepts' from different students/acting-readers, comprising various knowledge/experiential domains. If inserted in a real computer hypertext, for example, such a map could be organized (through the use of a hypertext *graphical browser*) into a *spatial map* that reflects the discursal interconnections and the semantic distances between 'concepts'.

Before presenting the map of the hypertextual protocol resulting from my students' application of the 'word-association-mapping' method on Milton's poem I shall provide the text from *Paradise Lost*.

B: The text. The extract, I reproduce below, is about the character of Satan, a particular which was kept hidden to students - together with the title, the author, and the subject of the poem - in order to encourage their own schematic, top-down authentications. The description is quite impressionistic, and the sense of sight seems to be almost neglected in favour of a general synaesthesia of sensations. Students therefore had to be enabled to transfer their internalized experience of 'darkness' achieved during their warm-up activity to this poem. This is the text:

Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool  
His mighty stature; on each hand the flames  
Driven backward slope their pointing spires, and, rolled  
In billows, leave i' the midst a horrid vale.  
Then with expanded wings he steers his flight  
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air,  
That felt unusual weight; till on dry land  
He lights - if it were land that ever burned

With solid, as the lake with liquid fire,  
 And such appeared in hue, as when the force  
 Of subterranean wind transports a hill  
 Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side  
 Of thundering Aetna, whose combustible  
 And fuelled entrails thence conceiving fire,  
 Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds  
 And leave a singed bottom all involved  
 With stench and smoke.

(Lines 171-87)

At this point, I shall present the 'hypertextual' methodological procedure I adopted by systematically illustrating it by means of some protocols from my students' responses to Milton's poem.

C: Protocol. The protocol is here arranged as a hypertextual 'word-association map', taking into account some individual first sensorial responses to words and lines. The map is organized into associative *links* according to these aspects:

1. O.T.: Original Text (original lines, words, and vocally emphasized phonemes - alliterations, assonances, onomatopoeias etc.);

2. F.A.: Free Associations (sensorial/emotional associations - touch, taste, hearing, smell, sight - and their conceptualizations);

3. L.C. plus Link Number: Link Connections (thematic - conceptual/sensorial - connections among different links by the same reader or by different individual readers).

*Word-association map:*

Link 1: (O.T.): "Upright he rears from off the pool" -->  
(F.A.): he roars, and rumbles and /fff/lutters about the cage.  
 He's a caged bear. ---- (O.T.): "His mighty stature" -->  
(F.A.): stiff, stock-still in chains (L.C.3).

Link 2: (O.T.): "from off the pool ... flames in billows"  
 --> (F.A.): foam of furios fire roaring in (O.T.) "the horrid  
 vale".

Link 3: (O.T.): "with expanded wings ... his flight aloft ... felt unusual weight - flight aloft felt - wings weight" --> (F.A.) flapping, wawing wings, I don't lift my flight. Aloft. I am a chained bird. (L.C.1).

Link 4: (O.T.): "dry land... burned with solid as the lake with liquid fire - so-li-qui-d fire - burned - land and lake - dry" --> (F.A.): in a desert, under hot sun, fire, fever, my skin is dry and cracking, I'm burnt (L.C.5).

Link 5: (O.T.): "Fire, ... force of subterranean wind ... fuelled entrails ... conceiving fire ... with mineral fury, aid the winds" --> (F.A.): /fff/orce of /fff/ire: /fff/; /fff/ury of wind in a desert land, I hear the noise of burnt grass in the hot wind: /ffff/ (L.C. 2 and 4).

Link 6: (O.T.): "and leave a singed bottom all involved with stench and smoke" --> (F.A.): stench of smoke: stinking burnt 'vale', burnt sticks of trees, 'pointing spires' stabbing my dry skin, blood is burning 'liquid fire'. (L.C.4).

It is interesting to notice that in the process of free-association between sounds, words and sensorial effects, readers tended to completely ignore latinate words and classical references which have always been traditionally considered as the peculiar 'force' of Milton's poetic style. On the basis of these protocols we might conclude, instead, that the 'emotional force' of his poetry lies in the sensorial effects 'germanic' words evoke in the readers. This mental operation of 'selection' can be detected from the 'summaries' of the lines students perform while they scan the text: since their scope is that of emotionally free-associating words with sensorial reactions to them, they tend to select the germanic words felt as more evocative than the latinate ones. Perhaps, if the objective of their reading had been a simple paraphrase, the more 'cognitively' explanatory latinate words in the text would have been chosen.

But let us examine, now the second phase of this hypertextual activity.

### **C.5. Second Phase**

A: Method. The previous top-down, conceptual mapping had, during this second phase, to be more appropriately linked to the structure of the poetic text through the concept-mapping technique of the 'pattern noting' (Buzan 1974, Fields 1982) related to the iconic context the students/acting-readers pragmatically achieved within the text by means of first-person metaphorical enactment as well as third-person aesthetic experience. During this phase, therefore, readers have to become 'acting readers' though still focusing upon their own individual sensorial experience of the poetic language.

According to this hypertextual model, the '*pattern noter*' begins by noting the central idea in the middle of the page; then, lines are added to the central box and related ideas are connected to those lines. This is the way they are organized in computer environments.

