

primarily on what will remain as the residue after the reading—the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out" (23). In aesthetic reading, on the other hand, "the reader's primary concern is with what happens during the actual reading event.... In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text" (24-5).

Central to this relationship is the way a reader draws on personal history to have a meaningful transaction with the text. A reader might have feelings, associations, and other connections with the text that contribute towards a personal construction of meaning. Each reader might make a slightly different association with the signs offered by a text, thus giving each transaction between particular readers and texts a potentially unique meaning.

As noted, much discussion of Rosenblatt centers on these two related aspects of her theory. Yet a central experience in an aesthetic reading, the reader's "evocation" of the literary work, is often overlooked in discussions of transactional theory. An evocation, says Rosenblatt, refers "to the lived-through process of building up the work under the guidance of the text" (69). A reader

brings a state of mind, a penumbra of "memories" of what has preceded, ready to be activated by what follows, and providing the context from which further meaning will be derived. Awareness—more or less explicit—of repetitions, echoes, resonances, repercussions, linkages, cumulative effects, contrasts, or surprises is the mnemonic matrix for the structuring of emotion, idea, situation, character, plot—in short, for the evocation of a work of art. (57-8)

This evocation is essential to the "lived-through" experience of an aesthetic reading, and Rosenblatt argues that too often readers abandon the evocation too quickly and move to an efferent reading. Yet, she says,

the reader should [savor] as fully as possible his personal evocation during the lived-through transaction with the text.... He must keep his sense of it as vividly and fully in mind as possible, as he goes on to ponder his response to it. He achieves a certain objectivity through reflective self-awareness, through understanding that the work envisaged is a product of the reverberations between what he has brought to the text and what the text offers. He seeks to



Exploring an Evocation of a Literary Work: Processes and Possibilities of an Artistic Response to Literature

Peter Smagorinsky

John Coppock

The University of Oklahoma

Many teachers of reading and literature are familiar with Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory of the literary work. With attention in reading research shifting to the reader's construction of meaning from the signs offered by a text, Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory has become among the most frequently invoked accounts of how readers make sense of literature. The idea of a transaction between reader and text has replaced the more static view of reading professed by the long-entrenched New Critics, who found meaning only in the work of literature and ignored the reader's constructive processes.

Attention to Rosenblatt's theory has primarily fallen in two areas: her distinction between efferent and aesthetic reading, and her focus on the reader's personal history in ascribing meaning to the signs of a literary work. In efferent reading "the reader's attention is focused

understand how his own sense of life, his own values, coincide with, or differ from, the world that he has participated in through the transaction with the text. (174)

The evocation, she says, is what readers interpret, not the text itself: "Interpretation involves primarily an effort to describe in some way the nature of the lived-through evocation of the work" (70).

Unfortunately, in schools the bulk of reading focuses on efferent rather than aesthetic response. This stress derives in part from the factual emphasis of many subject areas; texts in science, math, history, and other subjects tend to be written with information in mind, not aesthetics. Yet even in the study of literature the emphasis is often on what we "carry away" from the text rather than on what we "live through" as we read. As readers and teachers of literature we are troubled by this problem. How, we have wondered, can we organize instruction to encourage students to stay with their evocations of the literary work in order to have an aesthetic transaction?

We will next describe the results of research we have conducted describing one way to get students to sustain their evocations: to encourage students to produce an artistic response to literature. Artistic response invites students to work with the images they associate with the signs of the text and to animate them through some artistic medium. Our sense of art here is quite broad, including drawing, dance, music, and any other aesthetic means of exploring a response. Our research suggests that an artistic response, for some students in some situations, can provide the opportunity to pursue an evocation, to play with images, to experiment with ideas; in short, to sustain an aesthetic response to literature from which students may develop an interpretation.

The research took place at an alternative school for recovering substance abusers. We asked the students to read William Carlos Williams' "The Use of Force," a short story told from the perspective of a doctor who must extract a throat culture during a diphtheria epidemic from a young girl suspected of having the disease. The girl battles him savagely and hysterically to prevent him from examining her throat, and her parents try to help the doctor by holding her down and shaming her into complying. During the course of the struggle the doctor develops contempt for the parents and passion towards the girl. Against his rational judgment, the doctor becomes lost in "a blind fury" to attack

and subdue the girl. In "a final unreasoning assault" he overpowers her and discovers her "secret" of "tonsils covered with membrane." The story ends with a final act of fury in which the girl attacks the doctor "while tears of defeat blinded her eyes."

The students read the story in a classroom that we had stocked with a wide assortment of artistic media: tinkler toys, a keyboard synthesizer, a computer with graphics program, various art supplies, paper and pens, and so on. After reading the story the students had the opportunity to create any type of artistic response, either alone or in a group of up to five, that represented their response to the story. In addition to using the supplies we'd provided, students could produce a play, choreograph a dance, or otherwise produce a response of their own determination.

