

**A HERMENEUTIC DESCRIPTION OF A THERAPEUTIC INTERVIEW USING
READER RESPONSE CONCEPTS FROM LITERARY THEORY**

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ABSTRACT

Certain approaches in the discipline Psychology, use the term narrative to describe how they work. Upon investigation one finds that the term narrative is seldom informed from Literary Theory, the background from which it originated. Instead, other disciplines that were also influenced by Literary Theory are invariably used as a means of crossfertilisation, e.g. the work of Geertz from an anthropologist background. Therapists make use of techniques described in the theories in an attempt to come to an understanding of the interactions in the therapy session.

Some of the later theories emanating from Literary Theory appear to very useful for opening new ways of research in psychology, especially because some of them already come from an interdisciplinary background. This research attempts to identify useful theories and then apply them within a hermeneutical background in a therapeutical session. Theoretical work on ambiguity, recent research on foregrounding and defamiliarization and also the research in psychonarratology appear to be eminently useful for coming to a deeper understanding of the processes that take place in a therapeutic environment. It is thought that these theories could be of use because they have been 'tested' against the experiences of real readers reading texts. As novels differ from reports and washing lists, therapeutic settings differ from discussions. A novel is

a cultivated variant of a report, and a therapeutic conversation is a cultivated version of a chat.

These theories then, were applied to a real therapeutic session. The therapists who participated were interviewed on the session and on their reactions to certain 'readings' made by them during the session. The purpose of the interview was to obtain an understanding of their interpretation of what had happened during that session. The questions, reactions, observations and reflections of the session constitute the text of this research. The generated text was then reread from the perspective of each of the theories. The data was collected and interpreted. The interpretation focusses on the therapists 'reading' or understanding of the session and in the process, leads the therapists and researcher to further levels of understanding.

In conclusion, it was found that the theories were indeed useful as they were able to point out how certain stylistics of language and situation in the therapeutic session had led to hermeneutic or interpretive processes and also how these processes were perceived or experienced on reflection by the therapists.

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ABSTRACT

The term “narrative” in Psychology seldom appears to be informed from Literary Theory, the background from which it originated. Some recent theories from Literary Theory appear to very useful for opening new ways of research in psychology, coming from an interdisciplinary background. This research attempts to identify how theories such as ambiguity, foregrounding and defamiliarization and psychonarratology can be applied within a hermeneutical background to a therapy session and to come to a deeper understanding of the processes that take place in a therapeutic environment, because they have been ‘tested’ against the experiences of real readers reading texts.

The therapists who participated, were interviewed on a session and on their reactions to certain ‘readings’ made by them during the session. The questions, reflections, observations and interpretation focus on the therapists’ ‘reading’ or understanding of the session and in the process, lead the therapists and researcher to further levels of understanding.

Key words: Narrative Psychology, Reader Response Theory, Psychonarratology, defamiliarization, counselling

INTRODUCTION

There are many ways of thinking and speaking about being involved in a process of therapy. This paper is an attempt at coming to a deeper understanding of the therapeutic journey by researching the language processes (Van der Merwe, 1995) using theories from the discipline of literary science and more specifically the schools researching the role of readers reading. In this paper, the process of reading is used as an analogy for the process of therapy, in the hope that it may be a useful way of observing and describing some of the processes influencing a therapeutic intervention. The advantage of using the reading analogy is that reading is 'slower' than the therapy process and can be repeated – the text remains the text although the reading and interpretation may change each time – therefore giving more 'time' to the participant to describe some of the processes in which he or she was involved. In both activities, the reading of a text is involved, a physical text in the first and a discourse in the second (Ricoeur, 1973). In the first, it is experienced by the reader in the reading process and in the second during a therapeutic conversation between therapist and client. This will be explained in greater detail below.

In this paper it is my intention to focus on those textual devices by which the author may appeal to the reader's (cultural) knowledge and to which the reader is bound to respond by reconstructing the appeal (Van Peer, 1986). In this endeavour, selected devices identified in literary research and through hermeneutics, will be used to investigate whether they are applicable to a therapeutic conversation.

In order to do this I will discuss my reasoning for this intervention, then describe applicable literary tools, after which I will give a short explanation of the hermeneutical method I will use and a description of the results of the endeavour. Finally, I will point out some conclusions generated from the research.

THE THEORY

Anderson (1997) describes therapy as dialogical conversation and conversation as ‘more than simply talking’ (Anderson, 1997, p. 111), as it aims ‘to create new meaning and understanding mutually’ (Anderson, 1997, p. 110) in a created dialogical space through speech acts (Anderson, 1997).

Therein lies a similarity with the work of literary scholars researching the role of the reader, e.g. in reception theory, initiated by Iser (Du Plooy, 1986; Du Plooy, Viljoen & De Lange, 1992), reader response theory (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2001) and the dialogic theory of Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1981a). Van Peer (1986, p. 184), for example, calls literature ‘a patterned form of interaction between participants, having its own ... qualities and prerequisites It is a pattern of very high complexity...’. Individuals will according to communal plans, social needs and aims string together speech acts in a specific ‘pattern-like quality’ (Van Peer, 1986, p.183). According to these, one can distinguish whether the content is technical, scientific or artistic. Van Peer points out that in order ‘for author and reader to successfully engage in literary communication, some common ground is an absolute prerequisite’, which he describes as cultural knowledge about those specialized speech act patterns (Van Peer, 1986, p. 184).

Both the reading of a literary text and the involvement in a therapeutic process (i.e. the ‘reading’ of annunciations) are therefore self-conscious, reflective (reflexive?) and intentional processes, are highly stylized and structured and usually have a specific purpose. In other words, therapy and literature are both the result of craftsmanship, in which artistic expression is restricted to a medium (paper and therapy room) and set of rules (language and ethics) on purpose, in order to open new possibilities for the readers. Sometimes the reader or client participates in the exercise, although the process itself may not be pleasurable or comfortable.

Both Anderson (1997) and Van Peer (1986) point to the influence of society on the activity, whether it be a conversation, or a reading. Both need a common ground or dialogical space in

order for communication to take place. Ricoeur (1973, 1994) supplies the link as to why hermeneutics can be applied to both a therapeutic intervention as well as a literary text.