My 'physical' re-interpretation of such a model considered the 'central ideas' in terms of *what acting readers accounted for a mere 'denotative' reference to the poetic text*, whereas the ideas students/acting-readers 'connotatively' connected to the 'central' ones were regarded in terms of *immaginative, body/thought effects* the text produces on them while they physically and verbally improvised on it. These *effects* (recorded by protocols or video/audio tapes) then constituted the starting point for the subsequent re-textualizations of parallel poetic texts. The result was that additional lines (or additional taped performances, or protocols), representing additional related concepts and aesthetic experiences, radiated out from the original lines to create interconnected content maps, all together structuring the hypertext.

The following protocol represents an example of this second 'pattern-noting' method.



B: Protocol. This protocol is arranged as a hypertextual pattern-noting map, containing some of the individual acting readers' thematic/associative link connections (L.C.) between:

1. O.T.: Original Text;
2. E.M.: Embodied Metaphor (the acting reader's first-person physical embodiments of the poetic language - think-aloud or retrospective protocols);
3. P.RT.: Poetic Re-textualizations (the acting reader's third-person poetic rendering of his own previous first-person physical experience of the poem).

*Pattern-noting map*

Link 1: (O.T.): "Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool his mighty stature..." --> (E.M.): I'm in the dark, I keep my eyes closed. I sense the presence of something extremely dangerous. 'Incumbent'. Raising higher and higher in front of me. I shrink for the horror. I squat on the floor. Something monstrous, brutal, is going to happen. (O.T.): "Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air, that felt unusual weight." -->

(P.RT.): Darkness is thick, hot, oppressing.  
I can feel the heat - heavy. The horror, pressing.  
The dark shadow is looming. I'm scared.  
I have touched fear in the 'dusky air'.

Link 2: (O.T.): "on each hand the flames in billows ... as the lake with liquid fire ... sublimed with mineral fury" --> (E.M.): I rise from off the pool, I'm mighty, I dominate on everything. I extend my arms and generate liquid fire in billows from my hands, I am full of creative energy. I'm creating a new universe. --> (O.T.): " fuelled entrails thence conceiving fire" --↓

(P.RT.): I am a liquid fire, a blazing ocean,  
What I lick is ashes, I burn in motion.  
Billows lap and roll on gleaming spires,  
The horrid vale is left with trees of wire.

At this point, students/acting-readers were made aware that their 'metaphysical apprehension' (achieved by 'physically' experiencing the sensations poetic images prompted in them) was also experienced in similar ways by other artists. Surrealist and Metaphysical paintings of 'waste lands' by Dalì and De Chirico

were introduced at this point, and some lines from T.S. Eliot's Chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* (where the Women of Canterbury's emotional, sensory, visceral way of perceiving and 'synaesthetically incorporating' reality is emphasized to its extremes) were also explored in connection with the students' own poems. Actually, students could find many points of contact between Eliot's 'poetic apprehension' as propositionally expressed in his poetry, and their own poetic re-textualizations:

Chorus: "I hear restless movement of feet. And the air is heavy and thick.

Thick and heavy the sky. And the earth presses up against our feet.

What is the sickly smell, the vapour? the dark green light from a cloud on a withered tree? The earth is heaving to parturition of issue of hell. What is the sticky dew that forms on the back of my hand?"

This group stylistic analysis of their individual discourse re-textualizations was indeed preparatory to the collective third phase of this top-down poetic exploration.

### **C.6. Third Phase**

A: Method. As we have seen in the previous two phases, the pragmatic elicitation of semantic networks from a poetic text represented an approach to structuring physical hypertexts.

Given this assumption, then, in this third phase of model elaboration, the most difficult problem was represented by deciding what pragmatic, discursal associations (or *nodes*) the hypertext should exclude, because unrelated to the semantic content of the text, and which, instead, it should contain, and how they should be linked.

In other words, students/acting-readers had to reflect on how to organize both their *conceptual* and *contextual* discourse-links ensued by the previous elicitation into a collective 'interaction map' which had to be, nevertheless still controlled by the original text.

The resulting 'interaction map', on the one hand, was meant to illustrate the collective achievement of multiple dramatic discourses to be included in the poetic hypertext.

On the other hand, it had to represent a data elicitation tool for further textual creative re-elaborations and manipulations aimed to clarify, or even subvert, those discursal re-textualizations and associative links, without, anyway, affecting either them, or the original text.

Each acting reader could interact with the semantic structure of the hypertext by creating new dramatic-discourse nodes - or re-organizing the available ones (which, in other circumstances, could also be textualized by means of protocols or audio/video recordings within the graphical browser of a real hypertext).

The following protocol represents an example of the way students/acting-readers operated during this third phase.

B: Protocol. The protocol of the 'interactive, collective map' is organized according to the two basic positionings taken by acting readers while accessing the poetic language by means of their own embodied schemata, and they are:

1. E.M.: Embodied Metaphor (first-person positioning);
2. E.O.C.: Embodied Objective Correlative (third-person positioning).
3. P.RT.: Poetic Re-Textualization (third-person positioning).

The following protocol is just an example of how a Poetic Re-Textualization (the poem in Link 2, Second Phase) can be subsequently physically re-interpreted from a first-person stance as Embodied Metaphor by a group of acting readers, and then aesthetically experienced from a third-person stance as Embodied Objective Correlative by other viewers. In this sense, the top-down deconstruction of the Original Text (from *Paradise Lost*) can go on endlessly without, anyway, losing trace of the discursal effects produced by the original language.