To study the processes engaged in by students as they composed their artistic texts, we videotaped the students as they read and produced their artistic responses, and then used the videotape as a stimulus to get students to talk about the processes they'd engaged in during their reading of the story and production of their artistic texts. We will focus on two students, "Jane" and "Martha," who responded to the story by choreographing a dance depicting the relationship between the girl and the doctor.

In pursuing their evocation of the literary work, Jane and Martha engaged in three primary processes. First of all, they initiated their response to the story by empathizing with the literary characters. Second, they employed both spatial and bodily/kinesthetic intelligence to (a) visualize images to inspire their portrayal of the characters, and (b) represent the relationship between the characters through the spatial positioning of the dancers. Third, through their choreography they not only represented their thoughts in dance, but the process of choreographing the dance changed their thinking about the characters in the story as well. We will illustrate each of these three processes with excerpts from the interview transcripts.

Empathizing with Characters

Jane and Martha chose dance as their way of representing their evocation in large part because of its potential for emotional expression. Jane had originally wanted to perform a play to depict their understanding of the story but then changed to dance. "In the dance you can show more emotion than you can in a play," said Jane. "I dance all the time. That is how I show emotion. . . . Ballet is kind of a sad dance



for me but yesterday it was like different. It gave me enjoyment, it gave me a lot of self-esteem."

Martha identified strongly with the experience of the girl in the story because she shared the character's reluctance to open up to other people. Like the girl in the story, she felt "scared": "I felt like the little girl because we live in two different worlds . . . I felt like the little girl because she was always trying to hide from the doctor and I was like hiding myself from the doctor." Martha's feeling that she needed to hide from the doctor stemmed from experiences parallel to those of the girl in the story:

Martha: When I was hiding from [Jane in the dance] she was the doctor and I was the daughter, the little girl, and it was just like me. I hate people trying to find out who I am so I was basically hiding the way I always hide but I was hiding to be somebody else. I felt like I was hiding in the little girl, but it was me that was hiding, because I do that all the time. I hide from everybody.

Q: Did you feel for the character then?

Martha: Oh yeah, I felt for the character. When I was dancing I was thinking about what I would do. I hated what the doctor did to her. I wanted to kill him . . .

My feelings for the kid started when I was reading the story because there have been many times when I have had some problems. I'm like I'm okay, get away. In a way I kind of knew how this girl was feeling whenever the doctor was trying to get into her mouth. I am like that with dentists. I hate dentists. I won't let them get into my mouth. I'm afraid they're going to pull out my teeth. It scares me. I try to keep my mouth shut too. I put myself in her position through the whole story knowing she was scared and very insecure because she knows she is going to die. She knows through the whole story she's going to die. She doesn't want her parents to know about it.

Q: Is it just dentists? Earlier you were talking about how you don't like people in general getting inside you. So was it just a dentist or was it—

Martha: Well for people to know me, I don't like for anyone to know me, it is really scary for people to know me, who I am or anything

like doctors, and stuff like that. I don't like them to look inside my mouth. With her I feel like she doesn't want the doctor to know she is dying because I am pretty sure because she could feel her tonsils. She knows she is dying. She knew it, she knew it was there and she knew she was going to die and she didn't want her mom to know. She didn't want her parents to know.

Martha's inclination to make a personal connection enabled her to understand the character she portrayed and informed her interpretation of her role in the dance. Her remarks reveal that through her empathy for the sick girl, she drew on deeply personal knowledge of the sort of conflict experienced by the character.

Through their initial empathy for the characters, Jane and Martha engaged with the characters by connecting their experiences to the actions of the story. In doing so they were active in the process of interpreting themselves as much as they were active in interpreting the text. Through their empathic connection to the text, Jane and Martha came to a better understanding of the literary characters, and at the same time articulated the experiences that they had drawn on to relate to the characters. By sustaining that empathy through the dance, they were able to sustain their lived-through evocation of the associations they made with the signs of the text in transaction with their own personal experiences.

Representing Meaning through Kinesthetic and Spatial Relations

Jane and Martha represented their interpretation of the relationship between the characters through positioning, movement, and expression as they choreographed and performed their dance. In so doing they drew on both spatial and bodily/kinesthetic intelligence to express their interpretation. Howard Gardner in *Frames of Mind* says that

Central to spatial intelligence are the capacities to perceive the visual world accurately, to perform transformations and modifications upon one's initial perceptions, and to be able to create aspects of one's visual experience, even in the absence of relevant physical stimuli. (173)

Spatial intelligence involves "the capacity to conjure up mental imagery and then to transform that imagery," resulting in the "metaphoric ability to discern similarities across diverse domains"



(Gardner, 176); and the "more abstract and elusive" capacity to produce the "feelings of tension, balance, and composition" that "contribute to the power of a display, occupying the attention of artists and viewers of the arts" (176). Dancers create the appropriate facets of composition through the spatial relations involved in choreography.

