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THE READER-WRITER RELATIONSHIP IN PATRICIA DUNCKER'S *HALLUCINATING FOUCAULT*

Tesis sometida a la consideración de la Comisión del Programa de Posgrado en Literatura para optar para el grado de Magister Litterarum en Literatura Inglesa

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Dedication

To my parents, Gilda and Guillermo, who brought me up in a home full of books, art and Italian food.

To my mother, because she preferred to give me books instead of dolls.

To my father, because he had many bookcases filled with books for me to read.

To Alvaro Salas, who left us much too soon.

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Resumen

Se parte de la hipótesis que la novela *Hallucinating Foucault*, de Patricia Duncker, presenta la relación lector-escritor como un vínculo romántico para así ilustrar cómo los lectores y los escritores se compenetran al compartir una experiencia activa y creativa a través de los actos de lectura y escritura. De esta forma, el objetivo primordial de esta tesis es explorar y explicar la relación lector-escritor que se da en la novela. Para su realización, se analizaron diferentes rasgos y respuestas de los tres lectores-personajes (el narrador, Paul Michel y la Germanista) para visualizar como ellos crean significado por medio de sus procesos de lectura. Se ilustran características de los lectores reales e ideales propuestos por Wolfgang Iser para así analizar a los personajes de la novela y expandir en la relación lector-escritor. Siguiendo con la teoría de Iser, se valora el concepto del lector implícito para rellenar las brechas de significado y clarificar las negaciones que se producen durante el proceso de lectura. Finalmente, se estudia la relación lector-escritor siguiendo la teoría sobre la seducción de Jean Baudrillard para comprobar que el proceso de lectura es un acto seductor y en un juego obsesivo entre los lectores y los escritores. Estas características se comprueban a través de la inversión de las jerarquías presentes, del cambio de roles y de una muerte literal y metafórica. De esta forma, novela *Hallucinating Foucault* de Patricia Duncker muestra la complejidad existente entre lectores y escritores, vistos como compañeros de juego, quienes son parte de una relación que respectivamente alimenta su imaginación y su creatividad.

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Introduction: Seduced by the Writer's Message

> She said, 'If you love someone—you know where they are and what has happened to them. And you put yourself at risk to save them if you can...' I think that's the strangest, most romantic declaration I've ever had.
>
> (Patricia Duncker, *Hallucinating Foucault*, 157)

I read Patricia Duncker's *Hallucinating Foucault* back in 2004, reluctantly. I was not sure that my friend gave me the novel with a specific purpose or if he had read it before. I was not sure I was going to like it from the title, and I did not even bother to read the back cover. But as soon as I started reading Duncker's narrative, I was mesmerized. First, as a graduate student, I totally identified with the narrator who was writing his dissertation and later I was enthralled by the character of Paul Michel and his message.

The lesson was simple for me at first: Be responsible with those you love, be responsible of your actions because they always have consequences. And that is how my love for *Hallucinating Foucault* began. Until then, I had never knowingly analyzed the relationship between reader and writer and its importance within the literary discourse. But the novel's narrator and Paul Michel stirred feelings in me which led to more important questionings that, at the same time, contributed to the origin of this thesis.

At first, I focused on personal matters: had I been a good friend, a good partner, a good comrade to others? Had I properly behaved and consciously known how my actions weighed on others? Did I ever take a risk in order to "save" the people that I loved the most? Duncker's narrative taught me to be more careful and to be more giving.

As I reread the novel a year after, I began to see the interweaving of something important: the novel told me a story of a reader, a writer, and their love affair. Michel's idea that "The love between a writer and a reader is never celebrated" (*Hallucinating Foucault* 149) left a void in me, a gap, that needed to be filled because I had been in love with many writers throughout my entire life. I had never stopped to think about them and about the moment when, writing their stories, they thought of their readers. I felt I needed to celebrate Shakespeare, Chaucer, Austen, Coupland, Gaiman, Becquer, Doyle, Rice, Blake, Donne, and all of the writers who had written for me, for I, as their reader, had become their muse, their comrade in arms.

This is how my emotional response and affection in Duncker's narrative developed. But knowing that to articulate feelings is not an easy task, I realized I needed a theoretical framework that could organize and analyze literary responses and explore the "love affair" or seduction that takes place between the reader and the writer. Wolfgang Iser, with his structured views on reader response criticism, gave me an organized configuration of the types of readers and important insights

within the reading process. Jean Baudrillard, with his passionate arguments gave me more liberty to explore the seduction that occurs between readers and writers in the reading experience and in the nature of the "game" that readers and writers play.

Now that I have read *Hallucinating Foucault* many times, I feel that the novel is my own, and Patricia Duncker has become a constant voice in my thoughts. As the narrator of the novel affirms that he was Paul Michel's English reader, I can declare in my thesis that, by thoroughly studying *Hallucinating Foucault,* I am one of Patricia Duncker's most fervent Costa Rican readers.

Chapter I: Writing and Reading to Make Us Think

> I have never needed to search for a Muse. The Muse is usually a piece of narcissistic nonsense in female form. Or at least that's what most men's poetry reveals. I would rather a democratic version of the Muse, a comrade, a friend, a traveling companion, shoulder to shoulder.
>
> (Patricia Duncker, *Hallucinating Foucault*, 58)

For a long time now I have wondered if readers of literature know the power they have over writers. The influence of writers over readers has been studied so exhaustively that it has become almost simplistic to talk about it. Reviewers always ask writers who their influences are, and teachers always ask students who their favorite authors are. Does a writer have a favorite kind of reader? Is a writer able to give out the specific name of the person whom his or her writing is intended, devoted or dedicated to?

Author Patricia Duncker took on the responsibility of explaining the intimate relationship between readers and writers to her readers. She described the responsibility that each had on the other and the game of persuasion and seduction that readers and writers play in their literary processes respectively. In fact, a significant responsibility is shared by those two individuals who may or may not know each other in this literary transaction: readers *inspire* writers to write, writers write for readers, and writers could inspire readers to write. In the

end, the relationship between readers and writers is a matter of love: loving while wanting to be loved.

Patricia Duncker: Life and Writings

Patricia Duncker, one of the contemporary British authors who has explored the reader-writer relationship, was born in Kingston, Jamaica on June 29, 1951. Her father was a Jamaican businessman while her mother, an English citizen, worked as a teacher on the island. Duncker lived all her childhood in Jamaica and moved to England at the age of thirteen to be at the care of her aunt Patricia Beer, her namesake and a poet herself, who became Duncker's first literary influence. After attending boarding school in England, Duncker worked in Hamburg, Germany. Later, she went to Newnham College at Cambridge, and she obtained a Ph.D (known as D.Phil in Europe), in English and German Romanticism at St. Hugh's College at Oxford. Duncker taught literature at the University of Aberystwyth, in Wales, from 1993 to 2002, and she taught creative writing at the University of East Anglia, in Norwich, from 2002 to 2007. Currently, she is a professor of modern literature at the University of Manchester.

Not much is known of Duncker's life since she is a contemporary author whose work apparently begins in the early 1990s. Her first novel, *Hallucinating Foucault*, was published in 1996. Through her narrative one sees how Duncker has been inspired by her own life experiences, travels, and important people in her

life. She describes herself as being politically extreme, which accounts for her numerous contributions to feminist and lesbian writings as a critic and editor. Perhaps, Duncker's interest in sexuality is what has caught the attention of many critics since her first novel, and she has developed and refined this interest in her last novel, *Miss Webster and Chérif* (2006).

Asked about her characters and concerns, Duncker clearly states, "I write about people on the edge of society; sexual outlaws, the marginal, the mad, the disguised. I write about psychological extremity, the deadly space between the normal world and damnation" (qtd. in Matthews). In her personal page at the University of Manchester, Duncker declares that she is "interested in characters usually classed as outlaws, rogues, or figures that are dismissed as redundant, unnecessary, marginal" in order to explore human anger and frustration. Both statements express Duncker's need to portray realistic characters rejected by society.

Apart from her interest in marginalized characters, Duncker's fiction includes diverse topics, all of which are connected to her fascination with transgression. Literary critic Sean Matthews portrays Duncker as a "writer who resists categorization" since she works in different areas: creative writing, teaching literature, gender issues and editing. Duncker is a scholar who writes about eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature of a feminist or gender type. In addition, Duncker has written reviews for the *New Statement* magazine, and she

writes short stories and novels, some of which have won prizes: the Dillons First Fiction Award and the McKitterick Prize for *Hallucinating Foucault,* the PEN/Macmillan Silver Pen Award (shortlist) for *Monsieur Shoshana's Lemon Trees,* and the Commonwealth Writers Prize (shortlist) for the Best Book in the Eurasia Region for *Miss Webster and Chérif.* Taking into account these awards and nominations, and the good reception of her work, Patricia Duncker is considered an important post-modern author who gives voice to a specific set of topics, which continuously arouse the public's interest and concerns.

As a writer, one of Duncker's recurrent interests is the reader. She has declared herself an avid reader who reads day and night, which comes to explain why she is so focused on the readers of her novels and stories. Knowing her interest, Nicholas Wroe, of *The Guardian,* describes what Patricia Duncker might feel after winning a couple of prizes for *Hallucinating Foucault,* "while [it] is obviously gratifying to win prizes, the most exciting thing is to have more readers." In this respect, Duncker states, "I know how thrilling it is for me to read a book that excites me, so to think I might have given that pleasure to someone else is wonderful" (qtd. in Wroe). For Duncker, the pleasure of reading is essential for someone who wants to be a professional writer.

In regard to influence, Duncker declares, "My notion on influence is that you want to be influenced. That's the only way you're going to get any better. Reading is mainlining adrenaline and blood—it's where your sense of energy

comes from. Writing is about language and other writers and other texts. Behind every book stands another book—it's up to you to choose what those books are" (qtd. in Hall). Apart from wanting readers to be influenced in order to become good writers, she gives them the credit they deserve as the people who make her the writer she is. In an interview for ABC Radio National Duncker expressed, "I do think it's important to be very committed and engaged in your writing, and I think that readers are very good judges of whether the writer is there with them on the page or whether they're not, whether they're just going through the motions, and I now don't get through books which are going through the motions." This shows her concern about the relationship between readers and writers, which includes how readers can become immersed in a writer's work, and how writers should appreciate their readers.

Not only is her interest in the reader but also her perfectionism a trait of Duncker's narrative. She is reluctant to produce a novel or story that was not thoroughly revised and researched. Duncker affirms that her aunt, the poet Patricia Beer, a perfectionist, was her main influence. Even though they did not have a close and warm relationship, Duncker liked the writer in her aunt: "I read everything she wrote and she has shaped my mind. I hugely admire her ruthless imagination. There is a real ice-queen chill in her writing. And she taught me a commitment to excellence: never be sloppy, go to the sixth, seventh, eighth revision, leave your best scenes on the cutting-room floor. Work, work, work"

(qtd. in Wroe). Following her aunt's advice, Duncker prefers to keep her unseen and unpublished stories, novels and poems, stored in her desk, until they have been thoroughly revised.

Constant proofreading, serious research and personal experience are also characteristic in her works. Since Duncker lived in Jamaica, she wrote a novel on James Miranda Barry, a historically important character from the West Indies. It was also easy for her to write about Paul Michel's summer getaway to Nice in *Hallucinating Foucault* since she had lived in France too. In addition, as part of her research for this novel, Duncker went to a psychiatric clinic in order to get acquainted with schizophrenics and so develop realistically the character of Paul Michel. She also went to the mountains of Chamonix to research its topography to depict vividly a key scene of *The Deadly Space Between* (2002). Having lived in many places since her childhood, Duncker asserts, "As a writer I have no identity that is rooted in a country, no home, no origins" (qtd. in Gale Reference Team). Therefore, she writes about all the places she knows, giving all of them relevance without stating any particular preference.

As a writer who rejects any kind of categorization, Duncker does not limit herself to a particular field. Her literary work consists of four novels, two short story collections, one book of critical essays on literature, many editorial collaborations on books about women and written by women, and several endeavors as a reviewer and critic for magazines and scholarly journals. Her first

fictional work was *Hallucinating Foucault*, the novel I will analyze in this thesis and that can be summarized as follows.

The story starts in Cambridge, in 1993. The protagonist, a graduate student from Cambridge University is writing his doctoral thesis on a French novelist called Paul Michel. Narrated from a first-person point of view, readers are never told the name of the student. Over the course of his research, the student meets a young woman who is writing her thesis on Schiller. They start a romantic relationship which helps structure the plot of the story because it is she who tells the narrator that, if he is writing about Paul Michel, he should know everything about him and know exactly where he is, and if needed be, put himself at risk to save the author from any harm. She—whom the narrator calls "the Germanist"—prompts the student to find out where Paul Michel is and helps him in his quest.

Doing research, the student finds out that Michel was admitted to a French mental hospital. The student travels to Paris and searches in the archives for more information on Paul Michel. He finds Michel's letters addressed to Michel Foucault, but then realizes the letters were never sent. In these texts, Paul Michel calls Foucault his "Cher Maître" and admits that Foucault is his muse and source of inspiration, and that all he writes is for Foucault. Finally, the student finds Paul Michel in a mental ward of a hospital in Clermont, France. The student manages to gain permission to visit Michel. Even though his first visit was chaotic, as the days pass the author and student establish a sort of friendship. With time, the

student becomes more and more obsessed with Michel and urges Michel's doctor to let him travel with the patient. The permission is granted, and they travel to the south of France, to Nice, where they stay at a friend's house.

By then, the student is already in love with Paul Michel, which gives way to a homosexual relationship between them. The student asks Michel about his relationship with Michel Foucault, and Paul Michel clarifies the nature of this relationship. The conversation ends with Paul Michel telling the student about an encounter he had many years before in a beach in Nice with a boy, who he later found out to be a girl, who promised Michel to read all his books, to know where the writer would be, and to know what would happen to him. The girl also promised to put herself at risk if she needed to save the writer. This girl was the Germanist, and the student told Michel that she was the one who had sent him to France to look for the writer. That night Paul Michel dies in a suicidal accident, on the roads of Nice. The Germanist arrives in France to comfort and help the student with all the funeral arrangements. The student goes back to Cambridge and finishes his thesis. To preserve structural uniformity, the novel opens and closes with dreams that the student had after Michel's death.

Patricia Duncker's second work of fiction is the short story book *Monsieur Shoushana's Lemon Trees* (1997). This collection of thirteen stories explores the themes of desire, jealousy and revenge, mostly dealing with women and the issues with their husbands, their lesbian lovers, and the freedom and power in these

relationships. Two stories stand out: "The Arrival Matters," which is a novella about the last days of an old woman and the passing on of her knowledge and powers to a young apprentice, and "The Crew from M6," which is about "a film crew's taping of life inside a community of intellectual lesbians and the betrayal of the women by a male member of the crew." Although not all stories received such good reviews as these two, Duncker's prose was said to be "'spare and clean"' (Gale Reference Team) by the magazine *Booklist*, as well as ambiguous yet provocative. Just like *Hallucinating Foucault*, this collection of short stories is set in France, which has become one of Duncker's favorite settings.

Her second novel is *The Doctor* (1999), a historical narrative set in nineteenth-century Jamaica. The novel is about James Miranda Barry, a real colonial doctor, socialite and famous character of his times, who after his death, was found to be a woman. For the writer, this character was special because, apart from being a native of her country, Duncker's mother had done research on him and his legacy when she lived in Jamaica. As one of the "marginal characters" Duncker likes to create, Barry is depicted as "a fascinating subject because he embodies so many of [Duncker's] intellectual interests: the disruption of gender, cross-dressing, identity both as masquerade and as deliberate disguise" (Gale Reference Team). Duncker started developing this character back in 1991, but she had to stop after having written about a hundred pages since she could not solve the problem of referring to the character as *he* or *she*. Later, in 1997, she changed

the structure by combining first- and third-person points of view to avoid her previous problem. The novel received mixed reviews. The positive remarks highlighted the fact that Duncker was writing about a marginal character of society—a transvestite—and that she focused on "the complex relationship between what things are and what they seem" (Wroe). The negative reviews stated that Duncker left many things to the imagination of her readers.

Her third novel is *The Deathly Space Between* (2002), a psychological thriller about an almost incestuous love triangle between an 18-year-old son, his mother, and her mysterious lover. With this novel, Duncker created a thriller-mystery-suspense novel, and explored the Oedipus complex. Developing an intelligent suspense narrative was Duncker's main goal, but she was disappointed by the lack of good reasons that could move the plot. Therefore, she went back to her favorite psychological thriller: Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* where there are no motives in Oedipus's actions, since the sequence of events happens due to destiny, not due to the characters' intentions. As a result, in her third novel Duncker combines the Oedipal component with her thriller story, by referring to Roland Barthes's idea that without the death of the father, there would not be any pleasure in literature.[1] The novel received mixed reviews since her reference to *Frankenstein, Oedipus Rex,* Weber's musical compositions, and Freud's theories on sexuality make it an interesting, though somewhat "forced," piece of literature.

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[1] Roland Barthes's notion of "death of the father" is taken from *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973).

Duncker's second collection of short stories is *Seven Tales of Sex and Death* (2003). This collection again plays with the thriller-suspense theme, mixing in the obvious—because of the title—topics of sex and death in stories about rape, stalkers, the apocalypse and the uncanny. In them, Duncker finds the subject of serial killers absorbing because it is intriguing how people can get so obsessed with the possibility of being "the sex beast in the dark" (Hall). The mixture of fantasy and real life horrific possibilities makes these stories captivating.

Duncker's most recent novel is *Miss Webster and Chérif* (2006). This novel is considered as a comedy of errors after 9/11, where an elderly woman, Miss Webster, befriends a Moroccan student, Chérif. In an interview for the Australian ABC Radio National's show *The Book Club*, Duncker talked about her book in an open and frank way. She said she saw the character of Miss Webster in many influential women of her life: older women from her youth, very independent spinsters with a difficult temperament. In addition, the character of Miss Webster became an allegory of English life after terrorist acts and the war in Iraq had become everyday topics in the media. Duncker describes the novel as "[Miss Webster's] story of coming to terms with the world and accepting that she's not an island, that she may lived as an island all her life but that in fact she is linked to other people in places she wouldn't have dreamed of being so" (qtd. in *The Book Show*). With this novel, Duncker wants to tear down prejudices and open the English mind to topics and people that they would not normally encounter. In

addition, Duncker explores the possible way of thinking of an Eastern man—Chérif—in a Western world, surrounded by the news of a war set in his part of the world, and surrounded by a language he uses but does not understand completely.

As an editor, Duncker has worked on several compilations of stories about women and written by women. Her editorial collaboration is the following: *In and Out of Time: Lesbian Feminist Fiction* (1990), *Cancer: Through the Eyes of Ten Women* (1996), *The Woman Who Loved Cucumbers: Short Stories by Women from Wales* (2002), *Mirror, Mirror,* (2004) and *Safe World Gone* (2007). In addition, as a professor at the University of Aberystwyth, in Wales, she contributed to the Welsh independent cooperative press of Honno. Finally, in her job description at the University of Manchester, where she works now, Duncker states that her "involvement with women's writing and feminist publishing stretches back to [her] earliest student days and is a significant political commitment."

Her critical work can be divided into two groups: her reviews for *New Stateman* magazine and her selected essays. For the magazine, she chooses to review gender-related books, always following her feminist background. As a critic, she has several publications in literary journals, and two published books: *Sisters and Strangers: An Introduction to Contemporary Feminist Fiction* (1992) and *Writing on the Wall: Selected Essays* (2002). In the latter, Duncker explores ideas of sexual subversion and queer politics in many classics of literature by constantly

questioning male authors, such as Milton, Tolstoy and Freud, whom she calls "the Fathers," and current female breakthrough writers, such as Margaret Atwood and Angela Carter.