*Interactive map*

## Reference-text:

(P.RT.): I am a liquid fire, a blazing ocean,  
 What I lick is ashes, I burn in motion.  
 Billows lap and roll on gleaming spires,  
 The horrid vale is left with trees of wire.

(E.M.): (*retrospective protocol of an internal participant*):  
 In group we tried to find together a movement to embody the  
 'liquid fire', the 'blazing ocean'. We decided to explore the  
 quality of the sound in the words: 'blazing fire' and 'liquid  
 ocean' were easier to feel in a physical way because they were  
 natural matches: jumping and moving my body 'as a flame' together  
 with the others made me feel hot, an 'inner fire'. It was also  
 easy to feel as a 'liquid ocean' 'waving' all together on the  
 floor. Then we started with 'blazing ocean': it had to be  
 'rough', in billows, not waves, with the hot sun making it blaze.  
 We became 'rough'. And by becoming a 'rough sea' we got very hot  
 as well, we were sweating, we felt we were fusing 'in a liquid  
 fire', 'burning in motion'. There was something destructive in  
 us, our energy became so 'full of fuel' - as in the other poem  
 (Milton's original poem) that we really felt as if we could burn  
 everything we touched."

(E.O.C.): (*retrospective protocol of an external  
 participant/observer*): I saw them dancing frantically, as in a  
 sabbath. They were possessed by a powerful energy that made them  
 become sort of a natural strength, a fierce wind uprooting a  
 wind, or a rough sea, overturning ships.

(P.RT.): (*poetic re-textualization of an external observer*):  
 Free winds, wandering in space,  
 Enjoying freedom.  
 Light and unsubstantial fire  
 Going up to the sky.

A last observation. Johnson's idea that gestalt structures  
 are universally shared seems to be disrupted by this last poetic  
 re-textualization we have just examined. In fact, although the  
 'Force' gestalt - meant as a strong 'interaction' - seems to have  
 'survived', after all, throughout every top-down discursual  
 authentication and every re-textualization of Milton's original  
 text, this last poem evokes no 'interaction' at all, but only  
 'unconstrained freedom and lightness'. This suggests that  
 conventionalized schemata 'can' be disrupted and yet they can  
 remain discursively true to the language which elicited them.

**C.7. Summary**

A hypertext procedure, then, can become a tool in the acting reader's hands to emphasize and increase the integration of the new knowledge conveyed by the poetic text into his own body/thought schemata, while, at the same time, imaginatively restructuring it through collective dramatization. This means that a physical hypertextual methodology is not only an imaginative body/thought elicitation-tool, but also a teacher/researcher's tool for assessing the acting readers' imaginative discursal organizations of the poetic structure.

APPENDIX D (Chapter 7: *Applications - The Bottom-up Phase*, p.239)

Ideational/interpersonal inter-play of antithetical voices in John Donne's Holy Sonnet X

D.1. Objectives

The objective of this Appendix is to show a pedagogical implementation of the principle that a bottom-up, physical exploration of poetic language can lead students/acting-readers to realize an interpersonal/ideational dimension of the 'different voices' they achieve in micro-communication. I shall focus, therefore, on how this objective was achieved exclusively in reference to antithesis and 'pattern' infractions as they were discursively realized by my university students/acting-readers (who had already extensively worked with me on poetry) while exploring John Donne's lyrical poem *Holy Sonnet X*. To this purpose, I shall make use of a series of illustrative protocols of their responses to the activities I proposed in class. Such protocols will be arranged according to three steps:

Step 1.: First reading - Realizing tone, register, and style;

Step 2.: Ideational realizations - Realizing movements of thought;

Step 3.: Interpersonal realizations - Realizing different interacting 'voices'.

This is the text:

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for, though art not soe,  
For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow,  
Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill mee.  
From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee,  
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,

And soonest our best men with thee doe goe,  
 Rest of their bones, and soules' deliverie.  
 Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,  
 And dost with poyson, warre, and sicknesse dwell,  
 And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well,  
 And better than thy stroake; why swell'st thou then?  
 One short sleepe past, wee wake eternally,  
 And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

## D.2. Step 1.: First reading - Tone, register, and style

The objective of this step was that of encouraging students to read the poem aloud in order to achieve a first feeling of

a. The 'tone of voice' they would find discursively appropriate to the semantic organization of the text as they pragmatically realize it;

b. The 'register' they would adopt as appropriate either to the situation in which they contextualize the poetic utterance, or to the speaker's purpose and inter-actional relationships;

c. The 'style' they would identify as underlying the first two points.

Let us examine one 'think-aloud' protocol (since I do not omit anything, I use dots for pauses):

1. (*She reads the poem through for the first time*): "I feel ... sort of an energy running throughout the whole poem. ... It is quite violent. He is violent against Death, he is playing, as it were, 'high status' towards her, perhaps. He wants to feel superior (*register*). ... I feel like shouting, being aggressive (*tone*). ... But, it is not ... a naturalistic ..., I mean, it can seem a colloquial speech but there is that ... energy that ... pushes one word to the other, as if there were no full-stops, ... it makes it special (*style*)." (My parenthesis).