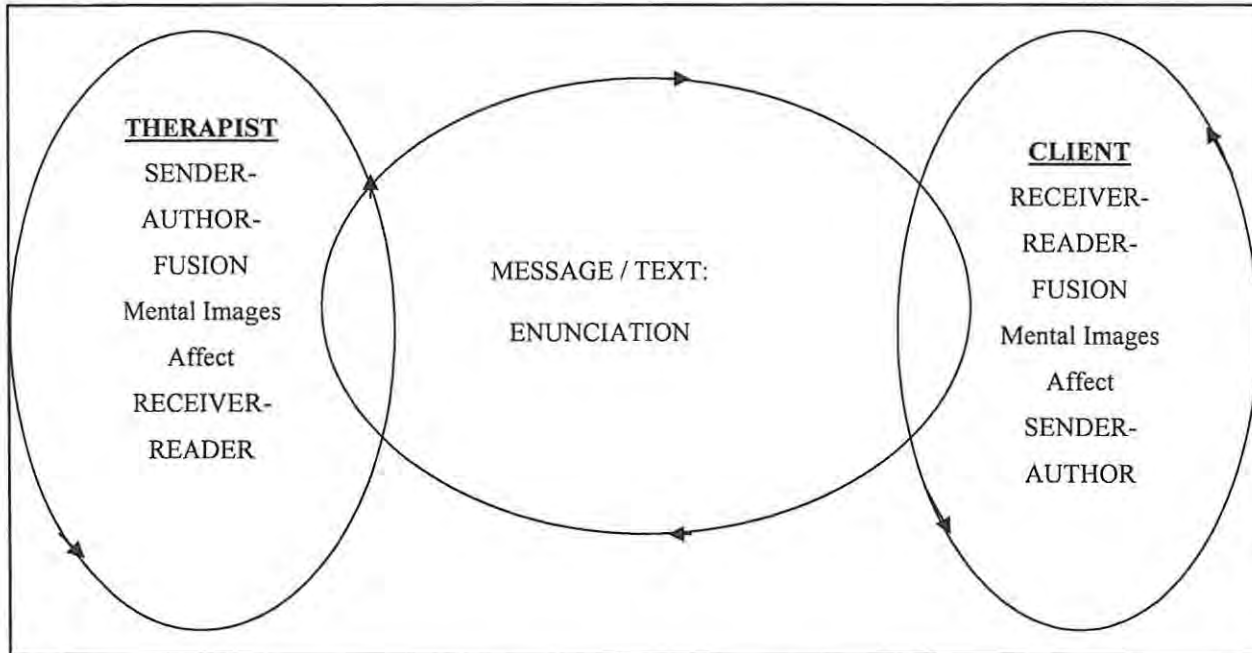
Hermeneutics can be applied to a literary text, more specifically to the discourse involved, and also to meaningful action when it is 'captured' (Ricoeur, 1973). It has become recognized that discourse is an action, and also that human action is a speaking one. Hermeneutics therefore, focuses on texts, but also on enduring events, institutions and personages (fictive, real, social) (Ricoeur, 1994).

The social aspect highlights why critical theory is useful as the metatheoretical stance about this research (Morrow, 1994). It supports interpretive research in the social sciences and especially the problem of interpreting meanings in social life (Morrow, 1994). It accepts that social 'facts' are created and recreated by humans and that we have the ability to change our behaviour in response to knowledge about society and critical theory is therefore post empiricist (Giddens, 1994). It is concerned with the norms of society, e.g. values and what ought to be, and is therefore critical of society. It wants to be socially responsible. Because critical theory is multidisciplinary, it also tries to involve all other segments of social or humanistic science into this endeavour, including psychology (Van Niekerk, 1992).

Reason and Ethics: Language is the medium in the process of reading and listening and as such, the communication model can be applied, i.e. that of sender – message – receiver. This model may also be described in another way, that is as: author – text – and reader. 'Message', then becomes synonymous with 'text'. This language process is more complicated in a communication session between two speakers – such as a therapist and a client – than a reader and text, because the process is reversed the whole time. The author can become the reader and the reader the author as utterances follow on utterances. This movement is diagrammatically illustrated in Figure 1 by the concentric circle existing between two participants involved in a therapeutic process which demonstrates the changing flow in the creation of the meaning. There

is also a circle surrounding each participant which reflects their changing role in the construction of meaning from sender/author to receiver/reader. As the arrows suggest, the communication process is active and fluid.

Figure 1: Basic example of the application of the communication model to a therapeutic engagement



The focus in this research is on the therapist and how he or she interprets and listens to enunciations from a client, and how he or she may engage in the process of making sense of such a conversation using ‘reading theory’ as a means of understanding the process. The specific theories of value here are theories from Su (1994) on ambiguity; Miall (1988, 1989, 1990, 1993, 1995, 1998a, 1998b), Miall and Kuiken (1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1996, 1998) on the influence of defamiliarisation on a reader; and that of Bortolussi and Dixon (2001, 2003) on the cognitive processes of readers whilst they are reading. The value of both Miall and Kuiken (1995), and Bortolussi and Dixon (2001) is that their theories have evolved from the experiences reported by real or live readers (as opposed to ‘implied readers’, which will be discussed below under ‘Background’ in the section on theory).

Whether 'reading processes' are at play in a therapeutic situation, was researched qualitatively in this research by interviewing two therapists about the processes they themselves, had engaged in during a therapeutic intervention and in that way to assist them to be more aware of the interpretive processes through which therapists and clients construct meaning in a therapeutic space.

Background: The theories used in this research come from a broad group relating to the reader oriented literary studies specifically developed after World War II in Germany and other European countries. This family of theories has become more popular in English speaking countries since the 1980's. Generally, they focus on the reader's productive role in constructing meaning during the reading process. Proponents of this approach are the Russian Formalists (e.g. Sklovsky) and Czech Structuralists (e.g. Mukarovsky) from about 1917 and onwards (Du Plooy, 1986). Some of the contributors of this period have only been rediscovered fairly recently in the Western World e.g. Bakhtin (1981a, 1981b, 1993, 1994) and Voloshinov (1929).

Du Plooy (1986) describes other trends that have developed from these early approaches. An important contribution was made in the groundbreaking work of Jauss in the late sixties (Du Plooy, 1986). He discussed the influence of the 'horizon of expectations' or the history of aesthetic expectations, but in the process placed the emphasis firmly on the reader. After him, followed the influential writings of Wolfgang Iser, which became known as the Reception Theory and focussed on the interaction between text and reader. He developed the concept of an 'implied reader', a text-based concept of the reader. This became a standard concept in literary theory, but in trying to solve problematic issues simply added to a growing list of more (Du Plooy, 1986; Malan, 1983, 1983a; Senekal, 1983).

Du Plooy (1986) also discusses the contribution of Roland Barthes whose research focussed both on the importance of narrative as well as on how interpretation of a text takes place. He introduced the idea that a reader not only absorbs a text passively, but actually produces the text.

The concept of the open text comes from him. A text is not just an utterance, a telling, but a saying, an enunciation. Therefore, there are different levels of meaning to be found in a text, as a text does not consist only of a collection of signs, but has a vertical connection, at a deeper level, to the narrative. The levels he discerns are (i) the informative, (ii) the obvious and (iii) the obtuse meaning. The last is larger and deeper than culture or knowledge makes possible.

Reception Theory was reconfigured by Reader-Response Theory in the English literary world. This approach still focused on the hypothetical responses of 'ideal' or 'universal' readers, in contrast to earlier theories in which the focus had been on hypothetical readers. However, a turn was observed in the work of Holland (1975) and Fish (1980). They are examples of scholars who started validating hypotheses on reader reactions by using real readers. Following from them came the work of literary theorists like Miall (1988), Bortolussi and Dixon (2001, 2003) and Van Peer (1986). These theorists also teamed up with researchers in other disciplines, such as psychology, to reach deeper understandings of the reading process.

This research will concentrate mostly on the theories of Miall and his co-researcher Kuiken, as well as on those of Bortolussi and Dixon and also on Su. The work of Miall (1989) and Miall and Kuiken (1994a, 1994b) is useful because it highlights the reports of readers about the affect/effect on them of the code while reading the text. Bortolussi and Dixon (2001, 2003) again give attention to the mental processes at work in the reading process.