Hallucinating Foucault: Critical Reviews

The fact that her first novel, *Hallucinating Foucault*, won the Dillon's First Fiction Award and the McKitterick Prize (for a first novel by an author over the age of 40) caught my attention, but in reality the merit goes to the novel itself. In fact, the reviews speak for themselves. Allen Lincoln, critic from the *New York Times*, describes the novel as "intricate" and notes that the best reason to like the story is because "Ms. Duncker, . . . is fervent about the intimacy the act of reading can evoke." The journalist affirms that even though within a phase of obsession and disaster, this well written narrative leads readers to declare their love to their favorite writers. Dorothy Wall, a journalist from *The San Francisco Review*, discusses the line of action of *Hallucinating Foucault*. She states that "The deceptively simple plot, in which the narrator engages ever more intimately with his writer, unfolds as a complex structure of fluid identities and interlocking narratives—an impassioned exchange between multiple readers and writers." The plot becomes deceptive since it presents a twist near the end of the story that shocks readers who were waiting for a more subtle withering of the affair between the student and Paul Michel. Wall also affirms that even though the nameless student—the narrator—"remains an oddly flat character, a vehicle for the passions

of others," the character of Paul Michel is brilliant, "both mad and sane, charming and tormented."

Chris Mitchell, from *Spike Magazine*, states that the novel contains "a dangerous mixture of intimacy, madness and self-discovery," yet it is a philosophical attempt to explain these topics. In an interview for this article Duncker states, "'I wanted it to be a love story,' . . . 'to explain the love between readers and writers. My life has been radically changed through the books I've read and I wanted to describe that" (qtd. in Mitchell). This would be the reason why Duncker wanted to write the story, yet the novel goes beyond a description of an affair between readers and writers, for it also explores topics such as insanity and homosexuality.

Apart from finding magazine reviews about Duncker's novel, there are books dealing with gender and homosexuality that refer to *Hallucinating Foucault*. In Alan Sinfield's *On Sexuality and Power (Between Men, Between Women: Lesbian and Gay Studies)*, the relationship between the student and Paul Michel is characterized as forcefully short since Michel dies before this relationship can be tested by the passage of time. In Christine Sylvester's *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey*, the author analyzes the steps of traveling and the journey Duncker's protagonist has to take in order to be with Paul Michel. Both books evidence the importance that the novel had in gay and lesbian circles. Duncker's novel not only won a respectable literary award, but also has been a favorite of

queer and straight audiences alike. On the other hand, Clare O'Farrel's book *Michel Foucault*, mentions the novel because it presents Foucault almost into a character in the book, a non-fictitious person interacting with fictitious characters. Interestingly enough, Duncker notes in her interviews that some people actually believe that Paul Michel is a real person, and they have even looked for his books and searched for his records in the hospitals mentioned in the book, probably due to the presence of Foucault in the novel.

Andrew Gibson, in *Postmodernity, Ethics and the Novel: From Leavis to Levinas*, uses Duncker's *Hallucinating Foucault* to portray crumbling identities and the creation of transformations saying that the novel is more about evading the outcome than arriving at a destination. In the text Gibson also sees the becoming of sexuality as an event that partially avoids categorical identification. Gibson promotes an ethic of loss, grief, emptiness and confusion, but it also proposes experience and the surrender to the other as forms of self-recovery. Finally, Gibson points out that since the novel does not end with the narrator but with the adjacent chronologies of Michel Foucault and Paul Michel, the text enforces the idea of confusion, mixing the real and the imaginary.

The previous references show the kind of analysis the novel has had so far, that is, mythic, gender and psychological post-modern readings. My aim in using Duncker's *Hallucinating Foucault* for my thesis has been to conceptualize the reader-writer relationship and analyze it from different perspectives. When I first

contacted Patricia Duncker to tell her about my thesis and my approach to her novel, she suggested I should look for the book entitled *Writing: Self and Reflexitivy* by Celia Hunt and Fiona Sampson. In this book, which is about the writing process, Duncker is praised for her effort to acknowledge the reader and his or her importance for the writer. There is an entire section called "The ideal imagined reader" devoted to the analysis of *Hallucinating Foucault.* Here Hunt and Sampson explain the concept of the ideal reader as "an imagined real person whose views of our writing we never hear but who nevertheless motivates us to write" (77).[2] In addition, Hunt and Sampson discuss the image of the muse and use the example of Foucault being Michel's muse since the French novelist believed that he and Foucault wrote for each other, though they never had spoken to each other. Hunt and Sampson quote several parts of the novel, especially when Michel is defining his concept of muse. They state that "Here the ideal reader or Muse is an internalized image of a powerful real person who protects the writer against 'the monster of the mind' (p. 63) and enables him [or her] to write what is most difficult" (78).[3] For both authors, the concept of Michel's muse is close to Bakhtin's concept of the "superaddressee" since for Michel, Foucault is "not only *present in* the dialogue, he also *transcends* it, holds it, provides a context for it: in Bakhtin's

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[2] The term "ideal reader" used by Hunt and Sampson was coined by Gerard Prince, and stands for the reader "who would understand perfectly and would approve entirely the least of [a writer's] words" (qtd. in Tompkins 9).

[3] For Hunt and Sampson, the ideal reader would be the muse of a writer.

terms he is also the invisible third person of the utterance" (78).[4] Finally, Hunt and Sampson conclude that, though the case of Foucault and Michel is an "extreme example of the sustaining role of an ideal reader, . . . it highlights a phenomenon which is crucial for many [writers]: the sense of a benign inner presence which helps to render the writing space 'safe enough' for creativity to take place," (79) reinforcing the intimate bond between readers and writers.

In their final chapter "An Essential Self," Hunt and Sampson describe the process of creating an individual voice for writers, an individual self. They use Duncker's novel as an example since it requires that readers pay close attention to what is said about the relationship between reading and writing because "the reader is forced to enact the novel's message" (167). Surprisingly enough, Hunt and Sampson mention that Duncker does not let the readers know the gender of the narrator, but they are mistaken. Even though the name of the student is never revealed, it is clear that the reader encounters a male narrator because of the narrator's interaction with other characters and especially after reading the dialogue between the narrator and Paul Michel before they have sex for the fist time. Furthermore, the fact that the student is male is necessary to illustrate Paul Michel's homosexuality.

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[4] Bahktin explains the "superaddressee" in the following way: "[T]he author of the utterance, with a greater or lesser awareness, presupposes a higher superaddressee (third), whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time (the loophole addressee). In various ages and with various understandings of the world, this superaddressee and his ideally true responsive understanding assume *various* ideological expressions." (*Speech Genres* 126)

My approach to *Hallucinating Foucault* will explore and discuss the reader-writer relationship thoroughly to prove the existence of a romantic bond between readers and writers. For this, I will first categorize four characters in the novel as some of the different readers proposed by Wolfgang. Second, I will explore the presence of the implied reader in the novel in order to study and evaluate the filling of gaps produced during the reading process. Finally, I will analyze the moments of seduction and obsession that go hand in hand with both writer (Paul Michel) and reader (the narrator), and other characters in the novel, using Jean Baudrillard's theory of seduction. Thus, I will study different literary perspectives that demand action and reaction between readers and writers as well as the experiences both groups share.

Hypothesis

In *Hallucinating Foucault,* Patricia Duncker presents the reader-writer relationship as a romantic bond in order to illustrate how readers and writers are engaged by sharing an active and creative experience through the acts of reading and writing.

General Objective

To explore and explain the reader-writer relationship in Patricia Duncker's *Hallucinating Foucault.*

Specific Objectives

1. To analyze distinctive traits and responses of three reader-characters (the protagonist, Paul Michel, and the Germanist) in order to visualize how they create meaning from their respective reading processes.
2. To illustrate specific characteristics of the real and ideal readers proposed by Wolfgang Iser, within the analysis of Duncker's characters, in order to expand the reader-writer relationship.
3. To evaluate the concept of the implied reader, according to Wolfgang Iser's theoretical views, in order to fill in the gaps and clear out the negations produced during the reading process of Duncker's novel.

4. To study the reader-writer relationship following Jean Baudrillard's theory of seduction in order to prove that the reading process is a seductive and sometimes obsessive game played by readers and writers that mainly deals with the reversal of hierarchies, changing roles and a literal or metaphorical death.

Chapter II: Seductive Theories about Readers

> If looking in the glass gives the reader the opportunity for self-correction, then the role assigned to him is clear. In taking this opportunity, he is bound to encounter sides of himself that he had not known about or—worse still—had not wanted to know about; only then can he see that the correct mode of conduct first involves shaking off the familiar.
>
> (Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader*, 36)

> Seduction, however, never belongs to the order of nature, but that of artifice—never to the order of energy, but that of signs and rituals. This is why all the great systems of production and interpretation have not ceased to exclude seduction—to its good fortune—from their conceptual field.
>
> (Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 2)

Reader Response Criticism: an Introduction

Reader response criticism is almost one hundred years old, if one excludes Plato's and Aristotle's concern on the audience's reactions through the use of rhetoric—the act of persuasion with words—or if one obviates the natural, yet intrinsically personal, reaction any reader has to a text when reading without thinking about critical theories or specific meanings. In close to a century, reader response criticism has seen changes and evolution, where different ideologies have merged and developed. As a critical approach, reader response criticism

analyzes the response of readers toward a text. Jane P. Tompkins, in her book *Reader Response Criticism: from Formalism to Post-Structuralism,* defines reader response criticism as "not a conceptually unified critical position, but a term that has come to be associated with the work of critics who use the words *reader, the reading process,* and *response* to mark out an area of investigation" (ix). From the previous definition, reader response criticism is seen as a theory that gathers other theories that are related to the response of the reader to a text. In fact, all reader response critics analyze both text and reader to reach meaning. The way meaning is acquired or developed will signal the break from one specific methodology in reader response criticism to the next, but as Lois Tyson writes "reader response theorists share two beliefs: (1) that the role of the reader cannot be omitted from our understanding of literature and (2) that readers do not passively consume the meaning presented to them by an objective literary text; rather they actively make the meaning they find in literature" (170).

In regard to meaning, Charles E. Bressler in *Literary Criticism: an Introduction to Theory and Practice* points out that "Meaning . . . is context-dependent and intricately associated with the reading process. Like literary theory as a whole, several theoretical models and their practical applications exist to explain the reading process" (61); therefore, Bressler affirms that, though each reader response model approaches the analysis of a specific text in a different way, all raise similar questions about the reading process and about the way a reader

reaches or gains textual meaning. Bressler includes many of these questions in his chapter on reader response criticism, trying to portray the wide array of possibilities the different models of reader response theories can bring into consideration: some focusing more on the reader and on his or her reading process, others focusing on the text and its weight on the reader, and some others even thinking about the author and his or her attitudes toward the reader and his or her intentions while writing a text. Bressler's final words on the assumptions of reader response criticism are: "The concerns, then, of reader response critics can best be summarized in one question: What is and what happens during the reading process?" (62).

In order to answer the previous question, Bressler proposes to explore the following elements: reader, text, and meaning. First, the concept of the reader involves not only the person reading but also his or her life experience, background, viewpoints, and reasons for reading. Second, the study of the text must include what Bressler calls "linguistic elements" which would be word choice, syntax, sentence formation, among others. And third, meaning has to be regarded from the interaction or transaction between the reader and the text (62). These three elements, reader, text and meaning, would bring forth the study of the response of readers and would give different emphasis to each one of these three aspects in order to develop various methodologies or models of reader response criticism.

In fact, reader response major methodologies are present in structuralism, reception theory, subjective criticism, social reader response theory, and phenomenology. To begin with, structuralism initiated with linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. His theories and notions influenced many scholars from different areas, such as the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, the semiotician Roland Barthes and the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky, among others. Structuralist critics analyzed the text in a scientific manner, the same way they used to approach language. The main objective in their analysis was to find certain codes in a text that would generate meaning. It was the job of a knowledgeable structuralist critic to find patterns of signs and translate their meanings to the public. Therefore, for them each text contained in itself its own meaning, which had to be de-coded or translated by the reader. For structuralists, readers tended to be rather emotionally passive because they were meant to discover the purpose or meaning of a text following only one dogmatic view, thus eliminating any possibility of textual plurality.

Another group of theoreticians who were avid readers were the New Critics. The school of New Criticism arose in the early twentieth century, with figures such as William K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley. The New Critics advocated close reading of texts, avoiding biographical information on authors or other external sources that could help in the textual analysis. According to Charles Bressler, "[the] New Critics believed the text would reveal its own meaning.

Extrinsic factors, such as historical or social context, mattered little" (58); therefore, it was mainly the text, and not the reader, the only source of the meaning. However, the New Critics knew that the text could have many effects on the reader, but he or she had to be passive, since the reader could not bring any personal experience or emotion to the textual analysis.

In the 1930s Louise M. Rosenblatt denied the authority of the text over the reader, or as Charles Bressler points out "Unlike the New Critics, [Rosenblatt] shifts the emphasis of textual analysis away from the text alone and views the reader and the text as partners in the interpretative process" (60). Rosenblatt's main contribution is the notion of a transactional experience between reader and text, where the text brings back past experiences to the reader, but at the same time, the text is shaping those emotional experiences by selecting and ordering the ideas in a well-structured way. In other words, according to her view, during the reading process emotion is taken into account, but the creation of meaning is still restricted to some features within the text.

According to Rosenblatt, a poem is produced each time reader and text come together during the transactional experience, which would be different from the actual text itself. In addition, Rosenblatt proposes two kinds of reading: an efferent reading, that is, reading for information, such as reading a travel guide or textbook, and an aesthetic reading, that is, reading to experience the text. The poem arises, then, from an aesthetic reading. Furthermore, the text can bring forth

different reactions since "The text acts as a stimulus for eliciting various past experiences" (Tompkins 60), but according to Rosenblatt, the possibilities are not endless; therefore, there is a limiting number of correct interpretations.

The shift that Rosenblatt creates is monumental in the advance of reader response criticism since, from that moment on, the text is not the only creator of meaning and the reader acquires more relevance and importance. Yet, structuralist views still influenced reader response criticism, as shown with Gerard Prince's notions of narratology and narratee. For Prince, the narratee is "someone whom the narrator addresses" (Tompkins 7), the person to whom the voice is narrating the story, and in literature, both narrator and narratee are fictional creations. Prince proposed the notion of narratee because he thought that most critics were concerned about the narrator but forgot the receptor of the story.

In addition, Prince points out and defines three types of readers: the real reader, the virtual reader, and the ideal reader. The real reader is the person who is actually reading the text, book in hand, concentrating on the words, silently—or not—reading the words printed. This reader is not fictitious. The virtual reader is the possible person for whom the author writes. According to Prince, "Every author . . . develops his [or her] narrative as a function of a certain type of reader whom he [or she] bestows certain qualities, faculties, and inclinations according to his [or her] opinion of men in general and according to the obligations he [or she] feels should be respected" (qtd. in Tompkins 9). Finally, the ideal reader is the one

who would perfectly understand what the writer intends to communicate and who would agree with him or her in ideology and perception of life. In all, the narratee cannot be any of these readers because first, the narratee is fictitious. Second, the writer is not writing for this narratee-person in mind, but for someone who can relate to what he or she wants to say. Finally, the narratee does not need to completely understand what the author says while the narration takes place.

In his theoretical views, Prince also presents the functions of the narratee. The narratee becomes the mediator or the link between the author/narrator and the reader. With the aid of the narratee, through explanations or asides, the reader better understands the characterization made by the narrator. In addition, the reader can discover the importance of a certain theme through the same narrator-narratee relationship; therefore, by studying this relationship, the reader can pinpoint the author's message and intention in writing the text. Then, from Prince's perspective, the reader's quest for meaning is eased by the narratee.

Another reader response theory is that of subjective criticism, which has been developed by David Bleich. For this critic, the text is formed by readers' responses since "there is no literary text beyond the meanings created by readers' interpretations and . . . the text the critic analyzes is not the literary work but the written responses of readers" (Tyson 178). For Bleich there are real and symbolic objects. While real objects are accounted for physically, like books or printed pages, symbolic objects represent the experience of reading and interpreting those

books or printed pages. For Bleich, reading is symbolization; in other words, the perception or identification which takes place during the reading experience and creates a symbolic world in the minds of readers. When a reader interprets a text, according to Bleich, he or she is interpreting his or her own symbolization; therefore, interpretation is a resymbolization of the reading experience.

Norman Holland is another follower of subjective criticism, which he uses from a psychological perspective, focusing on "what readers' interpretations reveal about them, not about the text" (Tyson 182). For Holland, readers respond to literature the same way that they respond to events in their past and present lives. Tyson affirms that "Holland calls the pattern of our psychological conflicts and coping strategies our *identity theme*. He believes that in our daily lives we project that identity theme onto every situation we encounter and thus perceive the world through the lens of our psychological experience. Analogously, when we read literature, we project our identity theme, or variations of it, onto the text" (183). Therefore, the reading experience brings forth interpretations charged with personal fears, needs, desires and objections, depending on each reader and his or her life situation. In this form, interpretation results less intellectual and academic, and more psychological and personal because of the richness that readers add with their textual interpretations.

Moving on to a less personal and more social form of reader response criticism, there is Stanley Fish, the precursor of social reader response theory. For

Fish, there is no individualistic response to a text, but rather a product of the work of the interpretative community to which the reader belongs. The interpretative community would be the social group that shares the interpretative strategies a reader brings to texts. In his essay "Interpreting the *Variorum*," Fish describes this concept as to be "made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading . . . but for writing texts, for constituting [their] properties and assigning [their] intentions" (qtd. in Tompkins 182). This interpretative community is, then, the result of institutionalized assumptions from established social groups such as the educational institutions, the Church, and the government, among others. These communities dictate "what makes a text a piece of literature . . . and what meanings [readers] are supposed to find in it" (Tyson 185). Fish believes that a reader comes to a text already predisposed to interpret it in a certain way depending on the interpretative communities that this reader belongs to. Thus, interpretations can change throughout history, as social, political and religious forces change, evolve, or disintegrate through the passage of time.

Finally, phenomenology, mainly developed by Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss, is a reader response theory that emphasizes the perceiver and perception process over the text. Phenomenology is the study of "phenomena," that is, the study of the objects as they appear in people's minds and the way people experience and gather meaning from them.[5] Objects, such as a literary text,

[5] Phenomena are observable occurrences, perceived through a person's senses or mind.

must be experienced so they can exist. According to Bressler, "Objects can have meaning, phenomelogists maintain, only if an active consciousness (a perceiver) absorbs or notes their existence" (65)—an idea that proves the importance of the reader in order to give meaning to the text. In literary terms, "the true poem can exist only in the reader's consciousness, not on the printed page" (Bressler 65). Thus, when reader and text interact or transact, meaning is created, and this transaction exists only in the reader's consciousness.

Hans Robert Jauss, an exponent of phenomenology, is associated with reception theory, which arose in the late 1960s. Reception theory studies the reader's reception of a literary text. Jauss proposes that when interpreting a given text, its social components and historical background must be taken into account; therefore, readers from different time periods can have valid, yet different interpretations of the same text. Jauss uses the term "horizons of expectations" to explain that each reader must be aware of the different assessments one could have in history. A reader, according to Jauss, will judge a text depending on the historical period of time he or she belongs to. Bressler notes that "since each historical period establishes its own horizons of expectations, the overall value and meaning of any text can never become fixed or universal" (66). The previous idea clashes then with structuralistic approaches given that for structuralists meaning was fixed as well as textual interpretation. For reader response critics meaning changes, develops, or is generated.

Jauss is not the only critic of phenomenology and his reader response views are also shared by other scholars. Wolfgang Iser is one of them and, in fact, his critical ideas are an essential part of the theoretical framework of this thesis. Therefore, Iser's theoretical notions will be developed in detail in the following pages.

Wolfgang Iser: the Critic and his Theories

A German theorist and critic, Wolfgang Iser (1926-2007) worked as a professor of English and comparative literature in many European and North American universities, such as the University of Constance and the University of California, Irvine—where he taught English and Comparative Literature. He became one of the most prominent literary theorists of the twentieth century because of his contributions to reader response criticism. In the late 1960s, he founded with Jauss the Constance School of Reception Aesthetics. Iser's critical works have influenced many other critics. Jane P. Tompkins describes his legacy as having "formulated a theory of the reader's role in creating literary meaning" (274). Thus, Iser's views and ideas are still highly influential in literary criticism.