Here we can see how the student, by reading the poem aloud for the first time is already capable of connecting the tone of voice - which reveals an ideational stance - with the situational/interpersonal register, both of them informed by a style prompted by the pragmatization of the text structure. It is

exactly the dramatic pragmatization of the linguistic structure of the poetic text, therefore, what enables students to subjectively realize the 'ideational' dimension of the voice they achieve in the text (that is, the 'movements of the Addresser's thought' as it develops, pauses, and change direction) which is then interpersonally realized in micro-communicative interaction.

These considerations lead us directly to Step 2. of our methodological development.

### D.3. Step 2.: Ideational realizations - Movements of thought

The objective of this phase was that of eliciting students to 'pursue the thought' they achieved from the text, and realize the extent to which the way poetic language is 'spoken' can change a *mind style*<sup>3</sup> and provoke another thought. In this bottom-up context, therefore, speaking poetry has many resemblances with interpreting a musical score.

At this stage, however, students had to be enabled to realize that they can 'sense' the thought-development in a more totally involving way when they are 'physically involved' in the poetic language. In this way, they would experience 'thought as movement'.

The activity consisted in asking students/acting-readers to form two groups and find 'their own physical way' through the linguistic pattern of the text in order to achieve an awareness of how their 'thought movement' developed. The following protocols (2 and 3) are retrospective reports of two first-person participants from each group:

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<sup>3</sup> The term *mind style* was coined by Fowler (1977) in reference to the 'world view' representation in literature. Fowler, however, seems to consider the 'mind style' as already 'encoded' in the semantic structure of the literary text, and not, instead, as pragmatically achieved by the reader within the text. In fact, he defines the 'mind style' as:

"cumulatively, consistent structural options, agreeing in cutting the presented world to one pattern or another, give rise to an impression of a world-view, what I shall call a 'mind style'." (p.76).

My stance, on the contrary, is the pragmatic one, so that I consider the mind style as belonging to the Addresser's voice as it is discursively interpreted by the acting reader in his dramatic interaction with the poetic text.



2. "At the beginning, one of us just read the poem in a normal, I mean, naturalistic way, for a general meaning we could agree on. We agreed that it was not easy to think within that language, because while we were saying one thing, then, suddenly, something different seemed to interfere. One thought seemed to be against another. We were not very sure about that, so we read it again to try to find the exact point in the text when we felt like that. We realized that our sensation was mainly provoked by words such as: 'though', 'for', 'nor', 'then', 'and'. They seemed they could add or change the direction of our thought. Then, we re-read the sonnet chorally. First we tapped our hands on something at each of these words, so we marked a stop to the flow of thought and the beginning of a new one, like that: "Death, be not proud, though some have called thee / Mighty and dreadful, for, thou are not so. / For, thouse thou think'st thou overthrow etc."

After, we agreed to walk around the room and to change direction on each of these words. We expected that in this way we could sense the 'flow' of the thought, and how it was interrupted or changed. Actually, this was a wonderful idea, because we realized that if we moved calmly, we were actually meditating in a serene way: our voice was calm, we were weighing words and thoughts. The slower we were, the more serene our mood was. Then we started accelerating, and the faster we moved, the frenzier we felt. Some of us felt even giddy, and I personally felt a sense of nervous anguish, a raising sense of fear while I changed direction so rapidly as if I were frenetically trying to find a vital solution to some tragic situation I was entrapped in."

3. "While we were reading the sonnet aloud, we realized that the stress of our voices was falling on the final words of each line. We decided to focus on them and to see if they were in some sense contributing to the development of the thought movement. At first we isolated them. They were:

Thee - not so,  
 overthrow - kill me,  
 be - flow,  
 go - delivery,  
 desperate men - dwell,  
 will - then,  
 eternally - die.

We immediately realized that they were words with strong emotional connotations for us: alone, they were already capable of suggesting in each of us an emotional story<sup>4</sup>. Our task was to find a 'physical way' through the thought movement we realized in the text. Therefore, we decided to explore how these words could 'build' a thought. We decided to stress those words even more. Physically. We put the gym mattress on the floor, in the middle of our circle, and we started kicking it on the last word of each line. My physical effort really made me realize the energy of those words in activating one thought next to the other."

This second step of their bottom-up activity actually helped students become aware of the 'dialogic', dramatic quality of the poetic language they were exploring. They could in fact realize how the text provided a larger semantic structure allowing the co-existence of antithetical discursal, ideational patterns for diverse thoughts, which were debated and then developed into the next ones.

The idea of a 'debate' going on within Donne's sonnet actually lead them to the third step of interpersonal dramatization.

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<sup>4</sup> This group even created a poem by using as their 'key-words' the last words of Donne's *Holy Sonnet X*. In their view, they epitomized the 'emotional story' of the poem as they perceived it. This is the students' creation:

Thou not so overthrow  
 And kill me.  
 I'll be and flow.  
 And then I'll go  
 To my soul's delivery.  
 Desperate men in Thee dwell.  
 Then they eternally die.

**D.4. Step 3.: Interpersonal realizations - Different interacting 'voices'**

At this stage, the objective students/acting-readers had to attain was twofold:

a. Realizing the interpersonal implications inherent in the ideational nature of the antithetical thought-movements they achieved within the poetic language in Donne's text;

b. Operating a stylistic analysis on their dramatic-discourse realizations.