The reasons therefore for the value of these theories to psychology and to therapeutic sessions, lie firstly in their multidisciplinary origins. In both the Miall and Kuiken, and Bortolussi and Dixon teams, a psychologist plays an important part in developing the theory about psychological aspects of reading. Secondly, as was stated above, the theories were developed from the responses of real readers. The cognitive processes and/or arousal which influence emotions, may not only be analogous to what is happening to therapists (as readers) but also to clients (as readers) in a therapeutic session. Thirdly, the narrative approach in therapy focuses on

the stories, or narratives that clients bring to the conversation (Anderson, 1997; White, 1995, 1997; White & Epston, 1990). The literary theories point out that an understanding of the role of the stylistics of text (or surface or external structure) is just as important as the deep (internal) structures that they cover. They contain the code that guides the reader to a deeper understanding of the text, or for that matter mislead the reader (Du Plooy, 1986; Eco, 1979; Gottdiener, 1995; Van Peer, 1986; Van Peer & Chatman, 2001, Van Zyl, 1982). Finally, the theories point out the value to psychologists of doing multidisciplinary research.

Additionally, it was thought that theories on how ambiguity contributes to the reading process should also receive some attention as a possible stimulus in the therapeutic session to continue with the conversation. Su (1994) raises the interesting perspective of how ambiguity in language becomes a driving force in the process of reading and contributes to defamiliarisation.

THE HERMENEUTIC FOCUS

The theories are used in this research in order to come to an understanding of the hermeneutical process of constructing meaning when the therapist or client makes a 'reading' of the utterances of the other. What is meant by hermeneutics will be discussed in greater detail later under the heading 'The research process'. In hermeneutics, the aim is to understand how a text can be read or 'decoded' and there are many theories which contribute to this process (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003; Eco, 1979; Ricoeur, 1973, 1984, 1994; Thiselton, 1992). As pointed out in critical theory, this hermeneutical process cannot be isolated from its wider context – the social context and the reciprocity of reading on society and society on reading, and especially for research and society. (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000; Giddens, 1976, 1994; Gottdiener, 1995; Morrow, 1994). In order to make this focus clear, attention will be given to the specific hermeneutical processes implemented in this theory. A more detailed discussion of the literary theories employed will follow. In addition a short description will be provided of how a text was

created from a therapy session, and this will be followed by a more detailed discussion of the reading.

Hermeneutical considerations: The understanding that comes from the field of hermeneutics is useful for illuminating a variety of processes, which take place concurrently, as a text is being read. These processes are not static, but circular and yet progressive (cyclonic) (the hermeneutic cycle rather than circle?). For the sake of this argument, three hermeneutic foci are distinguished for this research from the work of Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000). The first is a (i) focus on the author (which we will call level I), and which then progresses to (ii) an investigation of the text (level II) and then (iii) to the relationship of the reader with the text (level III).

Several sub areas can be distinguished in the processes described above.

- (i) Under level I research of the elements of history which had an influence on the author / writing process, can be included,
- (ii) Under level II the following sub processes can be discerned: an endeavour to understand interpersonal perception (inside of actions); an interpolation of events; an existential understanding of situations; as well as a narrative and metaphorical analysis.
- (iii) This makes it possible under level III to allow a questioning of the text to take place, which leads to a fusion of horizons and to a process of discovering the hidden meaning of the text. It ends with a process of suspicion which leads the reader on an inward path – into the hidden depths of his/her own psyche. As this cycle of the spiral is completed so it initiates the start of a another cyclical path that is inevitably enhanced by its predecessor (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000).

The term ‘fusion of horizons’ refers to the alternation of moving into an unfamiliar reference world and then back again into one’s own reference system in order to come to an understanding of an unfamiliar reference system. This coming to an understanding leads to a

gradual revising and possible enrichment of one's own reference system (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000).

The focus of this research lies at the third level described previously, in which attention is given to the relationship between the reader and the text. How can the questioning of the text possibly lead to a fusion of horizons and then to the hermeneutics of suspicion – the inward journey of the reader? In order to look at this aspect of hermeneutics in more detail, theory coming from the research of Su (1994), the work of Miall (1988, 1989, 1990; 1993) and Miall and Kuiken (1994a; 1994b; 1995, 1996, 1998) and the work of Bortolussi and Dixon (2001, 2003) on how real readers read, is used as possible ways of understanding this process.

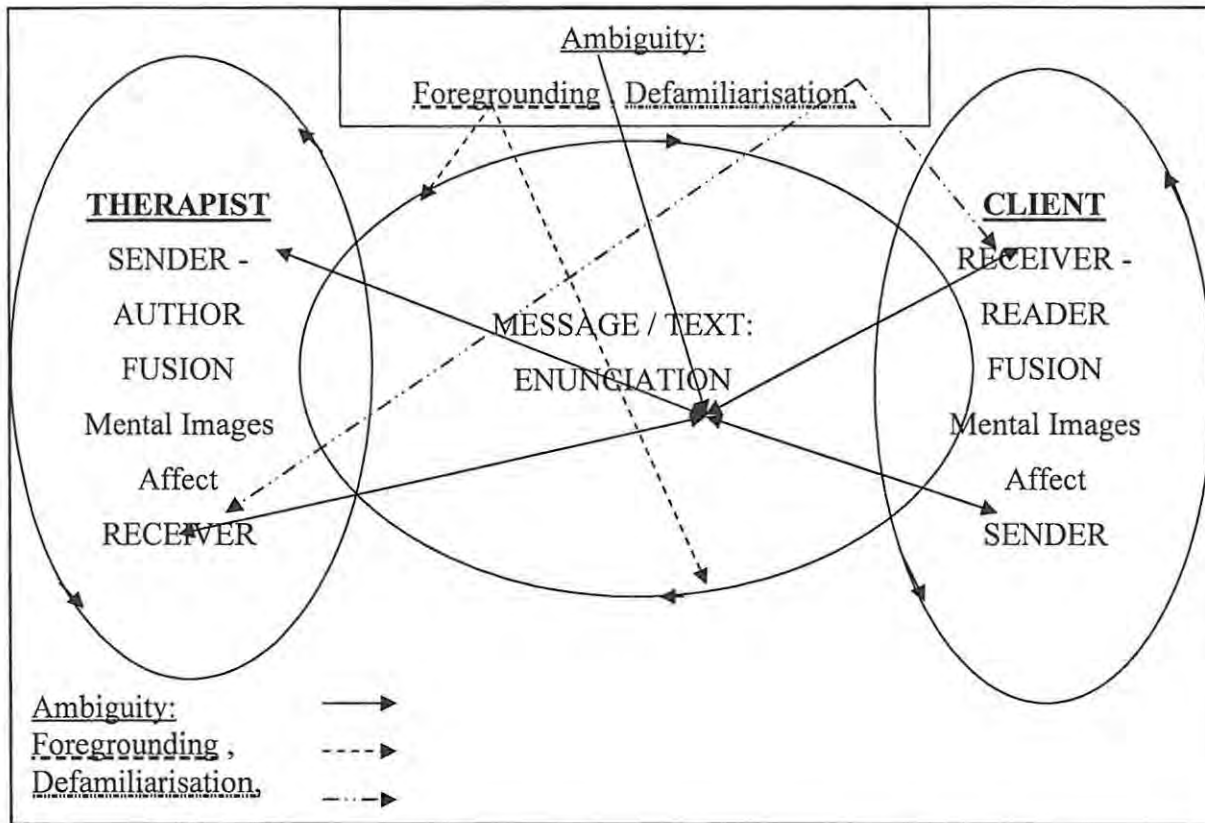
The literary theories: Su (1994) describes how ambiguity is interwoven with the situation and text, and contributes to foregrounding. Miall and Kuiken (1994a; 1994b; 1995, 1996, 1998) describe how foregrounding and defamiliarisation influence the reading process and also the affect of (affect) the reader. Bortolussi and Dixon (2001, 2003) again describe how a reader engages with projected mental images of the narrator, the characters as well as the plot of a narrative.