Iser's theoretical view of a system to describe the reader's experience in the reading process is one of his main contributions. Tompkins affirms that,

> Iser's phenomenology of the reading process, with its movement from anticipation to retrospection, its making and unmaking of gestalts, like Prince's taxonomy of readers and narratees, provides

> critics with a new repertoire of interpretative devices and thus brings to light a new set of facts for observation and description.[6] (xv)

In general terms, Iser and other phenomenologists believe that an object can have meaning only if it has been recognized or registered by a person's consciousness. In terms of literature, a text and a reader become one at the moment of reading, when the reader consciously recognizes the text and emits a response. Thus, Iser states that the critic should not attempt to explain a text but to study the reaction of the reader and the effect the text has on him or her.

In the essay "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," Iser presents the method utilized in phenomenological reading. First, he states that in order to analyze a text, one must take into account the reader's reactions to it; therefore, the reader becomes as important as the text, for the text must be concretized in the reader's consciousness. Parting from this, Iser proposes two types of literary works: the artistic and the aesthetic. The first would be the original creation of the author, and the second one would be the realization process performed by the reader after reading the artistic creation. Therefore, what Iser denominates *literary work* is the point where the text and the realization of the reader meet:[7] "The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into

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[6] The term "gestalt" refers to a structure, configuration or pattern of physical, biological, or—in Iser's case—psychological phenomena so integrated as to constitute a functional unit with properties not derivable by summation of its parts. Therefore, Iser's use of gestalt psychology responds to his study of perception and behavior from the standpoint of an individual's response.

[7] For Wolfgang Iser, the term "realization" refers to the act of reading, when the text is concretized in the reader's consciousness.

experience, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader" (*The Implied Reader* 275).[8] This personal and individual—for Iser *virtual*—connection between reader and text is dynamic because the text presents the reader with an array of perspectives and patterns that the reader must use and relate, elements that have to be somewhat unknown to him or her, so the reading is entertaining.

In addition, the reader's imagination must be motivated to and engaged in the realization process to become active and creative, serving the personal purpose of the reader. In a novel, for instance, an insignificant detail for one reader can be the delight for another, for reactions are as varied as there are readers with different tastes and interests. However, there is always some element—trivial or capital—that lures readers into a dynamic reading.

Iser's second objective in his essay is to explain the psychological endeavors through a phenomenological analysis. The first step is to study the way consequent sentences work upon other sentences. For this, Iser uses Roman Ingarden's idea of intentional sentence correlatives, a chain of sentences with intentional meaning and correlation, which unite to form more complex units that create a world within the literary work. Iser asserts that the fictitious world

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[8] The following quotations from this same source will be indicated as *TIR* with the respective page number(s) from this text.

presented to the reader does not show him or her everything needed to know in order to understand the text but promotes the reader's interaction. Reinforcing the significant role of imagination, Iser states that "the literary text needs the reader's imagination, which gives shape to the interaction of correlatives foreshadowed in structure by the sequence of the sentences" (*TIR* 277). Even though the imagination of a reader can advance as fast and as far as the reader lets it, the text's correlatives would only permit a reasonable amount of expectation for the reader in order to fulfill them in the best capacity.

Another psychological element studied by Iser is the impact of memories on the reader. Whatever is stored in the reader's memory can arise and add or take from a reading, given the connections made by the reader. Since no memory can be exactly the same as the original event which created it, a memory is enriched each time that it comes forth with whatever the background is that called it to attention. With memory, more complex connections can be made: "the reader, in establishing these interrelations between past, present and future, actually causes the text to reveal its potential multiplicity of connections" (*TIR* 278). The connections made between the reader's real memories and the events in a text which recalled those memories are the sole proof of how the text and reader interact in a creative process to bring forth meaning: "The product of this creative activity is what we might call the virtual dimension of the text, which endows it

with its reality. This virtual dimension is not the text itself, nor is it the imagination of the reader: it is the coming together of text and imagination" (279).

Apart from imagination, which is different for each reader, Iser notes that, in the flow of sentences in a text, omissions or gaps exist and can generate exasperation and frustration in the reader because the text is not following the path that the reader expects. Knowing that this will always happen in the reading process, Iser dismisses this concern by admitting that the omissions in the text provide the text with dynamism, "Thus whenever the flow is interrupted and we [the readers] are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us [readers] to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections—for filling in the gaps left by the text itself" (*TIR* 280). In other words, these gaps represent the best opportunity for the reader to develop his or her imagination, to clarify doubts and to fulfill expectations. Again, there can be as many ways to fill in a gap as there are readers; therefore, these innumerable realizations created by readers cannot exhaust the textual meaning or its effects on readers.

In addition, Iser postulates the idea that readers must accept the existence of a time sequence in each text since no complete chain of actions can be understood in a single moment. As the reading process takes place, readers must be aware that their perspectives will definitely move when constructing and linking the different events and elements of the text. For example, Iser calls the moment of a second reading of a text "innovative reading" (*TIR* 281) because the

reader comes to a text for a second time with knowledge of the plot, but with a different perspective and will notice elements that were not realized before. Furthermore, the time sequence changes since, "The time sequence that [the reader] realized on his [or her] first reading cannot possibly be repeated on a second reading, and this unrepeatability is bound to result in modifications of his [or her] experience" (281), making it innovative, a "new" reading for the reader.

Summing up the reading process, Iser notes that reading brings forth the basic patterns of real experience:

> In whatever way, and under whatever circumstances the reader may link the different phases of the text together, it will always be the process of anticipation and retrospection that leads to the formation of the virtual dimension, which in turn transforms the text into an experience for the reader. The way in which this experience comes about through a process of continual modification is closely akin to the way in which we gather experience in life. (*TIR* 281)

The text, for Iser, becomes a mirror that reflects the reader's experiences and dispositions. Nevertheless, what the reader encounters in the text is never exactly his or her reality; otherwise he or she would be bored of reading something that he or she already knows. The reading process brings forth personal and individual aspects of the reader only to enrich the reading experience, similar or familiar to his or her understanding but never the same. Yet again, this self-recognition on the

part of the reader depends on how willing he or she is to participate, share, and fill in the text.

Iser concludes his essay on the phenomenological approach to reading by clarifying the three aspects that form the reading process: "the process of anticipation and retrospection, the consequent unfolding of the text as a living event, and the resultant impression of life-likeness" (*TIR* 290). Iser recommends that texts be and remain "open" because this characteristic would challenge the reader to seek consistency and learn new things. In the search for consistency and selection making, the reader is said to become "entangled in the text-'gestalt' that he himself [or herself] has produced" (291), but at the same time, in order to get away or defeat the entanglement, the reader would leave behind his or her own preconceptions of life. Iser finally argues: "Reading reflects the structure of experience to the extent that we must suspend the ideas and attitudes that shape our own personality before we can experience the unfamiliar world of the literary text" (291). In other words, during the reading process, the reader lets go of him or herself and is immersed in the text, accepting it as a complete and enriching experience.

Having studied the tenets of the reading process according to Iser, one should continue with his notion of the implied reader, a fundamental issue in his theory. In order to introduce this term, Iser first admits the existence of many different readers who are "invoked when the literary critic makes

pronouncements of the effects of literature or responses to it" (*The Act of Reading* 27).[9] Iser categorizes readers into two types: the real and the hypothetical. The real reader, for Iser, is known to others because his or her reactions have been documented. The real reader is more academic in the sense that it represents the responses of a specific reading public which have been recorded. These responses, since taken from a group, would project the cultural codes that enable them. For example, when a text which does not belong to the real reader's time period is studied, the analysis will prove the codes the real reader had on the basis of his or her time period, and the interpretations he or she might have on the time period of the text.

The hypothetical reader is the one whose "realizations" or readings of the text are possible and could be projected. This type of reader can be divided into contemporary and ideal readers. The first type, that is, the contemporary reader, can be subdivided into three categories: one real and historical, whose existence has been recorded in historical documents, two hypothetical readers, one produced after the study of the historical and social knowledge of the time of its existence, and the other produced by the assumed role the text had projected for it (*TAR* 28).

For Iser, the ideal reader "remains nothing more than a cultured reader—if only because an ideal reader is a structural impossibility as far as literary

[9] The following quotations from this same source will be indicated as *TAR* with the respective page number(s) from this text.

communication is concerned" (*TAR* 28). Iser thinks that it is impossible for a reader to have the same "code" or knowledge the author has because the reading process would be a one-way communication since there is nothing new the reader could learn from the author. Iser believes, then, that being an ideal reader represents capturing all the possible meanings a text can have, personally and historically speaking. However, the critic considers this previous idea fastidious and ruinous for literature, for the text would be sort of wasted away by the ideal reader. Finally, Iser states that the ideal reader "is a purely fictional being" (29), unreal yet helpful, for he or she can be the know-it-all.

Furthermore, Iser mentions three other critics who have developed non-traditional and unrestrictive reading theories: Michael Riffaterre, Stanley Fish, and Erwin Wolff. Riffaterre's idea of a *superreader* equals that of a group of informants who, as an assembly, decode the various messages of the text—semantically or pragmatically. Fish presents the *informed reader* who is provided with a capability of language, semantic knowledge, and literary skills. Finally, Wolff's *intended reader* is the one the author had in mind when writing the text, be it an idealized version, or a conjunction of the values and norms of an audience from a specific historical period. Iser finishes his study of readers by pointing out what these previous readers have in common: "[they] all see themselves as a means of transcending limitations of (1) structural linguistics, (2) generative-transformational grammar, or (3) literary sociology, by introducing the figure of

the reader" (*TAR* 34). Having so many referents before him, Iser will formulate his own theory: the implied reader.

Acknowledging the imperious importance of the reader, Iser sets forth in specifying his *implied reader*, which would contain everything necessary for a literary text to work properly. Mainly for this reason, Iser defines the implied reader as the one "firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader" (*TAR* 34). Iser is very precise in this last point because he uses the implied reader as a helping structure that will precede any real recipient, forming or acknowledging meaning in an encompassing form for possible readers who can be ignored or excluded by the text. Furthermore, Iser declares that "the concept of the implied reader designates a network of response-inviting structures, which impel the reader to grasp the text" (34), so the implied reader becomes a sort of *liaison* between the real reader and the text.

Apart from his implied reader's definition, Iser proposes two interrelated aspects of the implied reader: the reader's role as a textual structure and the reader's role as a structured act.[10] Iser clarifies that "By bringing about a standpoint for the reader, the textual structure follows a basic rule of human perception, as our views are always of a perspective nature" (*TAR* 38). Because of

[10] For Iser, a structured act means that "the reader's role is prestructured by three basic components: the different perspectives represented in the text, the vantage point from which he joins them together, and the meeting place where they converge" (*TAR* 36).

the reader's standpoint, he or she can construct meaning according to the guidance of the text, with the use of his or her imagination and background. Finally, Iser concludes that "The concept of the implied reader offers a means of describing the process whereby textual structures are transmuted through ideational activities into personal experiences" (38). According to Iser's view, readers take textual structures and construct and convert them into personal explanations of the text.

Jean Baudrillard: the Critic and his Theories

Having explained the principles of reader response criticism, with an emphasis on the types of readers and Iser's theories, this chapter moves toward Jean Baudrillard's theoretical views because his post-structuralist ideas of power relationships complement the framework of this thesis. The theoretical issues Baudrillard discusses in his work *Seduction* will be used to explain how precisely seduction and obsession play a major role among readers and writers who are also characters in the novel. The romantic bond that exists between different pairs of characters in Duncker's *Hallucinating Foucault* will be explained by means of the analysis of this seductive game, in order to clarify the reader-writer relationship. It is pertinent to introduce some information on Baudrillard now and later discuss his theories.

Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) was a French theorist, philosopher and sociologist whose work is associated with post-modernism and post-stucturalism. He was a professor at the University of Paris –X Nanterre and –IX Dauphine, and was involved in the events of May 1968, in Paris.[11] After Baudrillard stopped teaching full time, he dedicated his time to writing. Baudrillard's themes range mostly from the way technological advances affect social change, to an array of subjects, such as consumerism, gender, and politics. He was a notable journalistic commentator on topics such as AIDS, cloning, the Gulf War, and the attacks on the World Trade Center. In a tribute article after the theorist's death, Sylvere Lotringer describes Baudrillard "not an academic philosopher, . . . [for Baudrillard] was more of a philosopher than most, being an artist in thought, a prophet of the present, capable of anticipating with a hallucinating precision what shape our world would take in years or decades to come. Contrary to what most believed, he was by far the most realist thinker in our time." In fact, Jean Baudrillard attempted to describe the condition of present and future times in a critical and philosophical way, creating a series of written images of the world and society in order to search for some meaningful sense.

Since one of my aims in this thesis is to study the reader-writer relationship in Duncker's novel from the vantage point of the obsession and madness

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[11] In May 1968 a series of student protests against the French educational system and employment situation occurred, which caused a general strike in Paris. It was fostered by the left-wing and supported by many relevant French thinkers of the time. Jean Baudrillard was one of them.

portrayed by the characters, Baudrillard's views are necessary. The use of a theory on seduction becomes a link between the pursuer and the pursued, the reader and the writer, for "Baudrillard's concept of seduction is idiosyncratic and involves games with signs which set up seduction as an aristocratic 'order of sign and ritual' in contrast to the bourgeois ideal of production, while advocating artifice, appearance, play, and challenge against the deadly serious labor of production." In short, Baudrillard interprets seduction "primarily as a ritual and game with its own rules, charms, snares, and lures" (Kellner).

Baudrillard's seduction is a ludic performance with the feminine figure, where the reversal of the order of things and positions plays an important role. Baudrillard begins by stating that Freud was correct in asserting that masculinity is the only sexuality, for the feminine can be absorbed or collapsed by the strength of the discriminative forces in society of the "phallus, castration, the Name-of-the-Father and repression" (*Seduction* 6). But according to Baudrillard, the strength of femininity appears in the game of seduction, as "an alternative to sex and power, one that psychoanalysis cannot know because its axioms are sexual. And yes, this alternative is undoubtedly of the order of the feminine, understood outside the opposition masculine/feminine" (7). Seduction, then, comes to be a game of challenges, duels, and a strategy of appearances of reversibility, instead of opposition. The feminine does not oppose the masculine but reverses the role in order to seduce. Baudrillard moves on and states that "seduction represents

mastery over the symbolic universe, while power represents only mastery of the real universe" (8). Thus, one can visualize the feminine ruling in the symbolic order with feelings and emotions, while the masculine rules the real order with power and regulations.

Exploring power, Baudrillard notes that "All masculine power is a power to produce. All that is produced, be it the production of woman as female, falls within the register of masculine power. The only, and irresistible, power of femininity is the inverse power of seduction" (*Seduction* 15). When Baudrillard speaks of the feminine, understandably, it is not woman *per se*, but the idea of the feminine that can be in both men and women. Thus, the game of reversions can occur: it is not necessarily the man seducing a woman, but a person's masculinity seducing another person's femininity, and the latter playing the game, challenging the other and allowing to be seduced. For Baudrillard, the most common perception of seduction people have is that "which women have been historically consigned: the culture of gynaeceum, of rouge and lace, a seduction reworked by the mirror stage and the female imaginary, the terrain of sex games and ruses" (21), a completely opposed idea to the seduction that he presents in his book.

Seduction, for him, becomes in reality an ironic way which breaks with the norm of referential sex, a place of challenge, play and defiance. The game of seduction is in constant movement, as seen in an example proposed by Baudrillard: "I shy away; it is you who will give me pleasure, it is I who will make

you play, and thereby rob you of your pleasure" (*Seduction* 22), but it is not necessarily a game that always implies sex or sexual practices. Seduction contains "a strategy of displacement (*se-ducere*: to take aside, to divert from one's path) that implies a distortion of sex's truth" (22). This strategy is stronger than sexual games because seduction requires the reversion of roles and positions, a movement that goes beyond the imposition of a hierarchy of power roles.

To prove that sex has a minor role in seduction, Baudrillard declares that sex is a banal aspect of seduction, where the pinnacle is reached in the quick moment of the orgasm, which is just the fulfillment of desire. On the other hand, seduction is more complex:

> The law of seduction takes the form of an uninterrupted ritual exchange where seducer and seduced constantly raise the stakes in a game that never ends. And cannot end since the dividing line that defines the victory of the one and the defeat of the other, is illegible. And because there is no limit to the challenge to love more than one is loved, or to be always more seduced—if not death. (*Seduction* 22)

Following this idea, sex can be a part of seduction, but it is never the goal. Whereas sexual intercourse is the end of desire, the game of seduction has no end, unless one or more of the players die. In short, seduction is not a game that has a goal line at the end or a definite span of time to be played. Seduction is, then, a

power of attraction and play which subverts the norm of an orgasm-oriented society and moves toward an inversion of roles.

Baudrillard holds power as the tool of anti-seduction. On the one hand, he states that power can seduce because it is haunted by reversibility, only when there is no more dominated and dominant, no more victims and executioners. If power fails to change and does not reverse roles, then it cannot seduce. Analyzing his own concept of seduction, Baudrillard states that seduction is "stronger than power because it is reversible and mortal, while power, like value, seeks to be irreversible, cumulative and immortal" (*Seduction* 46). As mentioned before, power belongs to the order of the real, of rules and limits, while seduction belongs to the order of the symbolic, of feelings and emotions. Therefore, power remains fixed and unmovable, while seduction is ever changing and varied. Power forges relationships which are rigid and hierarchical; seduction fosters relationships which are malleable and dynamic.

Baudrillard mentions that seduction has a dynamic cycle. For him, "The cycle of seduction cannot be stopped. One can seduce someone in order to seduce someone else, but also seduce someone else to please oneself" (*Seduction* 81). Thus, the flux of characters in this cycle can be varied in the game of seduction. There is no real, concrete subject or object because the forces of seduction keep changing: one can be the seducer one day and the seduced the other. In this sense, seduction is a generous practice because there is not only one contributor; seduction is a two-

way relationship. According to the critic, a person is able to seduce if he or she has been seduced before. This happens because, as Baudrillard describes, seduction is "a power of attraction and distraction, of absorption and fascination, a power that cause [*sic*] the collapse of not just sex, but the real in general—a power of defiance. It is never an economy of sex or speech, but an escalation of violence and grace, an instantaneous passion that can result in sex, but which can just as easily exhaust itself in the process of defiance and death" (81). These lines reinforce the strength of seduction and its capacity to reverse roles.

Baudrillard proves that seduction is a game or challenge by stating that the vertigo produced is reciprocal, both seducer and seduced feel it. Moreover, seduction creates in itself "a kind of insane relation, quite unlike relations of communications or exchange: a duel relation transacted by meaningless signs, but held together by a fundamental rule and its secret observance" (*Seduction* 82). Therefore, seduction must always be paired and acknowledged by both parts, not like an investment, but like an agreement of the occurrence and reality of a seducing situation between both individuals.

The system of seduction can be analyzed in the following form: the seducer does not necessarily want to love, cherish, or please the other but wants to seduce him or her. In addition, the seducer does not necessarily expect love, cherish or pleasure back from the seduced. Baudrillard calls this "mental cruelty" because either the seducer or the seduced cannot fall into the trap of love, desire and sex.

Desire, and all that it entails, becomes a "hypothetical prize" (*Seduction* 86) and not the goal of seduction. In seduction, the goal or end is never clear, for the pair of players might be unaware of other games: "The person might not even know what has happened. It might be that the person seducing actually loves or desires the person seduced, but at a deeper level another game is being played out, unbeknownst to the two protagonists who remain mere puppets" (86-87). According to Baudrillard, the only possible and probable end of seduction is death, where death is, again, not the destiny, but the *rendezvous.*

In *Hallucinating Foucault* the game of seduction occurs among all the characters of the novel. This game serves to illustrate the relationship within characters and their roles as readers. Therefore, Baudrillard's theories, as well as Iser's, are useful tools of analysis to study relationships among characters and their categorization and typification as readers. In fact, Duncker's novel is conformed by characters who are readers and writers at the same time: the narrator, Paul Michel, the Germanist and Michel Foucault. Their game of seduction is evident too. These characters are also readers who gather meaning through their reading experiences, which is why they must be studied at first from a reader response perspective. In the following chapter the processes of the characters' reading experiences will be analyzed in order to classify them following Iser's theories. With this classification of characters as readers, the

reader-writer relationship in the novel will be explored and the reading processes will illustrate more complex undertones of the literary bond between readers and writers.