What follows is a couple of retrospective protocols (4 and 5) - in the form of 'reported speech' - showing how different students/acting-readers came to physically realize, and then to stylistically conceptualize, an interplay of 'different voices' even within the unique ideational structure of the Addresser's 'poetic utterance'. This was to be accomplished by embodying the antithetical interaction of different movements of thought identified during the dramatic enactment of the poem.

4. "(physical realization - first-person stance): (voice 1) I used a sarcastic tone of voice, I meant to insult Death, to despise her. I wanted to make her understand that (voice 2 - paraphrase) 'although she was so proud of her power over men, and (voice 3 - paraphrase) though some other people consider her mighty and dreadful' (voice 1) I do not consider her as such. I laughed at her pride ('why swell'st thou then?'), because she was really so weak and dependent on circumstances: when I told her 'Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men / And dost with poyson, warre, and sicknesse dwell / And poppy and charms can make us sleep as well, / And better than thy stroke' I was more than ever fierce and contemptuous: that sequence of words sounded like a fire of offensive, outrageous words against Death, she is a 'slave', not at all 'mighty and dreadful'. I meant to humiliate her lowering her to the level of 'poppies' and 'charms' which 'make us sleepe as well / and better than thy stroake'. When I ended my tirade with 'Why swell'st thou then?' I felt daring and buoyant.

(stylistic conceptualization - third-person stance): I felt the presence of this fierce sarcastic tone just from the start. I wanted to see what aspects of the language prompted in me a feeling like that. So I noticed that there is a sonnet-pattern used in a very free way. there is not a regular metrical scheme. The lines are of different length and mostly 'run-on'. That's why

I couldn't hear the rhyme-pattern when I spoke it aloud. Yet there are rhymes, some are imperfect rhymes, though. The pattern: 'thee (a), soe (b), overthrow (b), mee (a); bee (c), flow (d), goe (d), delivery (c); men (e), dwell (f), well (f), then (e); eternally (g), die (g). I couldn't feel the flowing sound of Shakespeare's sonnet, for example. Perhaps because the rhyme-pattern of the sonnet is disrupted, here; it is not abab, cdcd, efef, gg. The first and the fourth rhymes are too distant, and I couldn't hear them; and then, as I said, there are run-on lines and I went for the sense, not for the sound. Yet there was a 'sound' I felt. It was irregular. So, perhaps, the disrupted sound-pattern of the sonnet corresponded to my disrupting the certainties of Death. She has not to be proud, nothing is 'patterned', even unavoidable truths of life can be disrupted. And the new sonnet-structure perhaps was taking me to this conclusion. Then, there are many alliterations: 'For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow, / Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill mee.' The repetition of the voiced and unvoiced /th/ sound, combined with the other consonantic groups, made language harsh and difficult to utter, and this perhaps contributed to my sarcastic, violent tone. The style itself is brusque, and defiant, as the speaker introduces the word 'Death' at once: 'Death, be not proud'. He uses 'imperatives', and the informal second-person pronoun 'thou'. He is not afraid of pronouncing that word which is so full of terrible connotations, and of addressing Death in a direct way. He considers all the pros and cons (Though, for, for, nor, then etc) just to re-assert at the end, even more fiercely, his conviction by concluding with the constative 'Death, thou shalt die'.

5. "(physical realization - first-person stance): (voice 1) I used a tone of challenge in my voice when I addressed Death. I wanted to defy his dreadful power ('Nor yet canst thou kill mee'). (voice 2) Then I thought that perhaps there was something deeper below my tone of challenge. Perhaps I was anguished. I was actually thinking of the impossibility of escaping my destiny. When I said 'And soonest our best men with thee doe goe / Rest of their bones, and soules' delivery' I felt a sense of chill in my bones, an inner stiffness. Perhaps because of all those /st/ sounds: 'soonest', 'best', 'rest' which remind me of that 'stiff' sensation of death. I felt terror. I tried to speak the last lines of the poem, where I seem so serene and convinced about the eternal resurrection after death ('One short sleep past, wee wake eternally, / And death shall be no more; Death thou shalt die'), by keeping this sense of tragedy in myself. I realized that my tone of voice was not so challenging anymore, and my last cry was not a cry of triumph over Death. I was shouting desperately as to dull my senses, as if I were frantically using the religious faith as a shield to protect myself from the Death's stroke. I was cursing my fate.

(stylistic conceptualization - third-person stance): The challenging, mocking tone of voice used by the speaker in this poem is therefore just a desperate attempt to exorcise his deepest fear. He is actually one of those 'desperate men' he himself talks about. So I identify two different concepts of

'death' in antithesis to each other: a 'mighty and dreadful Death', and a death which is 'slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men'. This contrast is evident in expressions such as 'Die not, poor Death', or 'Death, thou shalt die'. When I spoke these two sentences I felt as if I was putting one against the other not two different concepts, but the same one: so it was as if, by putting 'death' against 'death' I was depriving that word of its denotation and connotations. It was striking, because in this way the word 'death' signified nothing, and this fact actually stressed my sense of confusion. Indeed, the absence of a well-defined concept was really displacing for me. And I felt more terror."

From these two retrospective protocols it is possible to notice how different ideational epistemes come to antithetically interact within the Addresser's voice as it is pragmatically achieved by different acting readers within Donne's text. The dramatic, interpersonal quality of lyric poetry is here evident: different movements of thoughts are embodied and made to interact like characters in a play within the semantic structure of the poetic text.