It is useful to combine the theories of Su (1994), Miall and Kuiken (1994a; 1994b; 1995, 1996, 1998) and Bortolussi and Dixon (2001, 2003). Su and Miall and Kuiken's work focuses on how the text / message influences the reading process at the level of dialogue / utterances in the text, which come anew to the reader/listener while Bortolussi and Dixon discuss how a reader, or hearer, makes sense and participates in order to create a reading. In this case, reader or 'hearer' can refer to either therapist or client depending on who is at the receiving end of the message / text. The first focus will therefore be to look at how stylistic aspects in a conversation, in the message, affect/effect the 'hearer' and the second focus will be to look at what internal dialogues lead the 'hearer' or receiver to react.

The processes are presented diagrammatically in Figure 2. The arrows point to the areas which are affected by these processes. The influence of ambiguity includes the text as well as both author and reader as therapist and client, and as the arrows indicate, this effect can originate with both text and role-players. Foregrounding refers primarily to the text and defamiliarisation to the reaction of the reader (therapist and client) to the text.

Two stylistic aspects will receive attention, as per Figure 2. The first is ambiguity and the second is foregrounding and defamiliarisation. Su (1994) in her monograph on ambiguity gives a useful discussion of the first point. Ambiguity is an aspect of a text that defies the efforts of the reader to discern the inner meaning of a text. The work of Miall (1985, 1988, 1998a,b), Miall and Kuiken (1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1996, 1998) and Miall and Dobson (2001) will form the basis for the discussion of the second aspect, foregrounding, which in contrast to the discussion on ambiguity gives an understanding of why a fusion of horizons can take place (the terms are explained below). Defamiliarisation is the reaction of the reader to foregrounded text (Miall & Kuiken, 1994a, 1994b, 1998). The reaction of the reader also supplies the link to the work of Bortolussi and Dixon (2001, 2003). The work of Bortolussi and Dixon (2001, 2003) is important in assisting us in understanding how the process becomes an inner or inward journey for both therapist or/and client.

Figure 2: Influence of Ambiguity, Foregrounding and Defamiliarisation on the reading of a text



Language made difficult: Ambiguity as foregrounding – Su

The reader is not always faced with a text containing a simple clear message. Su (1994) points out that the reader is involved proactively in reading and therefore by actively contributes to the ambiguities in the text and even to misunderstandings arising from interpretation. As such, ambiguity is a pragmatic consideration. The reader is also guided by the context of the reading, which can also contribute to ambiguity. The reader therefore, has to become actively involved in the hermeneutical process in order to come to an acceptable understanding.

Ambiguity, as a concept, has received attention from various disciplines with diverging results. The term is useful for this discussion because of aspects in language that foreground text. From the discussion it will become clear that ambiguity entails more than just linguistic (textual and stylistic) aspects. Ambiguity needs special attention because it is so pervasive in everyday

language and can take place at various levels, at the lexical and semantic levels of a text and at the abstract and also particularistic levels (e.g. words of a specific century). Finally, it takes place at the contextual level, where 'author' and 'reader' interact (Su, 1994).

Ambiguity is therefore not a linguistic phenomenon alone, but also a pragmatic phenomenon that is 'realized in context and through contextual interpretation' (Su, 1994, p. 43). It becomes evident 'when two or more distinct meanings, or readings are tenable in a given context, rendering choice between the alternatives an uncertain one.' (Su, 1994, p. 55). Ambiguity can be distinguished from double/multiple meanings in that ambiguity is a more specific phenomenon, a hyponym of multiple meaning, or a form of 'integrated multiple meaning' (Su, 1994, p. 111). It involves a definite and finite number of possibilities within a given context.

Ambiguity can become fore grounded text, if one understands foregrounding as referring to a 'linguistic or semantic pattern, word usage or creation, or any aspect of language that has been thrust into prominence so that the reader's attention is attracted to that aspect' (Su, 1994, p. 84). Ambiguity in this sense can be a form of foregrounding or be fore grounded itself. A fore grounded part of a text is the most arresting and raises the question, 'What is the point?'. Ambiguity, where it is fore grounded, invites a reader to try to interpret and to find some coherence in meaning (Su, 1994). A more detailed discussion on foregrounding will follow below.

Where ambiguity is in a 'context of situation', the following categories are brought to bear: a) the relevant features of participants, such as the verbal and non-verbal action of participants; b) relevant physical objects of a period and c) the effects of verbal action. Some of these aspects are very context specific, e.g. should they be related to a specific era, such as the 19th Century, in which ambiguity may arise because the reader may not understand the conventions and presuppositions of that period (Su, 1994).

The reader has a role to play in 'bringing' ambiguities to life. Faced with ambiguity, the reader has to start a process of negotiation with the text in order to extract its meaning. This negotiation includes the meaning of linguistic signs as well as their communicative force for the reader. This process of interpretation takes place as a back and forth motion between formulation and modification. Text and reader are interdependent for a meaningful reading. The act of reading begins with a specific individual at a specific place at a specific time. A diversity of readings are, therefore, possible when conducted by given readers on given occasions (even a single reader reading the same text on different occasions). Each reading could thus be described as a token-reading. But the term 'token-reading' suggests that this act of reading is not just an idiosyncratic affair. In the midst of the variant multiple interpretations is an area of shared interpretations. This area can be called type-reading and the notion underlying it is the notion of validity (Su, 1994).

From this discussion it is clear that the reader of a text is often faced with many possibilities from which he/she has to make choices. It could be that the text is not clear linguistically, but it could also be that the reading is dependent on the background of the reader, his/her outlook and experience, as well as the era in which he/she is living.

Emotional language: the influence of stylistics on the reader – Miall and Kuiken

Miall, and Miall and Kuiken, have since 1985 made an extensive contribution by researching the involvement of the real reader in the reading process (as opposed to the text-implicit reader). Attention is given here to some of their relevant articles.

Miall and Kuiken (1996) build their theory on a psychobiological model which emphasizes the relationship between the art form and the arousal experienced by the reader. They set out to describe this relationship empirically (Miall, 1990; 1993; Miall & Kuiken, 1994a; 1994b; 1995). Miall (1988, 1989, 1990) finds that emotion, as the result of arousal, plays an important role in the reading process as a bridge between the text and the reader, i.e. the self. Texts address the readers through feeling. The reading of a text involves active participation from the reader; that is

the reader is required to engage with a text emotionally as opposed to simply reading an idea / fact (Miall, 1998b). Texts are the encoding of feeling and potential. They ‘situate the reader in relation to complex modes of experience, memory and social understanding’ (Miall, 1998b, p.5). Although some codes may evoke certain standard or universal feelings, e.g. unhappiness at the death of a loved one, other codes may have culturally-specific features that make them difficult to understand for a reader from another culture, e.g. the use of idioms.

Miall and Kuiken (1998) emphasize that the difference between a text and a literary text therefore lies in the encoded emotion. To them this distinction is important in order to discern between an informational text and a literary text. This distinction is called ‘literariness’, which is not just an aspect of either a convention or a set of text properties (Miall & Kuiken, 1998). They point out that in reading a literary text the reader becomes aware of the type of text being read through the recognition of poetic features. In this approach, they follow the lead of theorists like Mukarovsky (1964) and Havranek (1964). The purpose of these features is to making the literature strange and in so doing, to lengthen the perception of the reader, to see and hear more vividly. It is this ‘strangeness’ in the text that stimulates affect as the stylistic feature cuts across the meaning being developed, e.g. the use of metaphors and / or alliteration (Miall, 1998b). Affect, according to Miall (1989), plays a leading role in guiding the reading experience, as emotions are associated with images rather than with propositions. Why affect can play this role is because it is self-referential, cross-domain and anticipatory (Miall, 1989, 1998a,b; Miall & Kuiken, 1994a,b).