Chapter III: Readers within the Reading Process

> As a literary text can only produce a response when it is read, it is virtually impossible to describe this response without also analyzing the reading process.
>
> (Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading*, ix)

> He never took his eyes off my face as he stood up to remove the packet from the back of his pocket jeans. He was alarmingly thin. We smoked another cigarette. Then he said, "Who are you?" I hesitated. I said, "I'm your reader. Your English reader."
>
> (Patricia Duncker, *Hallucinating Foucault*, 96)

In Wolfgang Iser's essay "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach" three axes outline the relationship between the reader and the text: the process of anticipation and retrospection at the moment of reading, the reader's understanding of the text as a living entity and the reader's acknowledgement of the text's real life qualities (*TIR* 290). Being Patricia Duncker's *Hallucinating Foucault* a novel about readers, it is necessary to explain the reading processes of the main characters in order to analyze their responses and understand the way in which they generate meaning from their respective readings. These three main readers-characters are the protagonist-narrator, Paul Michel and the Germanist. The first one, filling in the gaps, creates meaning as he reads the novels of Paul Michel and the other texts he encounters. The second one, Paul Michel, the writer,

presents the nature of his reading process as he reads Michel Foucault, the philosopher, and his own interpretation of their relationship built by writing. Finally, the character of the Germanist brings forth her own reading of Paul Michel's texts, which will lead the narrator to the outcome of the novel. By analyzing these characters' reading processes in the novel, Wolfgang Iser's characteristics of his types of readers will be studied in order to show how readers construct meaning.

The Narrator: His Reading Process

Within the reading process, and following Iser's theoretical views, there are three elements that play a major role: the use of imagination, the existence of past memories that add personal verisimilitude to the interpretation of the text, and the filling in of textual gaps. Iser explains that the use of imagination works in such a gratifying way that engages the reader, "for reading is only a pleasure when it is active and creative" (*TIR* 275). This, in turn, facilitates the act of retrospection and the view of the text as a living event because the imagination embraces the reader's memories to ease the understanding of the text as he or she encounters events that resemble his or her personal life. In addition, the reader is faced with the fact that he or she must fill in the gaps presented by the text, an opportunity given to the reader "to bring into play [his or her] own facult[ies] for establishing

connections" (280). In sum, imagination, identification, and creativity are fundamental elements within the reading process.

At first, the protagonist-narrator of Duncker's novel presents two kinds of reading: an analytical reading, the proper one expected from a graduate student, and a careful reading, deciphering feelings and emotions to discover human nature. He systematically reads Paul Michel's novels and letters, the Germanist's messages and her annotations on Michel's books, and the articles written about Paul Michel. But he also reads Paul Michel—the person—as a text. Then the narrator's reading process of Paul Michel's work is set early in the novel in order to introduce the events that triggered the reader's involvement.

The narrator explains that writing a doctoral thesis was fostered by his desire to commit to Paul Michel's narrative, since it "was already [the narrator's] chief interest, [his] intellectual passion" (*Hallucinating Foucault* 4).[12] Instead of choosing a school of criticism or a specific trend in literature to develop his graduate project, he focused on Paul Michel's novels. First, the narrator presents to the reader a short account of Michel's works, his prizes, his arrests and possible political connections, and his sexual preference—homosexuality. Studying Michel's lifestyle, the narrator notices how the writer was never interviewed in closed spaces, as he sees that all of Michel's pictures from magazines and journals

[12] The following quotations from this same source will be indicated as *HF* with the respective page number(s) from this text.

were taken on the streets, at cafés, and always outside, an observation that he later discusses with Michel, the writer.

Little by little, the student is not only involved in the writing of the author but in the author's life through his writings and interviews. For example, the student had already extrapolated the writer's loneliness, for Michel "never had a lifetime partner as some gay writers do. He was always alone" (*HF* 5). Contrary to some critics who stated that Michel's interest in homosexuality was only one more theme in his writing, the narrator firmly believes that homosexuality is a central subject as Michel's "perspectives on the family, society, heterosexual love, . . . , desire, were always those of an outsider, a man who has invested nothing and who therefore has nothing whatever to lose" (6). The narrator's views on Michel's themes are evidenced in the process of retrospection, after the narrator has read the author's novels many times. As Iser affirms, when the reader has finished the text "and read[s] it again, clearly [his or her] extra knowledge will result in a different time sequence; [the reader] shall tend to establish connections by referring to [his or her] awareness of what is to come, and so certain aspects of the text will assume a significance [the reader] did not attach to them on a first reading" (*TIR* 281).

Following this process, the narrator discovers the way Paul Michel wrote, pointing out characteristics that he could visualize after his long study of the author's words, for the narrator started reading Michel since his undergraduate

years. Therefore, the narrator exclaims that "Paul Michel wrote with the clarity and simplicity of a writer who lived in a world of precise weights and absolute colors, a world where each object deserved to be counted, desired and loved. He saw the world [as a] whole, but from an oblique angle. He rejected nothing" (*HF* 6). Thus, for the protagonist-narrator, Paul Michel's writing "was that of an aristocrat who has owned land for centuries, who knows that his peasants are loyal and that nothing will change" (7).

Early in the novel, the narrator states that many critics considered *La Maison d'Eté* as Michel's "most perfect book" (*HF* 5); however, his favorite Michel's novel is *La Fuite*. Later, the narrator and Paul Michel talk about the author's books, and when Michel asks the narrator about his favorite work, the narrator answers "*La Fuite*, I think. That was the one which moved me most" (103). Unfortunately, the narrator does not give the reader more clues to explain what exactly he likes about *La Fuite*. Nevertheless, in the same conversation, Paul Michel responds that "*La Fuite* reads like a first novel. It's not the first I wrote, but it has the emotional energy of a first novel. And of course, like an inexperienced idiot, I couldn't resist putting everything in. Everything I'd ever thought was significant" (103). With this in mind, the reader starts wondering why the narrator prefers this novel over the others.

In his reading of Paul Michel's novels, the narrator encounters textual indeterminancies, so he has to fill in the gaps. Iser explains that "whenever the

flow [of reading and understanding of meaning] is interrupted and [the readers] are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to [them] to bring into play [their] own faculty for establishing connections—for filling in the gaps left by the text itself" (*TIR* 280). So, when the narrator looks for Michel's novels among the Germanist's books, he finds one page in a novel filled with her annotations and the remark "BEWARE OF FOUCAULT" (*HF* 12) with a reference to one of Foucault's interviews. The narrator, intrigued by the fact that the Germanist mentioned Foucault, looks for both the passage written by Michel and the interview. The narrator finds the excerpt that the Germanist had marked down in Michel's novel *L'Evadé*, which reads,

> The cats are asleep at the end of my bed and all around me, the thundery silence of L'Escarene, caught at last in the rising flood of warm air, carrying the sand from the south. The Alps are folded above in the flickering light. And on the desk in the room beneath lies the writing which insists that the only escape is through the absolute destruction of everything you have ever known, loved, cared for, believed in, even the shell of yourself must be discarded with contempt; for freedom costs no less than everything, including your generosity, self-respect, integrity, tenderness—is that really what I wanted to say? It is what I have said. Worse still, I have pointed out the sheer creative joy of this ferocious destructiveness

> and the liberating wonder of violence. And these are dangerous messages for which I am no longer responsible. (16)

The narrator fills in a gap of connecting Michel's passage to Foucault, first without reading the interview. The narrator's response is that the passage "was an important message, disturbing if taken out of context, but there were other things in *L'Evadé* which contradicted this savage despair" (16). At first, the meaning of this excerpt is a mystery for the actual readers of the novel, since they do not know Michel's narrative, while the narrator has read all the writer's novels. As the action of the novel unravels, the actual readers understand the importance of this excerpt and its connection to Foucault, which is about creation, sacrifice and the responsibility of one's actions over other people.

As Iser notes, the reader is the one who decides how the gap is to be filled. In this case, after his first response, the narrator immediately searches for Foucault's interview and extracts only two short parts of the interview. At first, the protagonist-narrator notes that the interview is about Foucault's own response to his monograph *Les Mots et les choses*. Foucault describes this book as "the most difficult, the most tiresome book [he] ever wrote . . . [in which] madness, death, sexuality, crime—these are the subjects that attract most of [his] attention" (*HF* 16). Then, the narrator's first response to these words is his observation that Foucault and Michel shared the same "sinister list of obsessions" (*HF* 16-17) as themes. The narrator feels that the second part of Foucault's interview is connected to Michel's

writing because the philosopher expressed "the craving, the taste, the capacity, the possibility of an absolute sacrifice . . . without any profit whatsoever, without any ambition" (*HF* 17). These words take the narrator and the actual readers back to the fragment from *L'Evadé*. After having read this passage, the narrator is more intrigued by the Germanist's apathy towards Foucault and her interest in that specific quote from Foucault than by the mysterious connection between the two French authors.

Besides reading and searching for meaning in Paul Michel's novels, the narrator explores the writer's letters which are kept in a Parisian archive. The voyage from Cambridge to Paris represents a personal and emotional journey for the narrator since he had promised the Germanist that he would find and save Michel from whatever could be happening to him at the mental asylum. As the narrator arrives in Paris, the process of retrospection mentioned by Iser starts to take place in him. As he re-reads Paul Michel's novels, he discovers new meanings. Iser describes that "the 'reality' of the reading experience can illuminate basic patterns of real experience. . . . The manner in which the reader experiences the text will reflect his [or her] own disposition, and in this respect the literary text acts as a kind of mirror. . . . Thus we have the apparently paradoxical situation in which the reader is forced to reveal aspects of himself [or herself] in order to experience a reality which is different from his [of her] own" (*TIR* 281-282). So when the narrator is in Paris, there is a change in him which takes place after a

close reading of Paul Michel's works in the city where the author had lived. The narrator asserts:

> I don't know if it was the heat, the loneliness, the odd sensation of being alone with him in that huge, tourist-infested city, of the peculiar awareness of having been chosen for reasons I did not understand, but that day, for the first time, I heard the writer who was still there, even across the great desert of his insanity, even through the remote serenity of his prose. I heard a voice, perfectly coherent and clear, that whispered terrifying things. (*HF* 53)

With the narrator's proximity to the whereabouts of Paul Michel, the man, and the weight of his vow to the Germanist, the protagonist-narrator rereads Paul Michel and encounters new and different meanings within the writer's texts. In recognizing and concretizing Michel's "voice," the narrator is revealing his own new feelings toward his current situation. These feelings arouse in him some uneasiness as he recognizes that he does not completely understand why he is in Paris searching for a mentally unstable writer. Therefore, the narrator is revealing his own personal uncertainty which becomes a new reality completely different from his past reality, the one of a graduate student doing research in Cambridge.

When the narrator starts reading Michel's letters to Foucault, he is faced with a completely new experience. At first, Michel's handwriting catches the narrator's attention as he describes it as "large, rapid and frequently illegible" (*HF*

57). Michel's handwriting becomes, then, an obstacle at first for the narrator because he has a difficult time deciphering it. He is used to reading typed novels or articles, but not handwritten letters. The narrator states that the letters "were extraordinarily difficult to decipher. At first [he] could only make out two or three words a line, then slowly Paul Michel began to speak again" (57). The narrator's capacity to understand not only Michel's handwriting, but the content of his writing, calls forth Iser's idea of the gestalt of a literary text, for the critic states that "While expectations may be continually modified, and images continually expanded, the reader will strive, even unconsciously, to fit everything together in a consistent pattern" (*TIR* 283). The narrator tries to gather meaning from what he is reading: first deciphering the author's handwriting and then listening to the author's voice articulated in these letters.

When the narrator finally reads all the letters, he is able to visualize and produce a meaningful whole. He senses he has been able to discover something unknown to others. He asserts that he "believed that [he] was capable of reading them differently from anyone else" (*HF* 73). At this moment, the narrator is playing his role as a reader, and it is self-evident that he is completely involved in his journey toward the "salvation" of Paul Michel from the writer's obscurity of madness and forgetfulness. Not only this, but in the narrator's reading of Michel's letters to Foucault, the intentional sentence correlatives developed by Ingarden

and Iser become more evident, and their purpose is quite manageable to understand, as the narrator evidences his reading process through narration.[13]

Therefore, in the novel, the narrator describes his process of understanding what was beyond the statements of Michel's letters as he traced Michel's words "in pencil marks so faint that they became a secret code" (*HF* 73). Two weeks after he first began reading and copying the letters, he finds something very significant. The narrator admits that he "realized the truth that was staring [at him] in the face and had been clear from the beginning. These were love letters. And they were fair copies, the only copies. The drafts had been destroyed. Foucault had never seen these letters, written over ten years ago. They had never been sent. None of them. Ever" (74). Through meticulous analysis and rereading of the letters, the narrator realizes the meaning beyond the mere statements formulated as sentences, that is, Paul Michel's feelings toward Foucault.

Later on, when the narrator finally visits Paul Michel, who is in a hospital at Clermont, he sees the writer's handwriting for the second time, on some graffiti written on the wall of the hospital. At first, he does not recognize that they were also examples of Michel's writing. The first graffiti, written in French at the door

[13] Iser, explaining Ingarden's concepts, talks of the intentional sentence correlatives as elements that have to interact with each other to make sense beyond of solely producing a statement, "but aim at something else beyond what actually says. . . . In their capacity as statements, observations, purveyors of information, etc., they are always indications of something that is to come, the structure of which is foreshadowed by their specific content" (*TIR* 277).

of the hospital, reads "J'AI LEVE MA TETE ET J'AI VU PERSONNE" (*HF* 86).[14] The second graffiti was a poem about the question mark:

> Qui es-tu point d'interrogation?
>
> Je me pose souvent des questions.
>
> Dans ton habit de gala
>
> Tu ressembles à un magistral.
>
> Tu es le plus heureux des points
>
> Car on te répond toi au moins.[15] (86)

The narrator admits that he "understood the French, but not the sense, not entirely" (86). It is afterwards, when the narrator meets Michel and they have a tough time getting along, and after the narrator tells Michel that he is "his reader," that the protagonist-narrator is able to understand the sense of the first graffiti and respond to it, and even respond to Michel. Thus, the narrator states that,

> [he] was in the street, sick, nauseous, terrified and without any cigarettes. [He] looked up at Paul Michel's enigmatic message.
>
> J'AI LEVE MA TETE ET J'AI VU PERSONNE
>
> [He] turned on the blank cream wall, furious, and shouted.

---

[14] "I raised my head and I saw no one" (*HF* 86)

[15] "Who are you, question mark?
I often ask myself questions.
In your festive garb
You look like a judge.
You are the happiest of punctuation marks
At least you get answers." (*HF* 86)

"You say you looked up and saw no one. That's not true. You saw me. I was here. I've come to find you. You saw me." (97)

In her book *Writing on the Wall* Patricia Duncker describes graffiti as a form of expression by declaring that "Writing on the wall is not usually signed. It is not easily interpreted. It is not even instantly intelligible. The writing is interrogatory, challenging, dangerous. You need a prophet to decode its encrypted meanings" (188). For the narrator, his first realization of Michel's graffiti, without knowing it was the writer's, left him with many doubts. It is only after he has met the writer and seen his dark side that the narrator fully recognizes the meaning of the painted words and responds to them and to the writer. For the narrator, his first reading experience of the graffiti, his meeting with Michel, and a second reading of the graffiti give him all that is necessary to "concretize" meaning, as Iser says, and speak out. Now he has read the painted words as a living text, charged with energy and passion that asks the narrator for communication and support.

Just like the narrator had read Paul Michel's texts, he also read the Germanist's notes and written material on her thesis on Schiller. At the beginning, the narrator finds obstacles in this reading process because of the Germanist's cryptic and sparse, yet understandable, handwriting. For example, one of her notes reads "*Coffee on stove. Fresh bread in bin. Use old loaf first*" (*HF* 10). The narrator responds by copying her messages, so he would "one day find the key to decode them" (11). Another example of the Germanist's notes is the one the

narrator finds one morning, on his way to the bathroom, that reads "SO GEBEN SIE GEDEANKENFREIHEIT (*Give us freedom of thought*)" (11). In fact, these choppy direct statements exhibit part of the dominant personality of the Germanist, the narrator's girlfriend.

The narrator has a difficult time understanding the meaning beyond the words when he admits that he copied the messages—sometimes written in German—so he would later look for certain words he did not know in the dictionary and "ponder their elliptical meanings" (*HF* 11). Regarding the Germanist's thesis on Schiller, the narrator found numerous notes and material in her apartment, "enough material for a dozen theses already," yet as he reads her notes he "could understand nothing" (11). Though the narrator is physically closer to the Germanist than to Paul Michel, he has a less difficult time understanding the French writer's works, while he remains mystified by the Germanist's notes and messages on the margins of all her books.

Another example of the narrator's response to the Germanist's writing is when he finds her in tears one day as she is writing a letter "addressed to '*Mein Geliebter*.'"[16] This heading provokes a negative reaction in the narrator who admits that he "nearly had a brain hemorrhage with jealousy" (*HF* 13). As seen by the way the narrator reacts, his response moves toward the emotional rather than to the rational. Iser points out that the interconnections a reader creates when

[16] Mein Geliebter means "my beloved."

reading explain "why the reader often feels involved in events which, at time of reading, seem real to him [or her], even though in fact they are very far from his [or her] own reality. The fact that completely different readers can be differently affected by the 'reality' of a particular text is ample evidence of the degree to which literary texts transform reading into a creative process" (*TIR* 278-279).

Besides reading and processing the Germanist's short messages, the narrator faces a more demanding and personal text to decode: the letter addressed to Paul Michel written by the Germanist at the end of the novel. The letter opens with "Cher Maître, I was your reader too. He was not your only reader" (*HF* 165). The Germanist told the narrator that the letter said all which the narrator wanted to say to the writer, even though Michel was dead. After the narrator reads it, his response is to admit that the Germanist "had written the truth" (166) since the love professed in the letter is the same that he felt. Weeks after Michel's funeral, when the narrator returns to England, he continues reading the Germanist's letter to Michel and affirms that he "now understood the code. The letter could have been written by either one of [them]" (170), that it, either the Germanist or the narrator. Iser explains that in rereading a text, the reader establishes interrelations between past, present and future which "actually cause the text to reveal its potential multiplicity of connections" (*TIR* 278). The narrator's first reading of the letter took place when he was still in shock because of Michel's death, but his later readings

made him able to connect the meaning of the letter to what it actually said and to his own feelings.

The other set of texts that the narrator reads to understand and expand his knowledge on Paul Michel are written by journalists and critics. For example, early in the novel, when the narrator tries to explain the character of Michel, he exposes what he had gathered from these readings. For example, regarding Michel's sexual orientation, the narrator states that "Reading through all the interviews [Michel] ever gave [the narrator] noticed that [Michel] insisted on his sexuality with an aggression which was characteristic of the period. But there was no other name associated with him. He never had a lifetime partner as some gay writers do. He was always alone" (*HF* 5). Therefore, the narrator gathers meaning from this kind of readings and concludes that Paul Michel was a lonely individual whose sexual orientation was an undeniable part of his lifestyle and writing.

However, the narrator is more interested in the literary topics of Michel's novels than in the writer's sexual orientation. In fact, Michel's literary influence is a topic the narrator tries to concretize. Looking for Michel's influences, the narrator expresses that he "had one other clue around which to build [his] image of Paul Michel" (*HF* 6), and that it was in one of Michel's interviews where the writer mentions Foucault as his biggest influence without adding any other comment. After having read this text, the narrator states, "Of course, Paul Michel was a novelist and Foucault was a philosopher, but there were many uncanny

links between them. They were both preoccupied with marginal, muted voices. They were both captivated by the grotesque, the bizarre, the demonic. Paul Michel took his concept of transgression straight from Foucault" (6). This comment shows that the narrator knows not only Michel's writings but also Foucault's writings well enough to find the similarities between both French writers, a relevant fact that with the help of the Germanist will lead the narrator to trace and develop the probable relationship between the writer and the philosopher.

There is an important moment in the novel when the protagonist- narrator is given an article about Paul Michel that sets in motion a series of events that are going to happen to the protagonist. The article, entitled "L'Epreuve d'un écrivain," is about Paul Michel and was written some months after Michel was admitted into the mental hospital.[17] The importance of this article is not perceived in the narrator's comments since he does not say anything about it, but in his reactions as he makes an important decision after having read the article.