Spatial intelligence is often expressed in conjunction with what Gardner calls bodily/kinesthetic intelligence, which involves "the ability to use one's body in highly differentiated and skilled ways, for expressive as well as goal-directed purposes [and] to work skillfully with objects, both those that involve the fine motor movements of one's fingers and hands and those that exploit gross motor movements of the body" (206).

Jane and Martha's dance involved the use of both spatial and bodily/kinesthetic intelligences in two areas: (1) visualizing images to inspire their performance, and (2) representing characters through physical symbolization. In so doing they experimented with different evocations of the text in order to arrive at one that they felt represented their view of the characters. According to Robert Probst, an evocation first involves the enjoyment of the images of a literary work "as a performance. [Readers] must let the words conjure pictures for them, and then be willing to look at the pictures and allow their minds to wander in the scene" (89). Jane and Martha used spatial and bodily/kinesthetic intelligences to create an evocation of the story in order to explore its meaning prior to arriving at an interpretation, as the following excerpts reveal.

Visualizing Images

Both Jane and Martha relied on the creation of mental images to help envision and project their characters. Martha had difficulty performing some of the leaps required in the production, and Jane told her to "picture a pond that you're trying to jump over and she did." Jane further reported that she typically conjured up a mental image of an animal to help her envision characters in dance:

Jane: In dance you talk with your body, not your mouth. You don't have to be anybody. It is kind of like a swan, you just aren't even anybody.

Q: Well, what did you feel like when you were doing this dance?

Did you feel like the character or did you feel like a swan?

Jane: Like a swan.

Q: Is that the animal that you always think about when you dance?

Jane: Ballet. When it is modern jazz, I feel like a cheetah.

Jane returned to the image of the swan on several occasions during the interview. She appeared to summon the image both to help herself perform and to strengthen her self-esteem. "I did feel like a swan because I could do those leaps and stuff and that makes you feel real graceful and the swans are real graceful. It made me feel pretty when I dance, so I still felt like a swan, but I felt the [doctor's] emotions too." Jane and Martha's ability to visualize images, then, was critical to their ability to envision the form their dance would take and enhance their ability to perform it.

Representing Characters through Physical Symbolization.

Jane and Martha needed to communicate the relationship between the characters through nonverbal movement. One key challenge they faced was how to represent the relationship between the characters spatially. Jane reported that "It was hard" to determine how they should do this. Finally they arrived at a solution: "When the doctor is trying to get her around to his way of thinking, we figuratively did it by going around in circles opposite each other," recounted Jane. The idea of placing the characters in diametrical opposition and circling one another represented both the doctor's attempt to persuade and the girl's effort to evade.

Later in the dance the roles were reversed:

Martha: The way that we set the dance up, we were kind of going in circles and she was chasing me or I was chasing her, but the way we set it up she was chasing me. I was getting real scared, kind of had up my own little wall.

Q: You talked about the dancers being opposite to each other in your dance. What part of the story were you showing when the girl was chasing the doctor? Do you remember when that was?



communicate their perception of his feelings, they needed to construct an alternative textual world, plan a spatial sequence of steps and movements and physically perform them, and create mental images to help them animate their characters and affirm their own self-worth. These processes all helped them to evaluate and reflect (Beach) on the quality of their experiences with the text as they moved from evocation to interpretation.

How the Dance Affected Jane and Martha's Thinking

So far we have focused on the extent to which Jane and Martha used dance to develop an evocation of the characters and their relationship, and to reflect on that evocation in order to come to a better understanding of the story and of their own experiences that informed their response to it. The choreography itself was clearly shaped by their thinking about the story. Prior to their engagement in the planning of the dance, they had not known what their production would look like. Jane, in fact, had originally planned to dramatize the story's action rather than choreograph it:

Q: When you thought you were going to do a play as you were reading the story, did you think about what that play would look like?

Jane: No.

Q: So while you were doing it, while you were reading, you had the idea of a play, but you weren't thinking here is what this character will do?

Jane: I was thinking that we'd get up there and do whatever. I wasn't thinking about making any lines.

Yet the interview also revealed that their thinking was shaped by the process of choreographing the dance. When asked if she had learned anything new in the process of creating the dance, Jane replied,

Jane: I finally figured out what it is like to be in that position of the doctor. That is why I didn't hate the doctor so much because I knew how he felt and I also knew how the little kid felt and I felt sorry for the kid.



Jane: When she was enraged, she was trying to get back at me.

Martha: That was the second time after we went down and came up again.