APPENDIX E (Chapter 8: *Applications - The Interactive Phase*, p.282)

Drama methods in interactive micro-communication dynamics:  
Protocols on *Othello*

E.1. Shifting-and-sharing perspectives through rhythmical discourse in poetic drama

With this Appendix I intend to provide evidence of the acting readers' imaginative embodiment of first/second/third-person perspectives by 'shifting and sharing' them with the other acting readers in the process of creating a collective, rhythmical discourse from Shakespeare's poetic drama *Othello*.

To begin with, in his essay on Othello's mode of verbal self-representation, Widdowson (1982) argues:

"Why is Othello such an easy prey to what is after all a fairly obvious device? Why does the conviction of his wife's adultery take such rapid root in his mind? The reason, I think, is that Iago plays upon Othello's ... concomitant tendency to confuse first- and third- person reference. ... And Iago is expert at exploiting the failings of his fellow men for his own purposes." (p.43).

Iago's expertise in absorbing Othello's third-person overt representation of his first-person covert fears, and reflecting them back to him, is evident, for instance, in the following lines:

"But, O, what damned minutes tells he o'er  
Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves."

(Act III, scene 3, lines 73-4)

If we take the Iago/Othello interaction as an example of a more generalized view of any real acting readers' micro-communicative interaction (of the kind I advocate in this study), we can notice exactly the extent to which an 'embodied Addresser' comes to displace his perspectives into his real 'embodied Addressees' who first absorb and then reflect them back to him once they become, in their turn, Addressers in the interaction.

Such a dynamics underlies the issue - central to my enquiry - of a dramatic micro-communication on a propositional, 'diegetic' level of discourse, which, at the same time, implies a 'mimetic', analogic fusion of the Addresser's self with the Addressees' selves (a fusion which, in the case of Othello - according to Widdowson's view - occurs with other indeterminate and abstract second/third-person selves, whereas, in the case of Iago, with Othello's self).

I shall illustrate the acting readers' cognitive/affective process towards the achievement of a dynamic, rhythmical 'physicalization' of dramatic discourses in poetry.

## **E.2. Psychological dynamics**

A type of psychological dynamics that real acting readers might want to explore by starting to embody, for example, the characters of Iago and Othello (as interchanging Addresser and Addressee in dramatic micro-communication) could be that, on the one hand, by appropriating Othello's discursal style, Iago 'becomes' Othello. On the other hand, Othello, as it were, 'objectifies' and distances his inner fears from himself by projecting them on his second-person Addressee Iago. Iago, in this way, becomes Othello's physical embodiment of his own schemata, reflecting them back to him. In other terms, Iago renders Othello's unconscious 'propositional' and, therefore, makes it conscious.

A stylistic realization of the dramatic interchangeability of the two characters was elicited by providing my students/acting-readers with random cues from both Othello and Iago: in embodying them, they found it difficult to distinguish which cue belonged to whom. I assert that such interchangeability is very common in poetic drama where (perhaps because of the peculiarity of its language) characters often are personifications of complementary or specular facets of a state of mind on a different, metaphysical level of being. This is evident, for example, in this short exchange from T.S.Eliot's poetic drama *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935):

"TEMPTER: ...  
 Seek the way of martyrdom, make yourself the  
 lowest  
 On earth, to be high in heaven.  
 And see far off below you, where the gulf is  
 fixed,  
 Your persecutors, in timeless torment,  
 Parched passion, beyond expiation.

THOMAS: No!  
 Who are you, tempting with my own desires?"

Othello himself, at a certain point, even seems to recognize his own self displaced and embodied in the second-person Iago, when he cries out, with his characteristic dislocated style:

"... By heaven, he echoes me,  
 As if there were some monster in his thought  
 Too hideous to be shown."

(lines 108-9)

But how can acting readers in fact realize this analogic/propositional, dialogic fusion between Addressers and Addressees once they come to embody them in actual dramatization?

### **E.3. Rhythmic dynamics**

Rhythm is one of the first components which can actualize psychological dynamics in the iconic, physical space of poetic dramatization.

Berry (1991), in her description of vocal techniques for actors, emphasizes the way in which even the rhythm achieved from the 'split lines' in the poetic-drama text leads to a sort of 'fusion' of the characters who "are almost breathing together" (p.68).

In the context of my argument, this means that a mutual achievement of a rhythmic discourse from the metrical pattern in the text could lead students/acting-readers to the realization of two main issues:



a) A true rhythmical fusion of the characters' thoughts into a unique one, so that every change of 'voice' at each cue might correspond to a change in the direction of such thought. This could justify, for example, my interpretation of Iago as a projection of Othello's mind, or of the Four Tempters as projections of Thomas Becket's desires, in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (see also Guido 1992b, pp.101-5).

b) A play of 'status', in which one character more or less deceitfully manipulates the rhythmical discourse in order to manipulate the other character's thought by eliciting a particular type of emotional response (Rhythm, breath, emotion and thought are all interrelated). Also this case suits our interpretation of Othello's interaction with Iago, although by 'manipulation' I do not necessarily mean anything negative: it is rather intended as a dialogic communication strategy.