The article was published in a 1984 issue of the magazine *Gai Pied Hebdo,* so the narrator finds the text difficult to understand because he cannot see the importance of the article among "a mass of ads for sex aids, health warnings and pictures of jack-off parties" (*HF* 26).[18] But the Germanist shows him the article

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[17] "The Ordeal of a Writer" is the translation of the title of the article.

[18] *Gai Pied Hebdo* was a real French gay magazine which started publication in 1979 and ended its publication in 1992. The magazine's name was suggested by Michel Foucault. The name, which literally means "gay foot," is a homophone of "guêpier" which means a hornet's nest or, figuratively speaking, a trap. This makes reference to the magazine's goal to shock the French status-quo.

written by Christian Gonnard about Michel that is included in the magazine. When the Germanist asks him to read it and promises him she will not say anything to interrupt him, the narrator finally understands the importance of the article in question and of the whole issue between the Germanist and Michel. The narrator "looked at [the Germanist]. She returned [his] glance steadily. Then [he] realized that this was the glove on the table. This was the obscure challenge, a demand" (26). After he finishes reading the article, the Germanist asks the narrator what he will do with this new knowledge about Michel's days after Foucault's death. The narrator realized that if he "gave the wrong answer she would abandon [him] then and there. But the sinister fact was that [he] already knew the right answer" (31), which was to say he would go to France in order to look for Michel. Therefore, when the narrator acts, he is reacting in accordance to the Germanist's wishes, by accepting the terms she had previously imposed: to discover where Michel is and save him from any harm. Iser affirms that "The constitution of meaning . . . gains its full significance when something *happens* to the reader" (*TAR* 152). In the novel, the moment the Germanist presents her "challenge" to the narrator, his life changes as he decides to go and look for Paul Michel. Thus, the meaning the narrator has gathered from reading the French writer alters as the events of the novel develop, offering him other ways of "reading" Paul Michel.

In order to prepare his trip to France with the objective of looking for Paul Michel, the narrator has to find all the information that he can gather from other sources that could help him pinpoint the whereabouts of the writer. During this process, the narrator has very promising beginnings but not bright endings. He expresses, "Once freed from the appalling task of thinking through eight or ten weekly sides of not very original, turgid prose I had imagined that the gates of scholarship would roll open before me, as if I had just acquired an extensive country estate" (*HF* 33). Iser explains that educated readers have specific expectations when reading, which can be "shattered, altered, surpassed or deceived, so that the reader is confronted with something unexpected which necessitates a readjustment" (*TIR* 58). This is what happens to the narrator, who expects to find answers for his questions yet finds none.

In reality, the process of reading unpublished theses on Michel is "the most devastating experience" (*HF* 33) the narrator has. The worst thesis the narrator reads is one written by an Oxford graduate who "argued that both Paul Michel and Virginia Woolf were essential Romantics, that their method was Romantic, that their epiphanies were revelatory moments of being" (33). Apparently, this Oxford student had managed to prove his hypothesis with many citations and cross references. However, the narrator finds the pitfall of this thesis because he knows that Virginia Woolf and Paul Michel were both social revolutionaries, each in their own time and setting, so he declares, "But the Oxford wizard wrote

remorselessly on about their lack of political commitment" (34). The narrator's reaction, a proof of his exhausting reading process, is a comment that evidences his mental fatigue: "This was a world without inconvenient contradictions. [The narrator] read every word of his thesis and emerged in need of therapy" (34). Iser affirms that texts can provide positive and negative reactions on a reader, such as surprise or frustration, feelings that will "rise to an esthetic experience consisting of a continuous interplay between 'deductive' and 'inductive' operations which the reader must carry out for himself [or herself]" (*TIR* 58). The literary works, according to Iser, become real to a reader through the reading experience and mental processes, just as the narrator of the novel experienced a negative reaction after reading some texts written on Paul Michel.

As mentioned in the first paragraph of this chapter, the narrator not only reads written texts but also reads Paul Michel, the individual, as a text. When he finally meets the writer, he realizes that the separation between the writer and the actual self no longer exists. Iser, trying to clarify the realization of a text, explains that a "work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized, and furthermore the realization is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader. . . . The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence" (*TIR* 274-275). Therefore, the narrator's understanding of Paul Michel, the man as a text, can be seen as the convergence of text and reader.

Though Iser clarifies that this convergence "must always remain virtual" (275), it still demands a dynamic performance from the narrator.

The protagonist-narrator has already gathered meaning from Michel's novels before meeting the writer, and meeting him does not alter what he had already concretized from these sources. But after having met the writer, he finds that text and writer are one, a realization that is personal and has not been reached by any reader of Michel's texts, with the exemption of the Germanist. In his reading process of "reading Michel" as a text, the narrator admits that he "realized that the two, which [he] had always held in [his] mind, distinct and apart, were now no longer separate. Paul Michel and the hidden drama lived in his texts were utterly and terribly fused. And this process was not of his making, but [the writer's]. . . . [Michel] had himself become the book" (*HF* 109). Iser explains that in order to produce meaning, the reader has to question the text as a form of communication between him or herself and the writer, where the former "must be made to feel for himself [or herself] the new meaning of the novel. . . . Rhetoric, then, may be a guiding influence to help the reader produce the meaning of the text, but his [or her] participation is something that goes far beyond the scope of this influence" (*TIR* 30).

Another example in which the narrator reads Michel, the individual as a text, is evident as he tries to fill in the gaps of Michel's personality, just like any reader tries to do so with texts. The narrator explains how the writer "was a mass

of open plains and locked spaces" (*HF* 135) to represent the voids he has to fill and the secrets he has to discover. Iser states: "The participation of the reader could not be stimulated if everything were laid out in front of him [or her]. This means that the formulated text must shade off, through allusions and suggestions, into a text that is unformulated though nonetheless intended" (*TIR* 31). As shown before throughout his comments and observations, the narrator describes how he has to make connections between the Michel he knows on paper, the one he meets at the mental asylum, and the one who travels with him to the South of France.

Paul Michel and the Germanist: Reading Processes of Real Readers

Duncker's narrator is not the only character whose reading process is evident in *Hallucinating Foucault*; Paul Michel and the Germanist perform acts of reading that are also important parts of the novel. Paul Michel tells the narrator about his relationship with Foucault and, through this confession, the writer explains his reading process. Michel declares that Foucault wrote back to him in his works as an answer to Michel's novels, in some sort of coded messages. Michel summarizes an ordeal that lasted years by saying that "Many people have observed that our themes are disturbingly similar, our styles of writing utterly different. We read one another with the passion of lovers" (*HF* 148). Iser said that the intentional sentence correlatives "set in motion a process out of which emerges the actual content of the text itself" (*TIR* 277), which explains not only the reading

but the writing process of Michel and Foucault. In addition, Michel affirms that both French authors began to know each other through their mutual reading and writing. The narrator asserts that Foucault's "history of sexuality was like a challenge to [Michel], a fist shaken" and that as Foucault approached Michel's austerity and abstraction, Michel "turned away toward a writing that was less perfect" (*HF* 149). Therefore, the content of each writer's text becomes self-evident to each other through their personal reading and reaction in future writings. Each one finds meaning in his own reading process respectively. However, Iser's process of realization, which is how a reader produces meaning from a text (*TIR* 37), seems not only individual but also reciprocal in the readings and writings of these characters.

If the narrator accepts Michel's explanation of his relationship with Foucault, he would have seen it as a reinforcement of the Germanist's reading of Michel and Foucault because early in the novel she had pointed out this relationship to the narrator. One night, while the narrator is having dinner with the Germanist and her father, she becomes upset because the narrator does not know that Paul Michel, the author he has chosen to write about, is kept in a mental institution. When her father asks her why it is so important to know exactly where Michel is, she answers, "if you love someone, you know where they are, what has happened to them. And you put yourself at risk to save them if you can" (*HF* 23). By means of her readings, the Germanist has already realized that Michel had

written for Foucault as the latter was "the beloved, the unseen reader to be courted" and that Michel wrote "for him and against him" (35). In addition, by reading the article about Michel published in *Gai Pied Hebdo*—which she had read before giving it to the narrator—the Germanist is able to determine that Michel's mental breakdown was linked to Foucault's death and therefore signaled the end of Michel's writing. Her interest in Michel comes from the fact that they had met when she was a girl, and then she had promised to read everything that he would write and that she would never forget him.

In fact, the novel reaches its climax when the narrator finds out that the Germanist had met Michel when she was a child. At this moment, the narrator realizes the reason of her promise and the reason why she turns into Michel's reader. The narrator confirms this relevant finding by means of the letter the Germanist writes and puts in Michel's coffin. She makes her reading process self-evident in this letter as she states that Michel gave her "what every writer gives the readers he loves—trouble and pleasure" and that she followed the writer through reading "across page after page, [she] wrote back in the margins of [Michel's] books, on the flyleaf, on the title page" (*HF* 165). The Germanist's reaction was personal and secretive, similar to Michel's reaction to Foucault. These two reader-characters, Michel and the Germanist, feel, as Iser puts it, "that there is no distance between oneself and the events described" (*TIR* 291) because they all have identified with the object of their readings.

Michel Foucault and the Germanist: Some Traits of Ideal Readers

While analyzing the reading processes of the main characters in *Hallucinating Foucault*, that is, the narrator, Paul Michel, and the Germanist, I observed that these characters have been categorized as real readers within a fictional world, according to Wolfgang Iser's definition of the term, for a real reader is the one who is "known to us by his [or her] documented reactions" (*TAR* 27) and the actions of these readers-characters have been documented by the narrator. In addition to these real readers, it is important to note traits of two ideal readers within the novel, seen in the characters of Michel Foucault and the Germanist. Iser presents the ideal reader as the creation of philologists or literary critics, but he then points out that an ideal reader "would have to have an identical code to that of the author" (28-29), and that he or she "would have to be able to realize in full the meaning potential of the fictional text" (29). Therefore, the ideal reader is not specifically a concrete person, or character in a novel, and in the case of *Hallucinating Foucault*, the two characters mentioned before present traits of an ideal reader that come to symbolize and clarify the relationship between reader and writer.

In order to understand why the character of Paul Michel considers Michel Foucault his ideal reader, Michel's concept of muse must be studied first. On one of Michel's letters to Foucault, Michel explains that for him the muse is not the female Greek divinity or any "narcissistic nonsense in female form." For him, the

muse was a real person, "a comrade, a friend, a traveling companion" (*HF* 58). Later Michel clarifies this concept by saying that the muse is the other voice when he writes. One voice is described as dangerous, while the other is precautious, "the one that takes the risks and the one that counts the cost" (59); the muse becomes the dangerous voice, while the writer becomes the safe voice. Furthermore, Michel admits that in the common version of the female muse there is distance and separation. For him, his muse is the reader, but not any random reader. Michel's muse was Foucault. Thus, on one of the last letters he wrote to Foucault, Michel declares that Foucault was the reader for whom he wrote, and that his biggest fear was not to lose his power to write, but to lose his reader.

The Germanist acknowledges Michel's love for Foucault, as she tells the narrator, early in the novel, her thoughts on the possible relationship these two French writers had. She is categorical in her remarks as she says that "For Paul Michel, Foucault was the most important radical thinker of his times. . . . Paul Michel never envied Foucault; he was never the ogre to be envied or slain. He was the beloved, the unseen reader to be courted" (*HF* 35). Her words evidence her proximity to Michel's thoughts and feelings. The Germanist adds, "Paul Michel wrote every book for Foucault. For him and against him" (35), and she declares that Michel "fell in love with Foucault" (36). Finally, the Germanist tells the narrator that the bond between Michel and Foucault, the bond between the writer

and his beloved muse, is dangerous for the French writer because the death of Foucault represented the end of Michel's writing since "His reader was dead" (36).

Once Paul Michel is able to trust the narrator, he confides in the type of relationship he had with Michel Foucault. This moment happens toward the end of the novel, after the narrator has been able to take Michel out of the mental asylum and both have found a refuge in the South of France. As their summer is ending, Michel decides to reveal his thoughts on Foucault to the narrator. Michel explains that he and the philosopher only met once, but that Foucault was "the first person to comment on [his] work whose opinion [Michel] valued" (*HF* 147-148). Immediately, Michel expresses that "It's rare to find another man whose mind works through the same codes, whose work is anonymous, yet as personal and lucid as your own" (148). These words take us back to Iser's definition of the ideal reader, one who had "an identical code to that of the author" (*TAR* 29) so Foucault presents some traits to be considered Michel's ideal reader. Furthermore, these two French writers never had a physical relationship, for "Foucault never attempted to contact [Michel]. He did [however] something more frightening, provocative, profound. He wrote back, in his published work" (*HF* 148).

It is important to clarify that Michel's writing to Foucault was not only through his literary works but also through his personal letters. Iser notes that with the existence of an ideal reader, "communication would *then be quite* superfluous, for one only communicates that which is *not* already shared by

sender and receiver," (*TAR* 29) which, in other words, can be said that the communication goes in only one direction. When Michel writes to Foucault but never sends these letters, there is only one person in this process of communication because Michel is answering back what Foucault would have answered according to his own thinking. For example, Michel wrote in one of his letters: "How odd that your memory of the cold during mass should be so similar" (*HF* 63). Since Foucault never received the letter, there is no possible way he could have respond to it. Michel wrote Foucault's answer or what he thought the French philosopher would answer. Iser notes that an author who plays the role of the ideal reader would have to "revert the code, which [he or she] had already recoded" (*TAR* 29) and that is exactly what Paul Michel is doing by coding his letters, by writing them, by recoding them and by answering in them what Foucault might have asked or said. Though Iser calls this notion *superfluous* since it can be seen redundant to code and recode messages, I find it *interesting* because it becomes *basic* in understanding the mental processes of a character, in the case of Paul Michel, his life and personality.

Paul Michel sees in Foucault a being who possesses traits to be his ideal reader, but Foucault was not the only one since the Germanist presents similar qualities. Michel knows of a promise made to him many years ago. In their farewell the Germanist, then a little girl, tells the writer: "when I can read French better, I will read every word you write. I will be your reader" (*HF* 157). When

Michel tells the narrator of this event, he only wonders if that girl still remembers him, not knowing that she was the one who silently challenged and demanded the narrator to look for him. Fifteen years earlier, Michel heard this promise from the girl, and he describes her as his first love, not only for her promise, but also for the relationship they had, which was simple and honest. Michel recognizes the Germanist's nature as a child as intense and fearless yet still innocent. The narrator tells Michel that in fact that girl never forgot her writer because she was the one who had sent him to the writer's rescue.

The Germanist's intention of being Michel's reader can go further than just her promise of reading every word he writes. Apart from this statement, she tells Michel that if one loves a person, one must know where that person is and what has happened to him or her, and to put oneself at any risk in order to save that person. The Germanist was only eleven years old when she uttered the previous sentences; however, she holds on to her promise throughout the years, as she repeats it to the narrator when she finds out that he does not know that Paul Michel was kept in a mental asylum (*HF* 23). Her words are echoed by Michel and Foucault, for in *L'Evadé* Michel wrote that "freedom costs no less than everything, including your generosity, self-respect, integrity, tendernes" (16), and in an interview Foucault pointed out "the possibility of an absolute sacrifice . . . without any profit whatsoever, without any ambition" (17). Both references depict a form of surrender, personal and intimate, a form of love, which requires nothing in

exchange, the same way the Germanist promises to look for her writer, Michel, and to put herself at risk in order to save him.

As Michel holds a one-way communication with his reader, Foucault, because he never sends the letters to the philosopher, the Germanist intends to express her feelings, as well as the narrator's feelings, through a letter that Michel never read because he was already dead. The letter opens with: "Cher Maître, I was your reader too. He was not your only reader" (*HF* 165). While the "I" can be either the Germanist or the narrator because of the declaration formulated, the "He" can be Foucault or the narrator because of the role both played in Michel's life. The Germanist leaves the first pronoun ambiguous because the narrator also had a close relationship with Michel, and the moments described in the letter can be applied to both of them. In that letter the Germanist writes what she believes, mirroring Michel's ideas and his letters to Foucault. This is the last example of characters exhibiting traits of ideal readers, which becomes necessary in the novel, as Iser expresses that an ideal reader is useful since "as a fictional being, [it] can close the gaps that constantly appear in any analysis of literary effects and responses" (*TAR* 29), therefore, helping with the depiction of characters and with the closure of the novel at the same time.

In this chapter, reading processes of readers who are also characters in Patricia Duncker's novel *Hallucinating Foucault* have been analyzed and studied.

When Michel tells the narrator about his relationship with Foucault, he states that "The love between a writer and a reader is never celebrated. It can never be proven to exist" (*HF* 149), but Duncker's novel presents this affection and portrays the different angles of this relationship. In addition, the reader-writer relationship has been explored with the clarification of the different traits of types of readers present in the novel. In the following chapter, Iser's concept of the implied reader will be evaluated in order to fill in the gaps produced during the reading of Duncker's narrative. The implied reader is necessary in this kind of analysis to point out the "response-inviting structures" (*TAR* 34) that help readers create meaning. In fact, the active participation of readers in the creation of meaning is crucial within the characters of *Hallucinating Foucault* and within the readers of Duncker's novel.

Chapter IV: Blanks and Negations as a Path to Meaning

> As the unwritten text shapes the written, the reader's 'formulation' of the unwritten involves a reaction to the positions made manifest in the text, which as a rule represents simulated realities. And as the reader's 'formulation' of the unwritten transforms itself into a reaction to the world represented, it follows that fiction must always in some way transcend the world to which it refers.
>
> (Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 182)

> Cher Maître,
> I was your reader too. He was not your only reader. You had no right to abandon me. Now you leave me in the same chasm which you faced when you lost the reader you loved best of all. You were privileged, spoiled; not every writer knows that his reader is there.
>
> (Patricia Duncker, *Hallucinating Foucault*, 165)

The importance of the reader's imagination has been already discussed, but it is imperative to remember that, for Wolfgang Iser, the "unwritten" stimulates the creative response and participation of the reader. Iser describes the reading process as a dynamic force where "The unwritten aspects of apparently trivial scenes and the unspoken dialogue within the 'turns and twists' not only draw the reader into the action but also lead him [or her] to shade in the many outlines suggested by the given situations, so that these take on a reality of their own" (*TIR* 276). The reader must use his or her imagination to mentally write the unwritten

parts or to fill in the blanks created by the text. In order to do so, Iser states that readers "are forced to take an active part in the composition of the novel's meaning" using not only their imagination but also the aid of the implied reader, a concept that "incorporates both the presctructuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader's actualization of this potential through the reading process" (xii). In fact, the purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the concept of implied reader in the novel by filling in the different types of gaps or blanks which arise during the reading process.

The way Patricia Duncker's novel is structured lets the input of the reader develop and facilitates the reader's participation and involvement. *Hallucinating Foucault* is divided into four sections: "Cambridge," "Paris," "Clermont," and "The Midi." Each section specifies the place where the action occurs. The reader has to assimilate the events in a chronological order, as the narrator moves from one location to the next. The structure of the storyline is almost linear, but there are some instances that lead the reader to guess more than what appears in the written text at the time of the reading process. Since Patricia Duncker planned the novel as a thriller, her favorite genre, the linear storyline creates anticipation in the reader as the plot unfolds, and the reader's interest is guided towards the end of the story. *Hallucinating Foucault* has an unexpected outcome and closure of the triangle among the narrator, Paul Michel, and the Germanist. The first section of the novel, entitled "Cambridge" starts forming up this triangle.

"Cambridge:" the Beginning of the Quest

"Cambridge" introduces the reader to the narrator and his interest in Paul Michel. This interest helps develop a reader-writer relationship that will take both characters on a journey neither of them had expected. But this journey is crowded with blanks. Wolfgang Iser describes the blank as the textual device that "designates a vacancy in the overall system of the text, the filling which brings about an interaction of textual patterns. . . . It is only when the schemata of the text are related to one another that the imaginary object can begin to be formed, and it is the blanks that get this connecting operation under way" (*TAR* 182). The beginning of the novel, for example, is the first major blank the reader must fill up since it presents the narration of a confusing dream. At this point, the reader does not have any information about the narrator, and he or she is not aware of the relationship between the two other people in the narrator's dream. After a short description of the blurry events in the dream, the narrator states, "I do not know whose memory I have entered. This is not written in any of the books" (*HF* 4). Apart from wondering what importance a dream may cast on the story, the reader faces now another dilemma based on the information provided by the narrator: is it a dream or a memory? More intriguing, which books is the narrator referring to? In short, the reader does not have enough information to answer the previous questions so the reading process of filling out blanks must progress at the same pace the story does.