Towards the end of the dance Jane and Martha were faced with a different sort of spatial problem. According to Jane,

We did another dance at the very end and we were practicing on it and like she's sheltered like the little girl is hidden. She won't let anybody find out what her secret is and that's what she is doing. She is hiding and the doctor is trying to follow in her footsteps to try to figure out what is going on. And at the very end when it says that she did have [diphtheria], in the dance we made her die. She just fell and the doctor picked her up and carried her. Because like we were going to have the doctor die with her because it was like the third patient he had died and he was dying inside, but [our teacher] didn't really like that. And after we started thinking you know how he gets underneath the skin real hard, it is like we started thinking about it too and he doesn't really die. He tries to help her and stuff. We went further than the story went.

Here Jane and Martha attempted to represent the figurative death of the character by physically having her die, a representation that illustrates the process of constructing alternative textual worlds (Beach). After abandoning this idea, they constructed another figurative representation of the story's ending, as described by Jane:

That is when they finally figured it out. It is like at the very end they walked together. It's like they walk two steps and when you do a little pause, the doctor shelters her and just looks at her because he's died with her. His whole life has just gone down the drain because it's another kid; he feels it's all his fault this time. And that is how I really felt when I was doing the dance.

Their representation of the story's denouement is quite different from the literal action of the story, where the girl attacks the doctor in a rage. Jane and Martha chose to represent the feelings of the doctor in their dance, however, and therefore focused on his sense of loss. Their depiction of the story thus reflects a very particular evocation based on their understanding of the emotional state of one of the characters. To

Q: Are those things you learned while doing the dance?

Jane: How the doctor felt. I knew his feelings, but knowing it and feeling it is totally different things. [I learned] about myself, that I can feel their feelings. I see how they feel.

Jane's remarks reveal that the choreography and performance of her dance served a dual purpose for her. The dance represented her evocation of the story and at the same time deepened her understanding of the character she portrayed, which in turn enabled her to produce a more insightful interpretation.

Patricia Enciso reports that her research with young readers' evocations of stories "supports the findings of Squire (1964), Wilson (1966), and Rogers (1988), who found that the readers who were most involved in the stories they read were also more able to describe and discuss the events and implications of the story in greater depth and detail" (99). The experience of Jane and Martha suggests that a reciprocal process can also take place: that a reader's discussion of events and implications of a story may cause greater involvement in the reading transaction.

Discussion

Rosenblatt's transactional theory helps account for the power of dance and other artistic means of response to literature. She says that

much greater concern than is usual should be accorded the "first step," the registering or savoring of the literary transaction. Whatever the reader may later add to that original creative activity is also rooted in his own responses during the reading event. His primary subject matter is the web of feelings, sensations, images, ideas, that he weaves between himself and the text (136-7).

When readers are allowed or encouraged to sustain an evocation such as dance, they may potentially explore the aesthetic dimensions of a text according to "a wide range of angles of vision" (136).

According to Frank Smith, "reading helps the brain achieve what the brain does best—the creation of worlds," providing "opportunities to exercise the imagination in manners and to extents in no other way

possible" (cited in Enciso, 75). The experience of Jane and Martha supports Smith's contention regarding the potential of reading for helping people to create worlds for exploring ideas. The deliberate, concrete representation of the evocation of the literary work through an artistic medium such as dance would seem to give readers an extended opportunity to live in those imaginative worlds and explore their response in depth.

Of course, the possibly idiosyncratic experience of two students does not suggest that schools should begin assessing students exclusively through artistic media or that such evocation is not possible in more conventional responses such as writing. The research does support the possibility, though, that response to literature is diverse, and that when given the chance to explore an evocation—regardless of the medium—students can have transactions that enrich their understanding of both the literature and their own experiences and knowledge that inform their response.

We wish to make one final point regarding Jane and Martha's experience in using dance as a medium of evocation. The alternative school in which they were enrolled required them to be involved in therapy to aid their recovery and so they were in a highly reflective environment. Their teacher had an extensive background in the arts and so encouraged students to express themselves frequently through artistic media. The instructional context in which Jane and Martha choreographed their dance, therefore, valued artistic expression as a means of response to literature. In order for students in mainstream classes to have similarly fruitful experiences with the arts, teachers would need to create an environment in which students recognized artistic evocations of literature as important means of expression. We are suggesting, therefore, a broad rethinking of educational values more than suggesting a teaching method that can work for everyone in every situation (see also Smagorinsky, Smagorinsky and Coppock).

We see, however, great potential for art in allowing students to pursue an aesthetic response to literature. The interview with Jane and Martha shows their powerful consideration of the issues at stake in the story, the depths of their personal connections to the story, the multitude of intelligences they brought into play in producing their choreography, and the changes in their understanding of the characters through their living-through of the relationship between girl and doctor. By sustaining their evocation through dance they stayed with their aesthetic response



and through their evocation developed a unique interpretation of the story. The processes they engaged in suggest that teachers of literature should give some consideration to the possibilities available to students through artistic responses to literature.

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