Let us now see how these two pragmatic issues were jointly applied to some poetic-drama extracts during my classroom poetic interactions:

a: Thought-fusion To come to a practical demonstration of the first issue I have outlined - concerning 'thought-fusion' - I proposed the following cues of dialogue (from *Othello*), insofar as they might be interpreted as a metaphysical contending of two antithetic thoughts and feelings (each marked by each cue ending with a full-stop) in the unique conscience of Othello:

1. "Iago: I see this hath a little dashed your spirits.
2. Othello: Not a jot, not a jot.  
Iago: In faith, I fear it has.  
.....
3. Iago: My lord, I see you're moved.  
Othello: No, not much moved."

(Act III; scene 3, lines 213-26)

At the beginning students were not given indication of the names of the Addresser and Addressee, so that they interpreted it as a unique soliloquy (a first/second-person interplay between a conscious, familiar side and an unconscious, unfamiliar side of the character's self). Then the distinctive identities of the two characters was revealed. These are some of the retrospective protocols on the conclusions my Italian students (University level - 2nd year Foreign Languages and Literature Faculty) reached after having vocally worked in pairs on the rythmical dynamics of the shared lines. Such discorsal interpretations can be seen in the light of the premises I have set just before:

A: "Line 1. has a regular iambic rhythm and it could suggest Othello's realization of a new, dangerous direction of his thought represented by the second-person Iago."

B: "I'm not sure Othello realizes this, 'his spirits are not dashed', the rhythm is very regular."

A: "Yes, there is a contrast between mood and rhythm. The thought is not clear now, it is creeping slowly in his mind."

C: "Line 2. starts with an anapest ("Not a jot, not a jot"). A double anapest? It speeds the rhythm. Othello's conscious side wants to remove, to dismiss immediately the thought upsetting him. This thought, on the contrary, re-asserts itself in the second part of the line, with Iago's regular rhythm. Iago's rhythm is always very regular".

D: "And also in Line 3. It's very regular. This shows, I mean, the regular metre of Iago's cues shows the firm, conscious establishment of the new thought in Othello's mind".

C: "But we don't know what this thought is. I mean, I know, because I know the story of Othello."

D: "No, but we know the effect, the emotional effect that this new thought has on Othello when Iago says: 'I see this hath a little dashed your spirits'; 'I see you're moved'. You are Iago, but you are me, too. I know I'm moved, but I don't want to admit it, I take my distances to defend myself from suffering."

C: "Yes, Othello says 'No', in the second part of the line. He alters the rhythm to stop his thoughts. But, this time, he has to admit to himself that he is moved though 'not much moved'."

Through this protocol it is possible to observe that sharing lines rhythmically (having them started by a character and ended by another) as if they belonged to a unique voice, can make

acting readers discursively achieve the emotional rhythmical dimension of the thought movements.

b: Thought-manipulation To explore the idea of thought-fusion alongside the nature of the micro-communicative interaction and thought-manipulation analyzed in this extract from *Othello*, students were asked to explore rhythm, punctuation and line-length (run-on- and end-stopped-lines), and to find a 'physical embodiment' of the movement of thought they would achieve in the poetic dialogue. This is the protocol of a recording made while a couple of students was interacting to create a physical representation of - in Berry's words - the *thought-in-action*. Then, also a third-person observer (another student) is present:

A: (Iago): " 'I hope you will consider what is spoke  
Comes from my love.'  
The metre is regular. But it sounds long."

B: "It's a run-on-line."

A: "Then there is the full-stop. A long sentence and then, suddenly a full-stop. And then I start again the new sentence with 'But'."

B: "But does it 'come from your love?', let's play it as if you wanted to reassure me of your love."

C: (external observer): "Iago looks straight into Othello's eyes, he holds his hands, and he says all his speech in this position."

A: (Iago): 'I hope you will consider what is spoke  
Come from my love. But I do see you' re moved.  
I am to pray you, not to strain my speech  
To grosser issues, nor to larger reach  
Than to suspicion.'

B: (Othello): 'I will not.'

A: (Iago): 'Should you do so, my lord,  
My speech should fall into such vile success  
Which my thoughts aimed not at"

"No, it doesn't convince me. It doesn't work. How do you feel?"

B: "You look into my eyes and I have no time to think. Why do you reassure me and then talk about suspicion? Give me more time to think, and don't look into my eyes."

A: "I'll stress the pauses at the full-stops." (*she does*).

B: "You mock me! I do not feel reassured. You see? Pauses make me reflect. You insinuate a suspicion, don't you? And want me to be moved. Let's try another way."

C: (*external observer*): "Iago turns round and round Othello while he says his words. When the long sentence ends, he stops and looks into Othello's eyes and says briefly 'I do see you are moved'."

Through this protocol it is possible to notice the way acting reader A uses pauses after every full-stop to manipulate mood and insinuate suspicion in acting reader B. *End-stopped-lines*, then, do not just mark grammatical pauses, but rather discourse emotional interruption which invoke a multiplicity of implicatures to be subjectively inferred. *Run-on-lines*, on the other hand, speed the rhythm and provide an emotional anti-climax.