One of the major difficulties the reader encounters when reading *Hallucinating Foucault* is that Patricia Duncker mixes fictional characters with real people. This factor is common in many of her novels, but it still represents an obstacle for the reader. This mixture of fictional reality is described by Iser who speaks of the reader's criticism on a fictional text as the event which constitutes "the reality of the novel" (*TIR* 113). In addition, Iser states that a novel "is not to be viewed as the mere reflection of a social reality, for its true form will only be revealed when the world it presents has, like all images, been refracted and converted by the mind of the reader" (113). Therefore, the act of filling in gaps and blanks provides a novel with veracity and reassures the reader of his or her own reading process, proving that an open mind and an active imagination are the main components needed to enjoy the text and to recreate its validity. In such a process, the reader of *Hallucinating Foucault* encounters, in this first section, at least three moments where he or she has to fill in textual gaps that arise due to the juxtaposition of fictional and real characters and places.

First, an early event in the novel that exemplifies the clash between what is fictional and what is real from the reader's standpoint comes after the description of the dream: the narrator briefly speaks of his experience as a French and German student at Cambridge, his interests and his decision to write his doctoral thesis on French novelist Paul Michel. His comment on this matter is that "Everyone has heard of Paul Michel, with a little prompting" (*HF* 5). This statement creates a

sense of anticipation in the reader regarding the identity of the writer in question, since he or she is completely unaware of the existence of a French writer called Paul Michel.

Second, the reader is introduced to key information on Michel as the narration progresses, but he or she is left with gaps as the narrator tells of Michel's fictional work, specifically, two of his novels: *La Fuite* and *La Maison d'Eté*. Though the reader is informed of the critical acclaim of *La Maison d'Eté*, the narrator does not specify the content of this novel, or for that matter, what the other four novels written by Michel are about. The reader encounters a major gap in the reading process from the beginning of the novel because the main character is writing his doctoral thesis on someone whose work has not been clarified and whose themes and some personal information are not commonly known to the public. The "true form" of the story, which Iser speaks about, and which represents the aim of the reader's role in the reading process, will arise after clearing some of these blanks.

Another example of an early gap in the novel is the connection the narrator makes between Paul Michel and Michel Foucault. The narrator notes that during an interview, Paul Michel was asked about the writer who had influenced his work, and he responded that the writer was Foucault. This interview helped the narrator make the connection between the two French writers:

> Of course, Paul Michel was a novelist and Foucault was a philosopher, but there were many uncanny links between them.

> They were both preoccupied with marginal, muted voices. They were both captivated by the grotesque, the bizarre, the demonic. Paul Michel took his concept of transgression straight from Foucault. But stylistically they were poles apart. Foucault's huge, dense, Baroque narratives, alive with detail, were like paintings by Hieronymous Bosh. . . . Paul Michel wrote with the clarity and simplicity of a writer who lived in a world of precise weights and absolute colors. . . . (*HF* 6)

The reader must negotiate with the fact that a real person, Michel Foucault, was included in this narration of fictional accounts, a fact that may generate different responses in the reading public depending on the reader's knowledge of Foucault and his texts.

Finally, an important gap that the reader faces is the absence of the names of two of the main characters of the novel: the narrator's and the Germanist's. When the narrator, who never gives out his own name, introduces the character of his girlfriend, he states that he "was going out with a Germanist" (*HF* 7), but he never clarifies her name. In addition, other characters in the novel never refer to the narrator or to the Germanist using their respective names. The reader must, therefore, fill up this gap and its significance for "it is his [or her] own criticism that constitutes the reality of the book" (*TIR* 113) and from this point he or she has to accept the possible facts that either the narrator may not care for names, or that

the writer of the novel may omit them on purpose. In a way, the lack of names and confusion of genders present in the novel indicate that the relationship between characters as readers and writers is flexible and dynamic in terms of identity.

The first section of the novel also contains gaps that are evident not only to the readers but also to the narrator as he becomes a reader of the Germanist's notes and actions, and of Paul Michel's texts. Wolfgang Iser explains that blanks must be resolved in the form of a textual task because gaps "give the reader the motivation and the opportunity to bring the two poles [what is given and what is not] meaningfully together for himself [or herself]" (*TIR* 34). Therefore, gaps or blanks not only present the reader with a questioning about the reality of the text, as seen in the previous paragraphs, but they also encourage the reader to use his or her imagination to create meaning alongside the text.

In the third chapter of this thesis I discussed the narrator's reactions to the Germanist's notes. An action that is related to this previous one is the filling of gaps found in the Germanist' thoughts on Paul Michel. The narrator has already stated that the Germanist had read all of Michel's novels, so he decides to look for those books in her apartment. He points out that the books were "all together, in chronological order, amassed in a privileged position beside her desk" (*HF* 11). The narrator and the reader may wonder why Michel's novels were kept so close at hand when the Germanist was writing her dissertation on Schiller. Furthermore, the narrator adds that the pages were filled "as much of her writing

as his" (12). The narrator refers to her notes to Michel, but since the texts were novels, what sort of notes were these? This example becomes a reflection process of multiple readings, where readers read and infer the narrator's reading of the Germanist's reading of Michel. This triple action of reading shows how much readers have to be involved in the creation and recreation of the textual meaning of Duncker's narrative.

The narrator finds a passage in the Germanist's notes that motivates him to do research on the possible relationship between Michel and Foucault. The narrator points out that the Germanist had written "BEWARE OF FOUCAULT" in Michel's *L'Evadé* as if "the philosopher was a particular savage dog" (*HF* 12), and that she had also written in the text the reference to one of Foucault's interviews. The narrator never fully explains, in his account of this event, the importance of this finding since he, at that moment, could not decipher the connection between Michel's text, the Germanist's note, and Foucault's interview. The reader must continue with this blank, for the narrator does not have a "sense of [the Germanist's] overall project, only a fascinating perspective on her engagement with detail. [The narrator] had no idea what she was doing" (17). In that respect, Iser affirms how the reader must take what has now become familiar to him or her, that is, facts, descriptions or even common knowledge, and use them to fuel his or her participation in the creation of meaning, calling this moment the "first

insight into the nature of the reader's active participation, as mobilized by the novel" (*TIR* 34).

The reader's insights play an important role in the reading process because they generate afterthoughts, and the reader ponders what has happened in the story and what could happen. Visualizing possible actions and events, a meditative narrator who mirrors his thoughts on the readers of the novel is in charge of the second section of *Hallucinating Foucault* entitled "Paris."

"Paris:" a Moment of Reflection

Wolfgang Iser affirms that textual gaps provide a moment of reflection for the reader. Iser states that "Thanks to the 'vacant pages,' [the reader] can reflect, and through reflection create the motivation through which he [or she] can experience the text as a reality" (*TIR* 40). The imagination continues to be one of the main components in the relationship between subject (reader) and object (text), as it serves the reader to connect himself or herself to the story and to create meaning during the reading process. There are mainly two instances in this second section of Duncker's novel which demand the use of the reader's imagination to fill up textual gaps: the narrator's arrival at Paris and his findings at the archive. These examples will show the narrator who, playing the role of a reader, tries to decode key elements of Michel's life and work.

As soon as the narrator arrives at Paris, he is confused by the sense of anticipation that overcomes him. The reader must remember that the narrator traveled to Paris to look for Paul Michel after the Germanist had challenged him to save the French writer if he was in peril. Traveling to Paris becomes the narrator's first step in his search of Michel, but, up to this point, the exact location of the writer is a gap for the narrator. Beforehand, the narrator has looked for more information on Michel, but in Paris he specifically looks for the writer's personal letters which are kept at a university archive. In Paris, he also looks for a place where he can re-read Paul Michel's novels. Thus, the search for physical space is a recurrent theme in Duncker's novel.

While the narrator is walking the streets of Paris, looking for the perfect place to read Michel's narrative in peace, he passes by the Louvre's courtyard and states:

> It was then that I had the peculiar sensation that something was being shown to me, explained, but that I had as yet no way of breaking into the code, no means of understanding the blank, flat surfaces. It was like seeing a new language written down for the first time. I stood watching a sign that would not yield up its meaning. I remember this because it had seemed uncanny at the time. (*HF* 52)

It is at this moment when his eagerness creates a blank in the story. The reader faces the same dilemma as the narrator. The blank exists because neither the

narrator nor the reader knows what will happen, yet the feeling of anticipation foreshadows that something important will take place. The reader can use his or her imagination and create different possible alternatives to what could happen to the narrator in Paris. At this moment, the reader is well aware that a life-changing situation happened to the narrator, but he or she does not necessarily know if the narrator will meet with Paul Michel or if the whole novel is an account of the narrator's search for the writer. Is Paul Michel in a Parisian hospital or somewhere else? Will Paul Michel agree to see a visitor? Could the narrator reach him, both physically and mentally? Is the narrator ever going to meet the writer? Is Paul Michel still alive? These and other questions can arise in the reader's mind, just as the narrator tries to find meaning from his own experience. These questions illustrate what Iser describes as the "points at which the reader can enter into the text, forming his [or her] connections and conceptions and so creating the configurative meaning of what he [or she] is reading" (*TIR* 40) or, in other words, how the untold or unwritten can generate meaning within the plot of Duncker's novel.

Another example of a gap or textual blank in this second section takes place when the narrator reads Paul Michel's letters addressed to Foucault at the archive. After having read these documents many times, the narrator finds out that Michel never sent them to Foucault; therefore, Michel himself was coding and recoding his own questions and answers to Foucault by means of his own writing. This fact

is known to the reader just after the narrator finishes reading the letters. However, there are many details in the correspondence that are left as blanks for the reader. This information is vital and presents itself as a textual challenge because, at that time, the narrator knows more of Michel's life than the reader.

In the first letter read by the narrator Michel declares that he is very pleased that Foucault "noticed the episode with the boy on the beach" (*HF* 58) in his novel *Midi*. Later the writer states that the passage had happened to him in real life. At this moment the reader has no other reference or clue that can help him or her understand this episode which Michel thought was important to share with Foucault. As stated before, the reader does not know about the novels that Michel had written, while the narrator knows them all since they are part of his dissertation. Thus, the narrator can make connections to Michel's comments found in the letters while the reader has little to make his or her own connections and must wait as the story unfolds to realize the significance of the episode of the boy on the beach.

The reader, then, has to create a more vivid image of Michel by deciphering the writer's life with pieces of information about his memories from boyhood, his family, the explanation of his beliefs, and the declaration of his love for Foucault. While all this information is filtered by the narrator, many aspects remain unknown to the reader. The novel is halfway done and the reader has not met Paul Michel. The reader's image of Paul Michel is not complete because of the lack

of information the reader has to face in order to recreate the writer. Gaps and blanks blur Michel's image in the reader's mind.

"Clermont:" the Site of a Dynamic Reader

As the novel progresses, and though the narrator finally meets Paul Michel in Clermont, the reader continues to face different gaps in the text. Iser further explains the dynamic quality of the gaps as follows: "whenever the flow [in a text] is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections—for filling in the gaps left by the text itself" (*TIR* 280). Then, more blanks appear as the narrator finds Michel in the hospital Sainte-Marie at Clermont-Ferrand. These blanks are characterized not only by their indeterminacy but also by their linguistic value.

In "Clermont," the third section of the novel, blanks appear just before the narrator enters Sainte-Marie hospital. He sees graffiti painted on the hospital's walls and, though he knows the French language, he does not understand the meaning of the following words:

> Qui es-tu point d'interrogation?
>
> Je me pose souvent des questions.
>
> Dans ton habit de gala
>
> Tu resembles à un magistrat.

Tu es le plus heureux des points

Car on te répond toi au moins.

(*Who are you, question mark?*

I often ask myself questions

In your festive garb

You look like a judge.

You are the happiest of punctuation marks

At least you get answers.) (*HF* 86)

These lines could create different reader responses. For example, a reader who does not know French will interrupt, at least for a while, his or her reading process and that could be annoying. A reader who does not like poetry could be distant or intimidated by those lines. A reader who knows French, like the narrator, could be wondering about the symbolism of this verse.

In her essay "Writing on the Wall," Patricia Duncker explains this episode of her novel as follows:

> In my early drafts of the novel I didn't translate the French, so that the text would remain as mysterious to the reader as it had first been to me. What does it mean to write something that is unintelligible? Or unreadable? . . . The writing on the wall in *Hallucinating Foucault* is about isolation, authority, the right to ask questions and the longing for a reply. The writing articulates the longing for answers,

> for meanings. The writing itself longs for the encounter with interpretation. (*Writing on the Wall* 188)

The reader later finds out that some of the graffiti were written by Paul Michel, but that fact does not take away the uncertainty of their meanings. More gaps could be generated by these lines. At first, a reader may question the identity of the writer or the identity of the addressee. Second, there is the negotiation with the French language. A reader may wonder if the italicized text is the best translation available from French to English, or if it appears in the novel because it was demanded by the editor or intentionally written by the author of the book. Finally, the narrator's initial reaction of not understanding the graffiti can lead the reader to try to decipher the lines by him or herself, or to share the narrator's feeling of uncertainty and discomfort. The content of the graffiti addressed to the "question mark" is itself a question that is in need of an answer.

Closely linked to the previous example of textual gaps, the reader must decipher Paul Michel's intentions after he dismisses the narrator in a violent form and later calls him asking for his visits at the hospital. In order to decipher Michel's reaction, the reader must closely follow the events before and after the narrator's meeting with the writer. When the narrator first arrives to the hospital and notices several graffiti, one of the nurses tells him that they were Michel's vandalistic work. The narrator meets Michel in a common room of the psychiatric ward, and they converse for a short period of time. Michel keeps asking the

narrator for his name or identity, until the narrator tells him that he is "his English reader." Michel's behavior turns aggressive and he menacingly tells the narrator to leave before he would kill him. The narrator leaves in a state of shock.

After this scene, the reader finds the narrator outside Sainte-Marie feeling confused when he sees again one of Michel's graffiti. The narrator explains as follows:

> I was in the street, sick, nauseous, terrified and without any cigarettes. I looked up at Paul Michel's enigmatic message.
>
> J'AI LEVE MA TETE ET J'AI VU PERSONNE
>
> I turned on the blank cream wall, furious, and shouted.
>
> "You say you looked up and saw no one. That's not true. You saw me. I was here. I've come to find you. You saw me." (*HF* 97)

Later, when the narrator returns to his lodgings, he is greeted with a surprising call from Michel. The writer excuses himself for what happened at the hospital and, in a rather charming way, asks the narrator to visit him the next day. Michel's petition provokes gaps that the reader must fill in.

The reader remembers that hours ago Michel had threatened to kill the narrator. The reader wonders what provoked the writer's change of mind. The reader may wonder if it was the narrator's scream outside the hospital that moved Michel, if the writer could hear it, or if Michel just rationalized the events of the meeting and decided to give the narrator a second chance. The correct answers to

these questions cannot be given because they will vary according to the each reader's background and experience. However, the presence of these gaps is an example of how the novel and the reader are dynamic since these blanks fuel the reader's imagination and contribute to the movement of the novel. As Iser affirms, "one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his [or her] own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities; as he [or she] reads, he [or she] will make his [or her] own decision as to how the gap is to be filled" (*TIR* 280). Definitely, Duncker's reader is always in constant movement, looking for places, people, words and meanings.

A blank that appears sometimes in the novel is that of characters leaving sentences unfinished or using fragmented narration. Iser describes this type of blank as "a source of constant irritation to the reader's image-building faculties" (*TAR* 184). In "Clermont," we find one example that takes place after the narrator and Paul Michel have become friends, and the former is trying to persuade Michel to leave the mental institution. Michel is not interested in day care centers for the mentally disabled, so the narrator proposes a holiday trip to get the writer out of the hospital. Michel thinks about this possibility and then the two characters exchange some interesting words:

> "For the moment you'll have to come to me, petit," [Michel] said. "I must go and lock myself up again now. Will you come back tomorrow?"
>
> "Every day," [the narrator] said. "As long as it takes."
>
> We looked at one another. I didn't explain. He understood. (*HF* 106)

The reader cannot quite understand the complicity between the narrator and Michel. The reader needs more information or more description to figure out this implicit agreement. The narrator does not explain further but both, he and Michel, know what "that silent look" signifies. However, the reader has to wait, read and decipher words to understand the meaning of that dialogue. Iser states that blanks occur in the midst of everyday language in the simplest form for a reason, and "as [blanks] withhold their references, they help to dislocate the reader's normal expectations of language, and [the reader] finds that he [or she] must reformulate a formulated text if [he or she] is to be able to absorb it" (*TAR* 185). Therefore, in the case of the previous scene, the reader must go back and reread the events that lead up to this moment, or pause and analyze the words used, or just imagine what the silent look and mutual consent could mean.

"Midi:" the Negation of the Familiar

Wolfgang Iser believes that the process of change and imagination cannot be solely left to the reader and that the text must have a mechanism that can

expose the reader to a specific line of thought according to the plot of the literary work. If the reader is guided only by blanks, gaps, and omissions without a connecting thread, he or she will be free of letting his or her imagination create and formulate something that perhaps is distant to the writer's message in that particular literary work. According to Iser, the text, in turn, must contain elements such as negations to control the wandering point of the reader's imagination. Iser describes a textual negation as "the inducement to realization—which is the reader's production of the meaning of the text" (*TIR* 37). Negations exist so the writer can lead the reader to a certain response which later can be frustrated in order to lead him or her to a different creative path, closer to the writer's intention.

In the final section of the novel, "Midi," readers have faced several events which they are able to connect to the plot and development of the characters; therefore, they find these events "familiar." In this last section, the narrator is able to get permission to take Michel out on a vacation trip. What was hinted in "Clermont" by Michel's doctor, Pascale Vaury, that the narrator courts the writer as a lover, has come true in "Midi"; the narrator is madly in love with Michel, and they have become lovers. Little did the narrator and the readers know that the line of action of the novel can change so rapidly.

The existence of a previous relationship between the Germanist and Paul Michel becomes the piece of the puzzle that finally fits in the grand scheme of the plot, which becomes an essential revelation in the novel and it is developed in this

last section. Then, with this piece of the puzzle well placed, the unfamiliar becomes familiar and negation is possible. Sometimes the familiar is rejected or hidden and then the reader is re-oriented in the process. By reading in retrospect, the reader's views are modified and that is an inherent characteristic of the process of textual negotiation. Iser describes the quality of negation as follows: "The efficacy of a literary text is brought about by the apparent evocation and subsequent negation of the familiar. What at first seemed to be an affirmation of our assumptions leads to our own rejection of them, thus tending to prepare us for a re-orientation" (*TIR* 290). This quality can be exemplified in the novel when the narrator realizes that Michel had met the Germanist fifteen years before, and that she had kept her promise of looking for the writer and saving him in case he was in danger (*HF* 157). What had become the familiar to the reader, that is, the Germanist's persistent promise, the narrator's journey and the way the narrator formed a relationship with Michel, suddenly changes, and the reader has to rethink and reconsider the events from a new perspective.

According to Iser, the reader experiences negation as a result of newly acquired knowledge. Iser affirms that the reader's attentiveness

> is heightened by the fact that the expectations aroused by the presence of the familiar have been stifled by this negation, which causes a differentiation in attitude in so far as [the reader] is shocked off from familiar orientations, but cannot yet gain access to

> unaccustomed attitudes, for the knowledge offered or invoked by the repertoire is to yield something which is as yet not contained in the knowledge itself. (*TAR* 213)

Perhaps, an example of this case of negation is the narrator's reaction to the events that took place after Michel's death, for he is also shaken by what he had considered familiar until then. For example, the reader and the narrator find out, at the same time, that doctor Jacques Martel, who had been introduced to the narrator the day before he had flown to Paris, is Paul Michel's legal representative. The narrator describes this moment with uncertainty by expressing that "There were too many pieces of this story that [he] had not seen, too many connections that had never been revealed" (*HF* 160). In addition, he finds out that the Germanist had not only plotted and guided him to accomplish her past promise, but also concealed vital information to the person who was doing so much for her. The reader, as the narrator, experiences first a shock, and then a change of attitude towards the character of the Germanist, so that both, reader and narrator feel—as the latter puts it—"imprisoned by conspiracy" (160): a conspiracy that Duncker has weaved in her narrative characterized by gaps that have been filled in and generated during the reading process.