Miall tries to explain how affect plays this role in the following way: A striking passage – an example of defamiliarization – arouses feeling, which leads to the reader to work towards retrieving experiences, memories or ideas that provide a new context for understanding the story so far. Once this recontextualisation has taken place, the reading of the story becomes more efficient (Miall, 1998)

Not only affect plays a role in the reading process as was stated above. Miall raises these following pertinent questions about reading:

How is it that readers can sense a direction, a possible future meaning, from a given sentence? What are its causes, and what are the inferential processes initiated? How does the sense of a whole arise, and from what aspects of a text? And what is the relationship between these two levels of response, the local and the global? (Miall, 1995)

He points out the important role played by anticipation in conjunction with affect in the reading process. In entering into a narrative situation, a reader may be faced by a range of complementary or contradictory possibilities very quickly. He or she has to keep several possibilities in mind the whole time because of the influence these have on the outcome of the story as well as its meaning. The strength of the different implications have to be assessed in the light of subsequent evidence. This becomes much more pertinent when having to deal with implied meanings which make great demands on our powers of attention, selection and synthesis (Miall, 1995).

There are several literary techniques employed in reading processes. Of these ambiguity, foregrounding and defamiliarisation seem to be the most pertinent for our purposes. Ambiguity was discussed above as this aspect is not specifically addressed by Miall and Kuiken. A discussion of their understanding of foregrounding and defamiliarisation follows.

Foregrounding refers to the list of stylistic effects that occur in literature at the phonetic (e.g. alliteration), grammatical (e.g. inversion) and semantic levels (e.g. metaphor, irony) (Miall, 1998b). Through foregrounding, communication is disrupted and deautomatised. By disrupting the schema, a reader can create the vision of an object without having knowledge of it. As such, it assists one to recover the sensation of life (Miall & Kuiken, 1994a,b).

The immediate effect of foregrounding is to defamiliarise, to make strange. Foregrounding, therefore, lies in the structure of the text and defamiliarisation in the reaction of the reader to the

foregrounding, in not understanding, or finding difficulty, or in re-reading a text, or in the slowing down of the reading process (Miall & Kuiken, 1994a,b). Defamiliarisation is the response or reaction to the experience of being exposed to a text in which foregrounded text occurs. It is induced or prompted by foregrounded text. Defamiliarisation in turn has the potential to evoke feelings.

Defamiliarisation occurs, according to Miall (1989) when readers apply a schema to a text in order to interpret it, but find that the text makes the application questionable and forces the reader to create a new schema adequate to the material. The 'work of the reader is to interpret the unfolding ... story for clues to a more adequate schema' (Miall, 1989, p.60). He points out that it is the 'reader's affective response that guides this process' (Miall, 1989, p.60). An important function of literature is that with its 'power to defamiliarize' it assists readers 'to reflect and reshape their cultural identity'. Readers have the opportunity of experiencing and experimenting with opinions not necessarily their own before starting to own them (Miall, 1995). The 'period of defamiliarisation' can therefore precede and lead to a 'paradigmatic switch' in Kuhnian terms, (Kuhn, 1970) within the reader. As Kuhn (1970) points out, a switch from one theory to another is usually the end of a process in which a theory continuously disappoints the user / researcher until another comes along which holds more promise.

In trying to understand the process of reading, the reader is also forced to face questions around style, structure, the reader's relation to the author, the impact of the reader's understandings or feelings, and how much of the reading process is due to education, or to interpretive conventions and to psychological processes. He or she is also forced to start considering how much of the process is prescribed by the text while reading and how much is contributed by the reader? (Miall & Kuiken, 1996).

Miall and Kuiken therefore point out that the use of stylistics in a text leads to increased affect and emotion especially in the knowledgeable reader. The effect is reported to be greater in

students of literature than in other readers. This effect grows with experience. It appears therefore that stylistics is a code for emotions, which has to be understood and practised in order to succeed. Under stylistics one can refer to, for example, the use of metaphor, alliteration and assonance. The inclusion of foregrounded text is sometimes done self-consciously – especially in poetry – but sometimes intuitively, and used in various guises in other forms of literature, like narrative. In the ‘aroused’ state a fusion of horizons can take place between the reader and text, author, and other readers.

The reader’s progress – Bortolussi and Dixon

The following aspect of Figures 1 and 2 needing attention, is the interpretive processes within the reader (i.e. therapist and/or client). Miall and Kuiken (1996) touch on the arousal created in the reader. Bortolussi and Dixon (2003) take this discussion further by highlighting the processes that occur in the reader during his/her reading activity.

Their theory is also the result of interdisciplinary cooperation. Old concepts are approached in a fairly novel way which contribute also to new insights for the discipline of psychology. Their theory is the result of the analysis of the responses of real readers to their experience of reading. Bortolussi and Dixon differ in that sense from other Literary Critics; they not only theorize about readers, but also obtain their data empirically from readers who reflect on themselves reading.

In their discussion of the processes, they focus on the following narratological concepts: The narrator, events and plot, characters and characterization, perception and focalization and finally represented speech and thought. These aspects all contribute to how a character is understood in a text, i.e. someone with a role, a personality, a history, a stance (or bias).

The process described below is represented in the diagrams in Figures 1 and 2 and specifically by the columns which follow under the headings ‘THERAPIST’ and ‘CLIENT’. In this research, we are focussing only on the role of the Therapist as reader, although the client will

also at certain periods fulfil this function in a therapy situation. Both these columns are encircled in order to indicate the processes that are continuously taking place in both persons.

The narrator: In literary theory discussions around the existence of a narrator in fiction take a central place. Usually the discussions are built on the traditional communication model: which makes the distinction between (a) the sender / author, (b) text / message and (c) receiver / reader. Traditionally within literary research it was thought that the narrator would be a feature of (b) the text. Several types of narrators could therefore be distinguished depending on the types of relationships the narrator had with the story world. Several levels of communication could be distinguished, i.e. between author and reader and then others within the text.

The distinction between fiction and non-fiction is important, because it was thought that non-fiction came from the author as direct communication. In fiction, the utterances were thought to be delivered through the mediating voice of a narrator, who is to be distinguished from the (real) author. It could be conceived 'that even in natural narratives and non-fictional discourse, storytellers or conversational participants may 'project' themselves into a speaking function distinct from themselves' (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003, p. 60). The reader therefore, must create a representation of the narrator or person who seems to utter the text. And the reader may now enter into a discussion with this narrator as if he really exists. What is present therefore is a communicative situation in the mind of the reader that then influences all aspects of the text and its interpretation. In this way, Bortolussi and Dixon (2003) depart from the viewpoint of seeing the narrator as a characteristic of the text.

The acceptance of such a communicative situation has a number of implications. On the one hand, for readers the narrator has to have characteristics that are necessary for conversation, and probably properties that are shared by the reader, e.g. language, culture. On the other hand, readers will assume that the narrator is cooperating with them, and will spend time making inferences of information that will render the narrator cooperative. Where this happens, the reader



actually remembers the material better. In other words, the reader treats the narrator as a conversational partner. The narrator in fact becomes the reader's representation of the original author. The issues of communication and the speech act theory exist as processing strategies in the mind of the reader (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003).