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## ERRATA CORRIGE

p. 38. Textual control is indeed paradoxically crucial in determining variability in discourse interpretations. This means that students should never disregard the semantic organization of the text as the multiplicity of their own discursal responses is always relatable to that. Therefore, as in activities based on re-writing and translation - which are complementary, 'covert' ways of creatively authenticating literary texts - also in 'overt' dramatic representations students should be guided to activate a systematic cognition of their own subjective/affective pragmatization of textual semantics. In this sense, students' use of self-monitored protocols as classroom procedure would enable them to subsequently re-textualize their discursal experience of poetry enactment and to perform a stylistic analysis on *their own* dramatic interpretation of the text-organization. Seen under this light, the structural and semiotic aspects of the analysis can be repossessed under a wholly personal, individual dimension, insofar as they are not considered as inherent properties of the text (as the structural and the semiotic methodological approaches seem to imply) but rather they are the outcome of an ongoing pragmatic negotiation of meaning which involves both poetic language and the students' individual physical, emotional, and intellectual personalities.

Indeed the approach I am proposing here is particularly suitable for the analysis of poems and poetic drama insofar as such genres have always the implication of a 'free direct utterance' whose figurative language readers feel 'authorized' to appropriate by imaginatively displacing their own individual schematic system of symbolization into textual semantics. It seems to me, therefore, that a re-appropriation of a historical method in analyzing poetry would not suit poetic expression insofar as it is always in a *paradigmatic* and metaphorical relationship with the real world as the link between referentiality and representation not only is not explicitly achievable, but also it is often totally subverted and disrupted, so that readers have to cope with contradictions they continually try to reconcile. All this is extremely schema-challenging and imaginatively productive. Hence I would define poetry as a *literature of Imagination*, and this is the kind of literature I shall be mostly concerned with in this thesis.

Of course, structural constraints become more stringent when readers come to deal with other, less 'direct' literary genres, such as, for instance, the traditional 18th/19th-century novel (where usually an 'omniscient voice' achievable in the text already signals a restricted range of interpretations) or also



science fiction, or satire. I would by contrast define these genres as *literature of Fantasy* insofar as the conditions of the world are already given, as they are explicitly achievable within the language of the text, and they essentially correspond to the real, historical ones. This means that readers are able to identify what is 'inside' the work with what is 'outside' it (as it happens in Dryden's and Pope's satire, or in Spenser's allegory), thus establishing a clear and well-defined interpretative parallel between reference and representation. In other words, works of Fantasy assume a shared code which allow a very limited range of interpretative diversifications since it is meant to be understood by a particular group of receivers. By means of such shared code everything representational falls into referential place. In this sense, I maintain, works of Fantasy are always in a *syntagmatic* relationship with the real world insofar as such relationship is always metonymically explicit. In such cases, a complementary historical enquiry might be a prerequisite for helping students accessing textual 'reference' to a social/historical reality (which is something different from using the text as a historical illustration, as it usually happens with the traditional historical method).

**p. 184.** Judgement-of-sense protocols were collected by having students/acting-readers taking part in the physical-theatre workshop and simultaneously tape-recording their immediate reactions and free-associations to their first-person involvement in the poetic event. In this way, the process of protocol-collection itself became a constituent of their dramatization and physicalization of the poem. Moreover, collecting judgement-of-sense protocols elicited in acting-readers a simultaneous displacement of their iconic self from a first- to a third-person perspective as 'observing participants' of their own representational commitment.

The use of a protocol collection simultaneous to the process of poetic enactment, therefore, was aimed, in pedagogic terms, to a cognition of their affective experience of the poetic language. Students' use of judgement-of-quality protocols, in fact, elicited in them a propositional verbalization of a bottom-up process of language-awareness in progress. This led them to subsequent conceptualizations of their experience which the two retrospective judgement-of-purpose and the judgement-of-taste protocols enhanced. Both types of protocols epitomize the very sense of the Kantian 'reflective judgement' informing my operationalizations, consisting in a principled attempt to subjectively conceptualize a 'new' representational physical

experience. The collection of judgement-of-purpose-and-taste protocols was implemented by having students taking their time to consciously organize and verbalize their experience. They could choose the means they felt more appropriate to their reflective processes, which means that they could use the tape recorder to record the immediacy of their recollections and then supply both the cassettes and their tapescripts and comments as well, or else, just written reports.

The amount of protocols I collected was huge: indeed, it covered the syllabus and the lecture-schedule of three academic years. Of course, since students were all Italian students of English language and literature at both high-school and university level, the language they used was English, as it is originally reproduced in the protocols. The selection of the protocol extracts exemplifying my theoretical and pedagogic positions was generally made on the basis of what I found relevant to illustrate the theoretical points I intended to demonstrate and the corresponding pedagogic objectives I meant to achieve in the course of the various phases - as I point out in detail in my practical argumentation. The protocols were not selected merely according to my own 'aesthetic taste'. A specific pedagogic choice of the plays, poems and excerpts proposed in the classroom was, on the contrary, made by me as the teacher, and, indeed, initially based on my own taste (it seems to me it cannot be otherwise). Nevertheless, I was always ready to substitute poems every time students did not feel any sort of 'elective affinity' with them (as it happened, for instance, with some of the English poetry of the Thirties). As a whole, I always tried to follow their inclinations (my students responded predominantly to metaphysical, imagistic, and romantic poetry, and enthusiastically to Shakespeare and some of Eliot's poetic drama. This does not mean, however, that the same approach I propose here cannot be applied to other kinds of poetry in other classroom contexts).