Hallucinating Foucault ends as it begins, with a dream. The narrator has given closure to the odds and ends of what happened during his summer with Paul Michel. He finishes his dissertation, confides solely in his parents and in the

Germanist, and goes on with his life. The narrator keeps his relationship with Michel private since he never mentioned what happened between them either in his thesis or in his teachings of Michel's fiction. His final thoughts take him back to one of his most vivid dreams with Michel. The narrator sees the writer in a burning field, during winter. He tries to get closer to Michel but is not able to approach him. He then notices the silhouette of another man behind the writer. He does not know who that person is. This blank is left to be filled by the reader after the completion of the novel. Perhaps the man is Foucault. Perhaps the narrator will be able to rescue the writer this time. Perhaps the writer does not want to be rescued.

Many of the blanks discussed previously help develop relationships among the characters of the novel. These characters are readers and writers who evidence feelings more powerful than mere affection or affinity. Therefore, Jean Baudrillard's theory of seduction will be used in the next chapter to explain the nature of the relationships of readers and writers as the characters in the novel become seduced and seducers. The following chapter will also explore the ambiguity that exists in a relationship among characters, readers and writers where seduction plays a transcendental role in a game of power—a game of shifting roles and a game of hierarchies between the seduced and the seducer.

Chapter V: Seduction as a Game of Reversals and Death

> Masculinity has always been haunted by this sudden reversibility within the feminine. Seduction and femininity are ineluctable as the reverse side of sex, meaning and power.
>
> (Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 2)

> "Yield," said Paul Michel, shaking with laughter. He pulled back a little, grinning, his face barely an inch from my own. Then he paused for a second, intent as a cat. He kissed me very carefully, very gently.
>
> (Patricia Duncker, *Hallucinating Foucault*, 139)

The word *seduction* comes from the Latin *sēdūcere*, which means to lead aside or to lead. A seducer leads the seduced person into a world different from the norm. To lead someone aside means there is a change in the reality of the people involved in the game of seduction. The events that occur in this situation are life-altering and expose a rather intimate exchange of actions between the seducer and the seduced. Often love and sex play a major role in seduction. Sometimes seduction is just a game.

The final major theoretical approach that complements the analysis of Duncker's *Hallucinating Foucault* is Jean Baudrillard's theory of seduction. After having analyzed the types of readers and their roles using Wolfgang Iser's theory of reader response, Baudrillard's theory evidences a type of relationship that

develops a perspective necessary to explore the relationship between readers and writers. This relationship is seductive, enticing and fulfilling, as the acts of reading and writing provide different forms of pleasure to both readers and writers. For Baudrillard, seduction deals with three major guidelines which are the ludic performance with the feminine figure, the reversal of the order of hierarchies and positions, and death as the only end of seduction. These three axes are interconnected with each other and need each other in order to exist. The game of seduction leads to a shift of positions and a change in the structure of power. Every game must have an end, though in seduction, as Baudrillard expresses, there cannot be a winner, just players.

Baudrillard's tripartite structure of the feminine figure, the reversal of hierarchies and the notion of death, proposed in his theory of seduction, can be traced in Patricia Duncker's novel. The characters of *Hallucinating Foucault* take part of different emotional triangles, which are fostered by the seductive game between a writer and a reader. The characters, male or female, play a game where their masculinities and femininities shift in the balance of power, and they are also involved in relationships with each other where seduction is the main fuel and death the only end. Paul Michel, the intriguing writer-character of Duncker's novel, once declared, "The love between a writer and a reader is never celebrated. It can never be proved to exist" (*HF* 149). This chapter celebrates the relationship between writers and readers, and it is the final proof that it does exist.

The Feminine in Us

Jean Baudrillard opens the discussion on seduction with the affirmation that sexuality is indeed centered on masculinity, thus creating a repressive society which gives the phallus the power over everything else. With this in mind, the feminine, for Baudrillard, does not have much space to act, as he declares, "There is no use seeking, from within [sexuality], to have the feminine pass through to the other side, or to cross terms. Either the structure remains the same, with the female being entirely absorbed by the male, or it collapses, and there is no longer either female or male" (*Seduction* 6). In reality, the feminine is more astute than the way masculinity portrays it. Baudrillard affirms that the "strength of the feminine is that of seduction" (7) because seduction is in itself, a game of appearances, a performance. Therefore, as the feminine seduces the masculine, the balance of power shifts, and masculine and feminine reverse roles. In *Hallucinating Foucault* there are many instances where the feminine strength imposes over the masculine discourse and shows its power. This is mostly done by the character of the Germanist, the narrator's girlfriend, who is the only main female character in the novel. Other examples seen in the characters of Paul Michel and the narrator will also portray some seductive traits.

In fact, the Germanist is the most dominant character in Duncker's novel. This fact coincides with Baudrillard's view that "the sovereignty of seduction [is] feminine" (*Seduction* 7). The first description the narrator presents of the

Germanist is purely physical, as she "had a mass of curly brown hair and wore tiny, round, thin-rimmed glasses. She was bony and quick in her movements, skinny as a boy, oddly dated in her manners, like a mid-nineteenth-century heroine" (*HF* 7). Though the narrator tried to initiate a conversation with her, she does not want to talk, so he withdraws. However, it is she who finally starts the relationship between them as she directly tells the narrator that she will sleep with him. This situation illustrates two aspects of the nature of seduction: first, the Germanist reverses the patriarchal notion of a submissive feminine role by adopting the masculine perspective and stating she is willing to start a sexual relationship with the narrator; second, the Germanist's femininity is taunting the narrator, showing him that she can be powerful and control her own decisions, proclaiming her sovereignty, as Baudrillard pointed out, seduction is "women's true being" (*Seduction* 8).

This empowerment evident in the Germanist continues as the novel progresses. Baudrillard describes femininity's power in seduction by confirming its "ability to turn appearances on themselves," (*Seduction* 8) a fact that explains the Germanist's distaste for skirts and other female attire, but also confirms her decision to have her bedroom as a "decadent mass of reds; a scarlet beadspread threaded with gold, and old Turkish carpet. . . . lampshades, adorned with tassels of red lace, [as if they] had escaped a Regency brothel" (*HF* 11), a space that evokes passion, sex and seduction. The Germanist is overpowering and in control

of her surroundings, not only with the narrator, but also with her fellow graduate classmates. As mentioned before, she is the one who initiates a relationship with the narrator. He adds that "It was clear, however, that she had fairly ferocious ideas of her own. She also had decided ideas about what should happen between [them] in bed" (10). According to the previous lines, the Germanist controls the relationship, and especially, the sexual act. For example, she uses the same blunt manner to tell the narrator to drop his trousers and to comment on the other graduates' papers, so she ended up being dreaded by her peers and with no close friends.

The Germanist's tools for seducing the narrator are not the typical ones because she is neither the feminine archetype of beauty and softness nor the *femme fatale*. She is actually described to be boyish and rude. Mike, the narrator's roommate, doubts the narrator's reasons for dating the Germanist because she is unattractive and unpleasant, so he asks the narrator of their conversations because he cannot imagine her being involved in a romantic relationship. The narrator answers that they talk about "everything. Her work. [His] work" (*HF* 18). The Germanist is not affectionate with the narrator, for she "never used any terms of endearment, never told [him] she loved [him], and never held [his] hand." (18). So, discarding good looks and an agreeable disposition, the Germanist seduced the narrator with her intellect and her controlling manners in bed.

In the same form as the Germanist plays with her sexuality in seductive terms by controlling and taunting the narrator and their relationship, the narrator and Paul Michel play the game of seduction that Baudrillard describes. The game consists of chasing and shying away, as the "seducer and seduced constantly raise the stakes in a game that never ends" (*Seduction* 22). The narrator initiates this game long before Paul Michel, since the French writer does not know he is being looked for. The narrator travels from England to France, and once he arrives in France, he searches for the writer in two cities. After these two characters meet, the narrator describes a passage of their relationship that closely resembles the game proposed by Baudrillard:

> Whenever I was put out, puzzled, locked away from [Paul Michel], he would immediately come towards me. When I prevaricated, he was direct. If I half spoke a thought he would finish my sentence. It was I who was sensitive, prickly, easily hurt. He knew things about me even when I had not explained myself. He always answered my real questions, the genuine demands, with uncanny intuition. (*HF* 111)

Now that the narrator has physically found and reached Paul Michel, they play an intellectual game because the narrator is obviously attracted and seduced by Michel's writing, even though the latter has not written in over ten years. As seen in the previous passage, Michel is the one who finishes the narrator's sentences

and the one who answers his questions. It seems that the writer is filling up the narrator's gaps. Michel is also enthralled by the narrator's interest and attentions. Though the narrator is not a writer of fiction like Michel, he is writing his thesis on Michel's novels, a fact that can be appealing to Michel's ego. Baudrillard affirms that seduction is "an ironic, alternative form, one that breaks the referentiality of sex and proves a space, not of desire, but of play and defiance" (*Seduction* 21). This can be seen in the relationship between the narrator and Paul Michel as they become seducer and seduced first, as a reader and a writer, and then as lovers in a homosexual relationship.

The game of seduction between the narrator and Paul Michel has two stages. First, Michel—the writer—creates something that makes the narrator—the reader—fall for him. This cannot be intentional because Michel is completely unaware of the narrator's existence until they meet in Clermont. The real seduction game occurs later because Michel is no longer a hypothetical person for the narrator. In Duncker's novel, once the narrator and Michel have become friends and the former visits the latter every day, Michel's doctor, someone who sees the events from the outside, notes how their relationship has changed and the implications of their actions. Dr. Vaury tells the narrator that he "come[s] here, courting [Michel] like a lover. What is going to happen to [Michel] when [the narrator] go[es]?" (*HF* 113). The narrator discards the doctor's warning and admits

to himself that "For years [his] life had already been dominated by Paul Michel" (113).

After they meet, the narrator comes up with a new challenge: to get Michel out of the mental hospital. Baudrillard notes that there is a "strategy of displacement" (*Seduction* 22) in seduction that means that there must be a change in the current balance of power in the seducer-seduced relationship. At first, the narrator is the one in charge, still convincingly rational to the rest. As the two main characters get to know more of each other, the situation changes. The displacement produced by seduction is not just about which character is in control or which character is subdued, but about the occurrence of the change. This example gives evidence that seduction can obscure the mind and make people behave irrationally, by dismissing any logical implications of the game and therefore losing control of any situation at hand.

The last two points of the previous paragraph will be further explained in the next section of this chapter, where I will analyze the reversal of roles as the main component of seduction as well as a recurrent motif present in *Hallucinating Foucault*. Baudrillard analyzes the word seduction as "*se-ducere*: to take aside, to divert from one's path" (*Seduction* 22) which calls for the displacement of positions and hierarchies of power. Thus, we will see how in one moment of the novel the narrator is in total control, and later it is Michel who is in charge of their relationship. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, to seduce is to lead,

and we will continue to see a change in the leading role among the characters of Duncker's novel.

Shift of Hierarchies and Reversal of Roles

Jean Baudrillard acknowledges that power seduces, but not entirely in the sense that it seduces because it can be controlling but because "power seduces by virtue of the reversibility that haunts it. . . . No more dominant and dominated, no more victims and executioners" (*Seduction* 45). Therefore, power becomes a seductive force that makes a relationship dynamic, for it implies a movement of hierarchies and reversal of roles. This point can be exemplified with the relationships depicted in *Hallucinating Foucault*: the relationship of the Germanist and the narrator, and the one of the narrator and Paul Michel. In the first case, though the Germanist is mostly in control, there is an instance when the narrator becomes the one in power. In the second case, the narrator starts controlling his relationship with Paul Michel, but their roles reverse, thus drawing a very fine line between sanity and madness.

As mentioned before, the Germanist actually initiates the relationship with the narrator, and most of the time she tells him exactly what to do. At the beginning of the novel she clarifies to him that she lives "in a two-room flat" so the narrator cannot move in, but she adds that she would "like to go to bed [with him]" (*HF* 9). The narrator does not give evidence of disliking this situation;

perhaps it is something completely new for him, and he is used to being the overpowering masculinity in previous relationships. It is clear that the narrator agrees and likes what he has with the Germanist. Baudrillard affirms that "power is realized according to a dual relation, whereby it throws a challenge to society, and its existence is challenged in return. If power cannot be 'exchanged' in accord with this minor cycle of seduction, challenge or ruse, then it quite simply disappears" (*Seduction* 45). The Germanist, by being in control and dictating what to do, is challenging the society that places men over women in gender relationships.

The narrator, aware of this situation, motivates a brief reversal of the power structure in their relationship. The night the narrator meets the Germanist's father, she shows evidence of letting him play the controlling role for a change. That night is memorable for the narrator because he witnesses how the Germanist changes in her overall behavior when she is in front of her father, a patriarchal authority. The narrator declares that she "was transformed from the intense, abrasive graduate into a merry child. She chatted, giggled, told stories, wolfed chips . . ." (*HF* 20). Amid the discussion of both his and her thesis, the narrator admits he does not know Paul Michel's whereabouts. This ignorance triggers the Germanist's fury because he does not know Michel is secluded in a mental hospital as she does. After her harsh words, she leaves for the restroom and appears moments later accepting the narrator's excuse that Michel's life is not a

means to interpret his writing. It is at this moment when she tells the narrator that if he loves Paul Michel, he must know where he is and try to save him if he is in danger.

After the narrator and the Germanist leave her father, she tells the narrator she is sorry for her sharp comments and he kisses her. The narrator remembers that moment as "the first time [he] made love to her rather than the other way around. . . . That night she felt brittle, fragile. . . . Like a defeated revolutionary she abandoned her sexual barricade. Something broke within her, gently, quietly, reluctantly" (*HF* 24). Here we see how these two characters exchange their roles and change the dynamics in bed in an unspoken act, letting the narrator be the one in control. In addition, in this scene the Germanist shows supposedly "feminine attitudes" assigned by society, like her volatile temper during dinner, and her softness and vulnerability during the sexual act, which indicates that the reversibility of roles happens in their relationship at different levels.

Baudrillard continues with the idea of power, seduction, and the reversibility of roles by saying that "Power seduces only when it becomes a challenge to itself; otherwise it is just an exercise, and satisfies only the hegemonic logic of reason" (*Seduction* 46). This idea can be exemplified with the relationship of the narrator and Paul Michel since it started as a challenge for the narrator and evolved and developed in the plot of the novel, needless to say that the hierarchies also changed in this relationship. At first, the narrator tries to be imposing and

controlling because he is meeting with Paul Michel, a man who had a history of violence, who attacked policemen, who sent a man to the hospital, who is a warden of a mental hospital and who had tried to escape from it several times. In short Michel is an insane individual and the narrator, in contrast, is a sane man.

During their first meeting, Michel is defiant and the narrator realizes that he must control the situation; otherwise he will lose any chance to get close to the writer. To show his command, the narrator exposes the reason why he is in Clermont looking for Michel. But the narrator loses his composure when he yells to the writer that he is not writing about him but about his fiction. The narrator recalls that just after this incident "Paul Michel looked at [him] with vindictive respect" (*HF* 95). Moments later, the narrator answers the writer in a rude manner due to Michel's provocative remarks. The narrator realizes that "[Michel's] whole face changed. The lines changed places, his eyes widened suddenly. He smiled" (95). Perhaps Michel's reaction is evidence of his sudden affinity for the narrator, a sign that the writer likes the narrator's personality because of his actions, or that he foresees the outcome of their relationship in the future. For several weeks after this encounter, the narrator is in control and Michel is submissive. The narrator brings small gifts to the writer, like cigarettes and sweets, which he uses to win Michel's confidence.

The narrator seduces Michel by showing him that he cares and *that he can* provide for his needs. The narrator seduces Michel with his constant

companionship since he is granted permission to visit the writer every day, for several hours, even on Sundays. The narrator gives the writer not only sweets and trinkets, but also his complete attention when Michel talks about his writing or about his illness. The narrator describes the days they spent together in the mental hospital as charged with "a sinister beauty" (*HF* 111), fact that proves that the narrator and Michel are immersed in the game of seduction, an action that represents "to be taken in by one's own illusion and [to] move in an enchanted world" (*Seduction* 69).

Of course the game changes later and Paul Michel gains control over the narrator. Seduction is not supposed to be an ironic situation, though it can be seen as such when the seducer becomes the seduced. Baudrillard formulates the following questions: "Doesn't the seducer end up losing himself in his strategy, as in an emotional labyrinth? Doesn't he invent that strategy in order to lose himself in it? And he who believes himself the game's master, isn't he the first victim of strategy's tragic myth?" (*Seduction* 98). The irony in the novel is that the narrator becomes more irrational than Michel, who is the madman confined to a mental hospital, losing control over the person who is seen by everybody as mentally unstable.

There is an event that marks the reversal of roles between the narrator and Michel. The night that they have permission to go out to town, they end up causing a fight inside a restaurant. After having spent the whole day together

outside the hospital, the narrator and Michel have dinner at "Quinze Treize." Part of their conversation is devoted to discuss the narrator's knowledge of Foucault's ideas about Bedlam.[19] As their discussion evolves, the narrator asks Michel if he could ask him about Foucault. Michel's negative answer, according to the narrator, is "a bullet, savage, furious" (*HF* 121). Michel is about to leave when a man behind pushes him, and they start a fight. Michel is dragged out into the corridor and the narrator goes after him. In the street, the narrator apologizes and Michel kisses him on the mouth. The narrator recalls how he felt as "Paul Michel was utterly calm and [he] was shaking with fear" (123). Three days later the narrator admits that Michel "had made no specific demands upon [him], and yet [the writer] demanded everything [the narrator] had; all [his] time, energy, effort, concentration. For something had significantly changed between [them] since the disastrous night out at Quinze Treize. The balance of power had shifted. [The narrator] was no longer in control of the affair and the outcome was radically in doubt" (123). The narrator clearly recognizes the change of direction of their relationship and accepts that now Michel is the one in control.

Paul Michel expresses directly what he wanted from the narrator once they reach their holiday destination and share the same bed. The narrator remembers how the writer "laid his cards on the table at once, without hesitation or

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[19] Bedlam is the popular name for the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, an insane asylum located in London. The hospital was notorious for cruel and inhuman treatment to its patients during the eighteenth century.

embarrassment" (*HF* 138). Michel tells the narrator that sex should not be an issue between them, so the narrator must join him in bed. The narrator is relieved yet disappointed but Michel tells him to "yield" (139), so the narrator lets himself go.

Baudrillard acknowledges that the challenge in seduction can drive people insane, an element which is part of the reversal of roles since seduction involves, as seen before, the change and rupture of power structures, which can be life changing for someone. Baudrillard affirms that the game of seduction produces a reciprocal sense of vertigo, "an insanity borne by the vertiginous absence that unites [the two people involved]. . . . it inaugurates a kind of insane relation, quite unlike relations of communication or exchange: a duel relation transacted by meaningless signs" (*Seduction* 82). In *Hallucinating Foucault* the theme of insanity and obsession plays the major role. In addition to Michel's mental history, there is a change of power between the narrator and Michel, which determines the rationality or irrationality in both characters.

Baudrillard's form of madness-inducing-seduction presents the seducer committing to the following rule: "I do not want to love, cherish, or even please you, but to *seduce* you—and my only concern is not that you love or please me, but that you are *seduced*" (*Seduction* 86), a rule that Paul Michel seems to follow in the novel. Because he is a diagnosed schizophrenic, Michel cannot handle emotions and close relationships as normal people do. Dr. Jacques Martel describes schizophrenics like Michel as

> incapable of loving. . . . They aren't like us. They are usually very perceptive. It's uncanny. They have a human dimension that is beyond the banality of ordinary human beings. They can't love you as another person would do. But they can love you with a love that is beyond human love. (*HF* 45)

With this description in mind, the reader of Duncker's novel realizes how Michel can easily play the seducer's role because he is far more perceptive than the rest, and he aims to attract readers with his work. The love between a writer and a reader does not have to be a romantic relationship, but a seductive game that invites the latter to become totally involved with the former.