An important aspect of this theory is that in order to maintain this conversation, each participant must maintain a representation of the other, which includes physical properties, the knowledge and mental state of the other, even the knowledge that the narrator is supposed to have of the reader. This is necessary in order to know or to decide on which information one has to contribute oneself to the representation. This representation is inferred from textual features.

It may be that the real reader realizes that the narrative does not have him/her as audience in mind. He/she still has the option of imagining what the audience would have looked like. He/she may ponder where the author or narrator has misunderstood him/her, or just reject the narrative outright. He/she may not identify with the narrator, but still interact with him/her as partner. This relationship is dynamic because the reader processes the information coming from the narrator. The resulting effect could be for the reader to jump to conclusions. He/she may typically conclude that the narrator is signalling a specific event which includes specific causal chains. Because the narrator invites the reader to infer a specific plot, what the reader may do, is to reconstruct the sequence of events from certain plot features, some situated in the text and some formed in the mind of the reader alone (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003).

Other characters: A reader gives flesh to the literary symbols representing characters in the literary text by referencing them to their own knowledge of the real world. Character traits referred to in the literary signs, are formed by referring to the real world. The result is that fictional characters are very similar to people familiar to the reader. These characters are configured by the text and created or 'generated' in readers' minds. These constructions of fictional people are not unlike the constructions we make of living people on a daily basis, as we

only have a finite and limited knowledge of any other living person. Much of the fullness of the character we read about has been constructed and filled out in our own minds. The codes and conventions used in fictional stories are similar to the codes and conventions used by us in getting to know other living persons and that the nature of the inference processes is similar (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003). We necessarily ‘construct other individuals on the basis of previously held notions, stereotypes and experience’, and that it is ‘an inevitable mental activity given the constraints of human perception and knowledge. ‘ (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003, p. 141).

Transparency: They point to the need for ‘transparency’ in characters as a prerequisite for the reader’s identification with that character, i.e. with the feelings, thoughts and behaviours. It means that the reader has to be told of those feelings, thoughts and behaviours in order to come to an understanding of a character. However, when drawing inferences about the narrator’s beliefs, a central component is likely to be the reader’s own knowledge and experience. ‘... Transparency is produced when readers use their own knowledge and experience to construct narratorial implicatures’ paradoxically even in occasions where less information is supplied (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003, p. 90).

Perspective: Usually it is assumed that a spatial description consists of a referent, a reference object and a reference frame. The referent is the object whose spatial position is described, the reference object identifies the relative spatial description and the reference frame dictates how directions and distances are described. Anything that is described has an implication for a special vantage point. One can distinguish between relative and external reference frames. The term relative means the description of perceptual information (information gathered from what is perceived) relative to the location of a potential perceiver. External reference frames are again distinguished by the axes in a narrative. All of the above information is conveyed through cues in the text, such as the use of perceptual verbs. (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003).

Depending on the perspective of a character and how their perspective changes, it can happen that the narrator and his or her attributes may be conflated with that of a character being narrated (e.g. as in the case of a first person-narrator).

Represented Speech: Represented speech refers to information given, or quoted, that comes from experts or other people. The narrator plays an important role in the understanding and interpretation of represented speech for the reader. The represented discourse may be conveyed in direct or indirect style or may include nested speech and thought. These forms have implications for the way in which characters are represented since representations of characters can actually be layered within the information coming from the narrator. A variety of features are available to the reader for interpreting messages. Some of the features depict elements of the communicative situation and some depict the manner of communication.

In the communicative situation, both the speaker and the recipient may be described in various ways through the reported speech. Communication may feature direct speech, a precise copy of what is said, or indirect speech, in which case the reader is supplied with a summary. Complex situations may describe a situation, e.g. where someone overhears what is said, or where misunderstandings are depicted, either over a shorter period or longer periods. Information may be given about the manner in which something has been conveyed, e.g. through the use of adverbs added to an expression. Another way in which a character may be coloured is through the use of transcribed language, like slang words (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003).

The contribution of Bortolussi and Dixon (2003) to the discussion is that readers actually construct dialogical characters in their minds, who can take on the roles of narrator and other characters in books. The readers enter into conversations with these characters who can actually take on a position in space and history and even have a specific slant on the narrated stories. It becomes possible for the reader to weigh up different values and opinions in the light of how they become represented in the text and even enter into a lively discussion / debate with these

characters. The reader recognizes an aspect of familiarity in these characters as they inevitably resemble aspects of his/her history and hopes.

The discussion makes it possible for the reader to try on different positions and to find out how they fit into the reader's context, expectations and worldviews. It may also relativise arguments of the reader and bring about a paradigmatic change

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Because of the potential that Reader Response theory has for understanding some of the processes in the therapeutic setting, it was decided to employ these theories in a research process as a means of coming to an understanding of how therapists interpret the process of doing therapy in a therapeutic intervention in order to construct meaning in the therapeutic conversation.

It was pointed out before that the research is qualitative, critical and makes use of hermeneutics as the interpretive process. What is meant by qualitative research? Qualitative research tries to study 'things' in 'their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

It would be appropriate to point out why this project followed a qualitative approach and restricted itself to two participants. The intention was to evaluate the possibility of applying Literary Theory to a therapeutic intervention and to assess whether it would indeed contribute to the understanding of the processes involved. It was also thought that an in depth conversation, in which the participant was allowed to richly describe his or her thought processes in the situation, would in fact contribute to the construction of a text (which will be explained in greater depth below). This text, in turn, would assist the researcher in coming to a deeper understanding of the processes in which the therapist participated. It is thought that this understanding could again contribute to the training of (future?) therapists to become more self aware and reflexive. Therapists in short, could be assisted to become more sensitive and respectful by being made aware of the interpretive processes through which clients construct meaning in the therapeutic

space, whether they be individuals or communities. In this way the research also remains true to the ideals of critical theory, by making a contribution to the society from which it originates.

The metatheoretical point of departure of this research is critical theory which indicates that the focus of this research work is post empiricist. It supports interpretive research in the social sciences and especially the problem of interpreting meanings in social life (Morrow, 1994). It also accepts that social 'facts' are created and recreated by humans and that we have the ability to change our behaviour in response to knowledge about society (Giddens, 1994). It is concerned with the norms of society, e.g. values and what ought to be, and is therefore critical of society. It wants to be socially responsible. Because critical theory is multidisciplinary, it also tries to involve all other segments of social or humanistic science in this endeavour, including psychology (Van Niekerk, 1992).

The vehicle employed to interpret meanings in social life, is, in this case, the hermeneutical approach. Although this process is called hermeneutic, the term must not be understood as if a single theory, or practice, called 'hermeneutics' exists. The term refers more to the activity of analysis applied to a text (Nethersole, 1982). Hermeneutics can be applied to a literary text, more specifically to the discourse involved, and also to meaningful action when it is captured (Ricoeur, 1973). It has become recognized that discourse is an action, and also that human action is a speaking one. Hermeneutics therefore not only focuses on texts, but also on enduring events, institutions and personages (fictive, real, social) (Ricoeur, 1994).

'Text' has been used here several times. What is meant by this term and how does it apply to hermeneutics? By text one refers to the discourse, the speech-act, that is 'captured' on paper in writing. Discourse is used here, not in the sense of the philosophical metatheory, but as discussed by linguists and refers to the language-event or linguistic usage. As words are the basic blocks of a sentence, so the sentence is the basic block of discourse (Ricoeur, 1973). Speech-act refers to the theory which argues that speech is an activity (Du Plooy, 1986).

In this research, one had to select a text from several possible texts in which hermeneutics could be applied and which became the levels for hermeneutic reflection. Some of the texts discerned are the following:

- a1. the original therapeutic session,
- a2. the reflection of a reflecting team on the session
- b. the videotape of the therapeutic session,
- c1. The reflection of Therapist A on the therapeutic session via the videotape
- c2. The reflection of Therapist B on the therapeutic session via the videotape
- d. the written reflection of the researcher on the reflections of the therapists.

This research focussed on the texts c1 and c2. This delineation is not cast in stone as the therapists, in their reflections, move freely back and forth between the different levels of texts, c to a, in their hermeneutical reflections and therefore, potentially create confusion for the reader of text d. In order to combat possible confusion, the researcher will point out where a therapist or client has reflected on a different text. The reflecting team referred to in text a1 was part of the therapeutic intervention during the family therapy and is only included here because one of the therapists refers to it. How the texts came about is described in more detail below.

The object of research, the sample, is the transcribed texts of interviews with two therapists as described above, i.e. texts c1 and c2. The purpose is not to generalize to all therapists and therapy situations, but to investigate whether theories coming from the Literary Criticism, and specifically Reader Response Analysis, can be of use to therapists in understanding their own reaction to the 'text' coming from the client and how to process it.

These texts came about in the following way. The original text (a) was a therapeutic conversation that took place between two therapists and a family consisting of a grandmother, her daughter and a grandson about an incident in which her grandson had used her motor car without her knowledge. The conversation was observed by a reflecting team which in turn reflected on

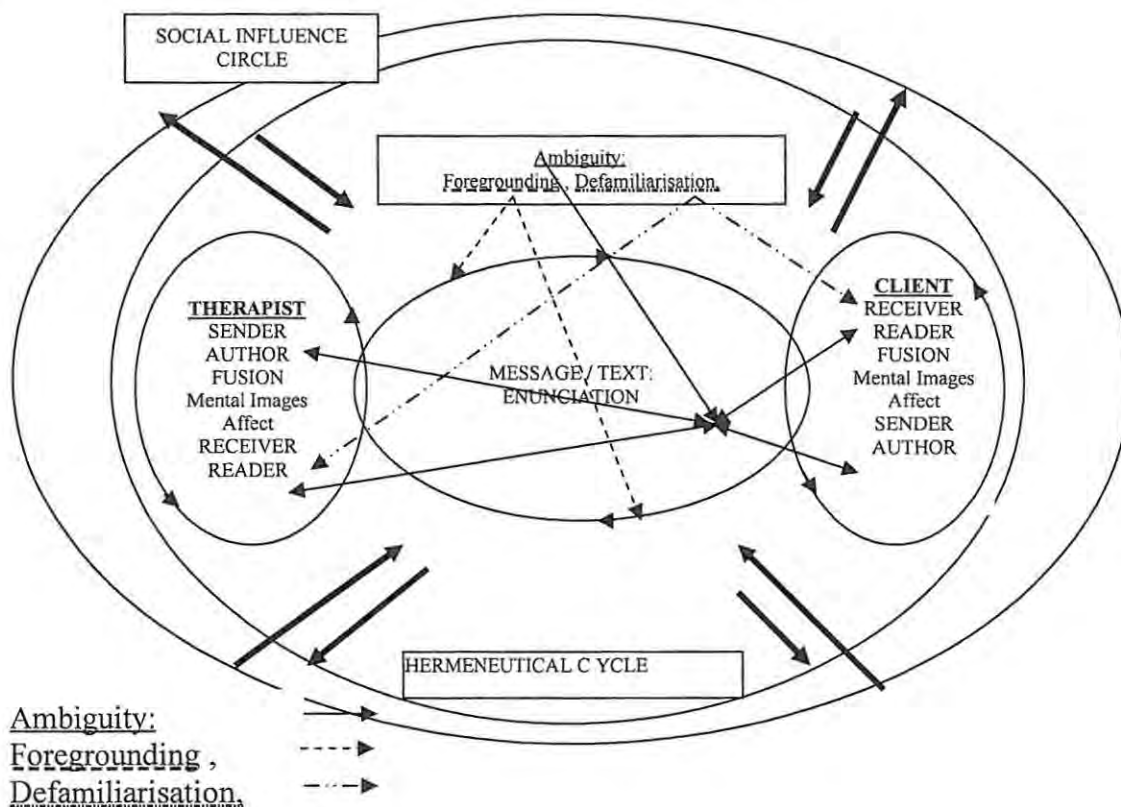
the session and this was called text a1. This complete session was videotaped with the permission of the family (including the response of the reflecting team) and became text b.

As the focus was on the interpretation of the conversation the therapists had with the family, the reflection of the reflecting team (text a1) was set aside. The sample text is the transcription of the interviews (texts c1 and c2) held with two therapists about the video taped family therapy session (text b) in which they had participated as co-therapists. The same portion of the videotape was used with both therapists in order to prompt them to recall their interpretive processing of the interview. This prompt therefore, gave a specific structure to the research. The questions and discussion that followed in the interviews were unstructured, but were aimed at thickening the description of the interpretive processes. The interviews were audio taped and then transcribed and used as text for the research with the permission of the therapists. The transcription (of texts c1 and c2) became the primary text with which the researcher hermeneutically engaged in order to come to an understanding of how the therapists had made meaning of the therapeutic session in which they were involved (leading to text d).

Several questions were also prepared to be used as prompts. The questions were aimed at assisting the therapists to reflect in greater depth on the process in which they had been involved, as well as their thoughts and awarenesses in and during the therapy session with the family. The theory was not explained beforehand to the therapists. The researcher used some questions to coax them to reflect in greater depth on the process. Examples of the questions are: 'What did you think of the statement / question?', or 'How did the question / statement affect you?', 'Was there anything in the question/statement that struck you?'. In order to assist the therapist to reflect on his or her own processes the types of questions asked, were: 'Can you recall what you were thinking about after you heard the question / statement – for example any images that came to mind about anything or any other person?'

The researcher's hermeneutic reading is depicted in Figure 3. He reads 'down' through the texts of the therapists (c1 and c2) to the therapeutic session (text a). In this reading he is influenced by other external and internal circumstances, such as the social context within which he/she lives as well as the interpretive process that he/she is involved in, which in turn influences the reading as well as the interpreter's understanding. The presence of these influences are depicted in Figure 3 below by arrows. The arrows suggest that the readings are influenced by and in return, influence the wider hermeneutic and social contexts.

Figure 3: The researcher's hermeneutical 'reading' in its context



Sampling and other issues

There were some sampling issues that had to be considered. Both therapists were known to the researcher and were selected for reasons of convenience and availability, and the text produced from their reflection therefore became the sample text for the present research. The fact that they were known to the researcher could have influenced the production of skewed text, but this was counteracted by the fact that they were uninformed about the theory. Furthermore the

fact that they were known to the researcher was thought to be a positive aspect in producing a richer and thicker text, as trust did not have to be built up from anew. Language and cultural differences were also to be expected as both the therapists and researcher came from different backgrounds and used English as a second language. These confounding factors make this research more valid in South Africa as multilingualism and multiculturalism are constant influences in the lives of South Africans. These factors could also be foreseen to have had an influence in the original interview with the family. It could become an additional confounding factor in the hermeneutic processes of the therapists (in text a and c1 and c2) and the researcher.