When the narrator is finally able to locate Michel in France, he has taken very personally the promise he made to the Germanist to save Michel from danger. When he departs from Paris heading towards Clermont-Ferrand and hence towards his writer, the narrator remembers how he had felt at that moment, showing signs of obsession and lack of rationality:

> Looking back, I see now that I had become obsessed, gripped by a passion, a quest, that had not originated with me, but that had become my own. His handwriting, sharp, slanting, inevitable, had been the last knot in the noose. His letters had spoken to me with a terrible unbending clarity, had made the most uncompromising

> demands upon me. I could never betray those demands and abandon him. No matter who he had become. (*HF* 80)

Even Michel recognizes the narrator's state of mind as he tells the narrator that "only a madman would have come all the way to Clermont to find someone who had been incarcerated for nearly ten years. . . . Without knowing who you would find" (120-121).

The narrator becomes so blinded by his feelings towards Michel that he is no longer rational. Michel, the insane, is the one who makes decisions regarding the outcome of their relationship. When their vacation time is near the end, the narrator wants to keep Michel for himself and plans to obtain permission for the writer to permanently leave the mental hospital. Michel, in turn, tells the narrator "you are twenty-two and very much in love. I am forty-six and a certified lunatic. You are much more likely to be insane than I am" (*HF* 145). In the end, the roles change; Michel commits suicide days before returning to the hospital and the narrator has to face the death of his author, helped by the Germanist and Dr. Jacques Martel, who arrive in France to assist him with all the funeral arrangements.

Death: the End of the Affair

Baudrillard makes clear that seduction is an on-going game that can take one person to another person and so forth, with sex as merely a stage in the game

but not as the ultimate prize, for the real prize is to seduce and be seduced. But, as in any game, it must come to an end somehow, and Baudrillard points to death as the only sign of conclusion. Though death is inevitable, the players involved in the seductive game are not aware of their fate, which is why Baudrillard calls death "a rendez-vous, not an objective destiny" (*Seduction* 73). In this respect, there are three important deaths, two physical and one symbolic, in *Hallucinating Foucault* that mark the end of a seduction: the death of Michel Foucault, the death of Paul Michel and the end of the relationship between the narrator and the Germanist. These characters, as writers and readers, or as romantic partners, are all involved in the game of seduction, and the survivors have to face the end of the game and its consequences.

The death of Michel Foucault marks the end of Paul Michel's writing because Michel's muse and reader is gone for ever. This is noted by the Germanist early in the novel when she explains to the narrator the importance of Foucault in Michel's work. The Germanist affirms that for Paul Michel, Foucault's death in 1984 "was the end of writing. His reader was dead. . . . Why bother to exist if your reader is dead?" (*HF* 36). The narrator does not believe her and tells her that she has made everything up, so she challenges him to go to France and ask Michel personally.

The narrator finds out Michel's affirmative answer even before he meets the writer. In the letters that Michel wrote to Foucault, the former states that the

French philosopher is his muse. According to the narrator, Foucault is the person "who has more absolute power to constrain [Michel], or set [him] free" (*HF* 59). In another letter, one of the last that Michel wrote to Foucault, the writer admits to the philosopher that his greatest fear is to lose his reader, the person for whom he writes. Therefore, the Germanist was right; but the narrator does not want to let his writer, his muse, fade away in a mental institution. At last, the narrator asks Michel if he still has any more messages to send. The writer answers with a negative and adds "And what is there left for a novelist to do when he has sent out all his messages? . . . Rien que mourir" (151). Michel's answer is that there is nothing left but dying, and that is how the platonic affair between Michel and Foucault ended after the philosopher's death and how Michel's writing ended as well.

Baudrillard's concept of death as the end of seduction has an interesting nuance evident in the affirmation that "We seduce with our death, our vulnerability. . . . The secret is to know how to play with death in the absence of a gaze" (*Seduction* 83). Therefore, it seems that death can be both the end and the beginning of seduction. In the novel, the Germanist writes a letter to Michel as if the narrator had written it too. In it the Germanist tells the French writer that he had no right abandoning her and the narrator since they were his readers too, not only Foucault. The message of the Germanist's letter reminds the readers of Michel's letter to Foucault when the writer expresses that what he feared most was

"the loss of [his] reader, the man for who [he] wrote" (*HF* 72). However, the Germanist writes to Michel that she does not fear losing him because she will never let him go. She ends the letter saying that Michel "will always have all of [her] attention, all [her] love" (166). After death, and through Michel's writings, the game of seduction will continue in the Germanist, the narrator and other readers of his work who will keep "playing" by reading. In fact, death ended up immortalizing Michel and his work. Baudrillard uses the analogy of the death of movie stars to solidify immortalization through death. By being dead, a celebrity can be idealized because that person can remain perfect. The critic affirms that "*death itself shines by its absence*, that death can be turned into a brilliant and superficial appearance, that it is itself a seductive surface" (*Seduction* 97); thus, making the dead—a person, a work of art or a relationship—eternally perfect in the eyes of the others.

The narrator's involvement with Michel marks, to a certain extent, the end of his relationship with the Germanist, though this break is not described in the novel. The narrator tells the Germanist everything that happened with the writer when he comes back to England to finish his thesis. However, he does not let her know that he knows about "Michel's encounter with the boy on the beach" (*HF* 170). The narrator does not mention this episode because he respects that moment as a secret the Germanist did not want to reveal. The narrator and the Germanist were still somehow involved for a while back in England because the narrator

asked her to meet his parents again, but she refused "with unnecessary aggression" (171). The initial roles they played at the beginning of their affair seem to have continued for some time after Michel's death. The last pieces of information the reader have about them is that, with time, the narrator wins the Foucault Travel Prize and uses the money to travel. He later teaches in a London college, while the Germanist works in the Goethe-Schiller Archive in Weimar. They write to each other for over a year, but the narrator loses touch with her. The last thought the narrator devotes to the Germanist is his intention to buy the next book she publishes. One more time the reader-writer relationship is reinforced in Duncker's novel.

In the Germanist's letter to Michel, the relationship between writers and readers as seducers and seduced ones is one more time clarified because she expresses that Michel gave her "what every writer gives the readers he [or she] loves—trouble and pleasure" (*HF* 165). The reader-writer relationship becomes, then, a form of seduction, hazardous, alluring and yet gratifying. As seen before, Duncker's narrative describes different readers and writers who all play the game of seduction, reverse their roles of being the seducers and the seduced, and suffer after the death of their affairs. The game of seduction, as Baudrillard describes it, is intense, dangerous, engaging, and dynamic. The actions of reading and writing share these same traits. Patricia Duncker, in *Hallucinating Foucault,* presents this

game framed within the reader-writer relationship, a relationship that she describes and celebrates as well.

Conclusion: Readers and Writers Vindicated

> "Yes. I'm his reader. It's crucial that I see him. I can go no further with my work until I do see him. And even if he doesn't write anymore I am still his reader. I can't relinquish my role."
>
> (Patricia Duncker, *Hallucinating Foucault*, 79)

With *Hallucinating Foucault*, Patricia Duncker illustrates the complex relationship between readers and writers. In fact, the novel presents and develops various aspects of this relationship such as the way different readers perform the act of reading, the way writers create meaning, the way readers participate in this creation, and the way the seduction game is played by writers and readers. The three main characters of the novel, the narrator, Paul Michel and the Germanist, are at the same time readers and writers and form part of one of the two love triangles set in the plot—the other triangle is formed by Paul Michel, Michel Foucault and the narrator and the Germanist, these last two as the third side of the triangle. As readers, these characters feel strongly attached to a writer, be it Paul Michel or Michel Foucault. As writers, their aim is to study the author whom they are analyzing and to please him, comfort him, and acknowledge his creative genius. This reader-writer relationship is fueled by seduction, which is the game these characters play until the relationship finally dies. By writing *Hallucinating*

Foucault, Patricia Duncker has proved that the bond between readers and writers is a key topic in the literary field and that should be explored and celebrated.

Analyzing the characters as readers in the novel, I studied different reading processes, the obstacles the readers face and the diverse readers' interpretations. For example, the narrator encounters texts from different sources and he must learn to decipher such codes. Since he is narrating the story, there is more evidence of his reading process than of the others. As a graduate student, when he reads and analyzes Michel's novels, he is secure and feels at ease because he has read them many times. When the narrator encounters new texts, which range from the Germanist's cryptic notes written on the margins of books to Michel's letters to Foucault, he has a harder time trying to concretize the meaning of these writings. But the narrator is quite persistent in his reading process. Just as he has read Michel's novels countless times, he reads and re-reads the texts he has difficulty understanding until he reaches a concrete interpretation.

As the narrator develops meaning, he also understands the writer—be it the Germanist or Paul Michel. From the Germanist's notes, written comments and actions, the narrator visualizes an intellectual, yet a person who cannot maintain normal relationships easily because of her lack of social skills. The Germanist is uninhibited and speaks directly and bluntly as her written messages are short and sharp. From Michel's novels and letters, the narrator discovers a very lonely individual who writes what he believes in with precision and sincerity. When the

narrator meets Michel and spends several weeks with him, he is also able to read Michel, the man, as a text. The narrator is good at analyzing the writer's moods and sensibilities, one of the reasons why he ends up falling in love with Paul Michel.

Using the reader response theory presented in the thesis, one can recognize traits of different types of readers proposed by Wolfgang Iser. The real reader and the ideal reader are juxtaposed and thoroughly studied. This is important to point out because the complexity of the characters as readers gives them credibility and dimension as characters. The narrator, the Germanist and Paul Michel are real readers within a fictitious world. The Germanist, Paul Michel and Michel Foucault present traits of ideal readers within this same fictitious world. The Germanist's and Paul Michel's responses to different texts in the novel, a trait of real readers, have been recorded by the narrator, who is also another real reader. In addition, all of them exhibit the potential to understand the code of a particular writer, a trait of ideal readers.

Paul Michel's reading process is visualized by the accounts of his relationship with Michel Foucault. Though the French writer knows that his themes and the philosopher's were alike, the former admits that it is so because they were writing for each other, they were answering back with each new text what was exposed in the previous. Michel's own words and his unsent letters to Foucault are proof of this last assertion. Michel explains his relationship with

Foucault to the narrator by affirming that he considers it distant in physical terms, but very close in literary matter. Michel explains the reason for this relationship as he describes Foucault as his muse, not seeing him as a source of inspiration but as an intellectual companion or partner. Later, in his unsent letters to Foucault, Michel's reading process codes and recodes the messages as he writes the answers and questions that Foucault could have written if the philosopher had answered his letters.

The Germanist's reading process is seen as the narrator tries to analyze her writing, especially the notes she writes about daily routines and reminders in her apartment, and the notes she has written in the margins of Paul Michel's novels. Readers of the novel find out, at the same time as the narrator does, that the Germanist had met Paul Michel when she was ten years old, and that she had promised to read everything Michel would write. Readers realize that she keeps her promise, for she becomes one of Paul Michel's readers. The notes she writes on Michel's novels and the remarks she makes about the author evidence that she has analyzed and studied Michel's texts thoroughly. Therefore, due to this knowledge, the Germanist can make connections about Michel's life and writings before the narrator. She could discern from Michel's and Foucault's works that both French authors had some sort of secret relationship that was beyond the similarity of their themes. In a similar way, as Michel had written his love letters to Foucault, the Germanist is able to write a love letter to Michel where she foresees the possible

questions and even answers them. The Germanist and the narrator put her letter on Michel's coffin at the end of the novel.

When one analyzes the reader-writer relationship in *Hallucinating Foucault,* one of the most rewarding tasks for the reader is to fill in the blanks presented in the text. What is left unwritten and unsaid is always intriguing because these textual gaps or negations give the reader power to imagine and to generate his or her own meaning. In fact, the novel presents many situations in which the reader must decipher what a character meant when he or she said something, or when he or she left something unsaid. The meaning of the novel becomes clear as the reader connects the pieces of the puzzle created by Patricia Duncker, for *Hallucinating Foucault* demands the presence of an active reader.

In order to concretize meaning, any reader would have to consider the concept of Iser's implied reader, which acts as a bridge between the written text and the actual reader. The implied reader is the mechanism that would activate different questions that could be formulated during the reading process. In a few words, the implied reader is the pattern of structures an actual reader should consider in order to concretize the meaning presented in a narrative. Therefore, the way a text is written and constructed will provide the actual reader, via the implied reader, the necessary tools to gather meaning. If the text's message is given out bluntly, then the actual reader will not consider his or her reading process fructiferous or satisfying because the joy of reading mostly lies in the use

of imagination. The text must contain blanks and negations, so the actual reader fills in the gaps and solves out the contradictions.

Hallucinating Foucault has two strong points that entice the actual reader's reading process. First, Patricia Duncker cleverly managed to build up the suspense as the novel progresses. The actual reader sometimes knows as much as the narrator, and sometimes knows even less because the narrator has read Paul Michel's narrative and the actual reader has not. In Duncker's novel, the actual reader, as a companion, has to follow the narrator's steps in his journey searching for Paul Michel. The actual reader faces many blanks such as the narrator's dream and its indeterminacy, the lack of knowledge in Michel's fiction, the unmentioned names of two of the main characters and the Germanist's real motives behind her manners and actions. When the narrator finally finds Michel, more questions arise in the actual reader who has to concretize the relationship between the narrator and the writer, the sexual tension between them and the symbolism of their trip to Nice. Just when the novel seems to present a balance because the narrator has found Paul Michel and they become partners, there is a sudden twist in the action, which leads to an unexpected end, the second strong point of the novel.

Patricia Duncker surprises her readers when Paul Michel tells the narrator of his first love, the incident of the boy on the beach, a boy who was in fact a girl and who swore to read all his books and to look for him if he was in danger. The girl is the Germanist and suddenly many details and actions in the novel make

sense to the narrator and to the actual reader. With this fact, other blanks and the negations emerge. The actual reader, as well as the narrator, must assimilate the new knowledge and continue solving contradictions because, as a good thriller, there is still a lot to discover. In fact, the climax of the narrative takes place when the narrator finds out about the connection between Michel and the Germanist, almost at the end of the narration. After that, the unexpected death of Paul Michel occurs. The narrator can connect all the pieces of the puzzle. The mystery is unfolded, the reader fills in the last gaps, and the story ends.

I mentioned before that the three main characters were involved in one of the two love triangles in the novel, and that they were at the same time readers and writers. This aspect was best explained by analyzing the game of seduction in which they were "players." In Duncker's novel each character, as reader and writer, has appealed to each other on personal and intellectual levels. Paul Michel seduced the narrator and the Germanist through his narrative. The narrator seduced Paul Michel with his interest in the writer's work and his constant attentions. The Germanist seduced the narrator with her intellect and unpredictable behavior.

But seduction is more than obsession and conquest. According to Baudrillard, seduction reveals important changes in the structure of power and the type of relationship of the people involved in it. The game of *seduction implies* reversal of roles, shift in the hierarchies, and the repercussion of a literal or

symbolic death. In *Hallucinating Foucault* we find that the narrator—a man—is soft and submissive and that the Germanist—a woman—is controlling and self-willed. The narrator, a well-balanced individual, falls in love with Paul Michel, the schizophrenic, and the narrator loses his grip over reality and becomes blinded by his affection towards the writer, who ironically behaves with a very clear mind until he loses control right before his death. Michel's death signifies the end of his affair with the narrator and closes the narrative, for the game is over.

Michel Foucault, who was never an actual character, is a key figure within the plot and resolution of the novel. He is part of the other love triangle depicted in the story, with Paul Michel and Michel's readers. Foucault's death led to Michel's end of writing, even though the Germanist and the narrator wanted to bring the French writer back to his former productive and creative self after Foucault's death. However, Michel's mental instability led him to commit suicide. At the end, the Germanist and the narrator still remained Michel's faithful readers, even after his death. Foucault is limited to a silhouette or shadow behind Michel, a hallucination in the narrator's final dream that he describes as "The shape of a man, a long way off, behind Paul Michel, [which] glimmers through the smoke of the stubble fires" (*HF* 172).

In the analysis of the reader-writer relationship in *Hallucinating Foucault*, I was able to illustrate how readers and writers are committed to an active and creative relationship and how they share a romantic bond that fuels the reading

and writing processes. During the study and exploration of the reader-writer relationship, I encountered difficulties and satisfactions. The lack of bibliography on the specific subject of this relationship was a challenge to be surpassed but, at the same time, a motivation to keep going in order to fill the gaps. Two critics who best served the aim of this thesis were Wolfgang Iser and Jean Baudrillard, whose theories worked as a framework to visualize this relationship and to incorporate my views in that respect. As seen in this thesis, reading and writing require order and tension. Iser provided the order with the careful analysis of the different types of readers and the structural pattern of the reading process, and Baudrillard provided the tension with his theory on seduction and his views of power and shifting hierarchies.

Hallucinating Foucault exemplifies well the objectives I started out with. The characters present the traits of the types of readers proposed by Iser and their reading processes are documented by the narrator. There are many textual gaps and negations which are clarified by both the narrator and the actual reader of the novel. Finally, the novel presents rich examples of the reversal of hierarchies and literal and metaphorical deaths that are part of the seduction game played by readers and writers.

Exploring this subject is important because the literary world has placed more emphasis on the study of the writer. Critics such as Iser have changed this conception and studied the reader and his or her reading experience. Still, these

two literary actors are united and, as proven in this thesis, share a strong link which vindicates their relationship in the eyes of critics. An issue that was not touched in this thesis is Michel Foucault's influence in the writing of *Hallucinating Foucault* by Patricia Duncker because it would have taken my analysis into a completely different path.

Patricia Duncker's novel interconnects the acts of reading and writing. Therefore not only the role of the writer but also the role of the reader is relevant within her discourse. Paul Michel voices the writer's task, and in doing so, he expands the reader-writer relationship. The writer tells his reader: "I make the same demands of people and fictional texts, petit—that they should be open-ended, carry within them the possibility of being and of changing whoever it is they encounter. Then it will work—the dynamic that there must always be—between the reader and the writer" (*HF* 107-108). Thus, readers and writers move together because each group needs the other. They transform themselves and each other in this dynamic process. There are no writers without readers just as there are no readers without writers. In this relationship of mutual nurturing, both literary figures play their roles.

Hallucinating Foucault celebrates the fact that writers create texts for their readers and that readers pine for their writers. *Hallucinating Foucault* is, then, a tribute to a relationship sometimes taken for granted but that is fervent and passionate, a relationship that becomes meaningful to both readers and writers.

Hence, *Hallucinating Foucault* reveals the drama of readers and writers, seen as partners or players, who are part of a relationship that respectively feeds their imaginative and creative minds.

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Appendix A

List of Works by Patricia Duncker

As a writer:

1992 *Sisters and Strangers: An Introduction to Contemporary Feminist Fiction* (Blackwell)

1996 *Hallucinating Foucault* (Serpent's Tail)

1997 *Monsieur Shoushana's Lemon Trees* (Serpent's Tail)

1997 *Insides Out: Stories by Susan Dodd, Patricia Duncker and Ruth Moon Kempher* (Kings Estate Press)

1999 *The Doctor: A Novel* (Ecco Press)

2002 *Writing on the Wall: Selected Essays* (Pandora/Rivers Oram Publishers)

2002 *The Deadly Space Between* (Ecco Press/HarperCollins)

2003 *Seven Tales of Sex and Death* (Picador)

2006 *Miss Webster and Cherif* (Bloomsbury)

As an editor:

1990 *In and Out of Time: Lesbian Feminist Fiction* (Onlywomen Press)

1996 *Cancer: Through the Eyes of Ten Women* (Pandora)

2002 *The Woman Who Loved Cucumbers: Short Stories by Women from Wales* (Honno)

2004 *Mirror, Mirror* (Honno)

Appendix B

Patricia Duncker's Prizes and Awards

1997 Dillons First Fiction Award *Hallucinating Foucault*

1997 McKitterick Prize *Hallucinating Foucault*

1997 PEN/Macmillan Silver Pen Award (shortlist) *Monsieur Shoushana's Lemon Trees*

2007 Commonwealth Writers Prize - Eurasia Region, Best Book (shortlist) *Miss Webster and Chérif*