The interpretive process is another factor. The text used is a scaled down version of the original and excludes many dimensions because it is a written version of a spoken text. The focus is also on the questions of the researcher and the answers of the interviewees which are then captured on paper. Attention is given to the answers, how they are encoded and whether understanding takes place. This can only be done from inside the hermeneutical circle or cycle as was described above under 'Hermeneutical Considerations'.

Another valid warning comes from Giddens' (1976) about the concepts' obedience to a double hermeneutic, i.e. that any scheme in natural and social science is in a sense a form of life in itself. The concepts have to be mastered as a mode of practical activity generating specific types of descriptions. The double hermeneutic lies herein that one deals with a universe already 'constituted within frames of meaning within actors, mediating ordinary and technical language' (Giddens, 1976, p 162). There is nothing fixed in the meaning of these concepts and as they are used, become part and parcel of what is analyzed.

Because of a text's metaphorical character and because it is a whole and cumulative process, one has to construe meaning from it. Although one can and has to read it many times, one never sees the whole, but only specific perspectives (relief's) of the text. One constantly has to ask 'why' something is happening in order to understand it, and in the process, take educated

guesses. In describing actions, one is already taking or preparing a stance for or against them (the actions). And understanding leads to explanation (Ricoeur, 1973).

None of the processes are simple, as both cultural and professional differences could lead to misunderstanding between the researcher and the therapists. The last problem was the least influential because the participant therapists and researcher had trained at the same institute for a number of years – and as Miall and Kuiken (1996) and Van Peer (1986) pointed out, one's training influences how one reads another's language codes.

'READING' A THERAPEUTIC PROCESS

The original text (text a) was a therapeutic conversation that took place between two therapists and a family, consisting of a grandmother, her daughter and a grandson, about an incident in which her grandson had used her motor car without her knowledge while she was away and had been involved in an accident. The damage to the car was extensive. The grandmother expressed her views quite strongly and volubly and her voice appeared to dominate the family therapy session. The grandmother gave a long introduction in which much time was spent talking about who was at home during that time. She then talked about the incident and made it very clear how unhappy (or angry) she was that the grandson had taken her car, especially since she had taken him into her house and fostered him. Her daughter (not the boy's mother) and grandson however, said very little and spoke only a few times. The grandson appeared to be very withdrawn and sad.

In interpreting the conversations of texts c1 and c2, referrals are made to lines in the text (indicated by 'l.' and a line number) as well as a quote of the actual words of the therapist. The interpretation was directed by the following questions: (i) Were the therapy sessions influenced by ambiguities, what type of ambiguities were they and what was their influence? (ii) Can any stylistics be identified that could indicate that a text is foregrounded, what type could it be and what was the influence? (iii) Can the therapist describe any discussion at a mental level that can

be described as a 'psycho narrative'? What was the influence of the internal narrative on how the therapist participated in the session? Finally (iv) the question needs to be asked, what hermeneutical processes could be observed and what was their influence on the therapy process? Does the process lead to understanding and a fusion of horizons?

(i) Ambiguity – Understanding made difficult

Su (1994) points out that ambiguity can occur at different levels and in different contexts. It would seem that how ambiguities occur at contextual and pragmatic levels would be of more use in an oral context, as well as how they contribute to a foregrounded text. Therapist A was occupied with ambiguities that she became aware of in the conversations. A reason for this appeared to have been the long introduction which the grandmother had made before starting with the problem story. The first ambiguity had to do with the grandmother informing the therapists about the whereabouts of her daughter, who was supposed to be in charge, instead of talking about the reason for referral. Another ambiguity had to do with the reason why the grandmother had brought the son to the therapy session – was it because of the accident or was it because of something else that had occurred at the same time.

The first ambiguity was picked up by Therapist A from an emphatic statement made by the grandmother in lines l. 24-25 'My youngest daughter is at home but she is working. I think she said that twice and I tried to understand it', and later on in l. 188 – 196: ' ...That she was at home and at work. ... I said OK what is she trying to say, she's....where is she? Is she at work or is she at home.'

This ambiguity became foregrounded for her, as it appeared to occupy her 'processing' activities for a while (l. 208 – 215, 251 - 253):

24 A 'I think she said that twice and I tried to understand it.'

208 A 'I think if there were expectations, well I didn't expect the background so long....I think my expectation was that she would have said my son is doing "a-

b-c-d" because of "e-f-g"

- 251 A 'Yah the background is so long. I because then I didn't know it was the background to the [..unclear...]. ???. I thought she was because the strong emotion is there right from the beginning.'

Her reflection on the ambiguity that occurred in the original session (l. 24) occupied much of the discussion. The ambiguity appears at different levels for her. On the one hand, the ambiguity appears at a semantic level, and on the other at a contextual level. This focus influenced the researcher into including ambiguity as an additional literary concept. 'A' said the following about what had struck her (l. 3 – 25):

3 Q Why did you ask this question?

4 A I thought there were two stories.

5 Q Ok, you said that you thought there were two stories?

6 'A' 'Yah there was the background which she was going on and on about who lives at home and so forth, because she started off saying this is what happened and
9 then she went on to describe who was at home and I got lost somehow, but I listened to what she was saying then she said again now I am going to tell you a story and I thought OK which story is it. What happened was she was away or is it another story.'

15 Q 'So the background was supposed to be the background of an accident, but she gave it a background of who'd been at home.'

'A' 'And then she started the background of the story ...'

Q 'And then she started the background of the story Uhhmm so I see so that would be your sense of what would be of the story.'

20 'A' 'Mhmm?'

Q 'Of the story of her reply Uhhmm at that stage was there something in what

she said that struck you as strange? What was it in what she said that struck you as strange?’

24 ‘A’ ‘My youngest daughter is at home but she is working. I think she said that twice and I tried to understand it.’

In the text (l. 3 – 25), it appears as if a contextual ambiguity had already been set up in the original text (text a) for ‘A’. In the first lines (l. 3 – 14), she recalled the long confusing introduction, ‘I thought there were two stories.’ (L. 3), and: ‘I got lost somehow’ (l. 11), which led to her question in l. 3 asking for clarification. In text a, the reaction of the grandmother is the ambiguous annunciation (l. 24) to which ‘A’ refers. The context itself did not assist ‘A’ by providing any direction and did not support any specific choice as to how to interpret this ambiguity. The reason for the ambiguity lies in the conjunction of two apparently equally valid, but opposing statements: i.e. the use of the conjunction ‘but’, with ‘is at home’ which is set against ‘is working’ (l. 24).

The fact that this statement was repeated more than once raised several questions for ‘A’. It became the start of a hermeneutical process for ‘A’, as she said ‘and I tried to understand it’ (l. 25). One was: why was the client emphasizing this by repeating it? Another had to do with the physicality’s of life, i.e. how is it possible to be at two places at the same time (l. 63, 134 – 136).

63 ‘A’ ‘Yah, but at the same time the words, that’s why I said even the problem of language because I couldn’t understand. It was not immediately clear to me that it was significant, because she said my youngest daughter is at home, as if at this present moment she is at home, but she is working.’

134 ‘... I remember trying to think she is at home or she is at work, how can she be at two places at the same time, what is happening, what is she trying to say’

Another was a question that evolved around the social situation of South Africa, i.e. the fact that there are many people who use English as second or third language, and that this could be a

language matter 'problem of the language' (l. 62). The ambiguity became resolved for her when she realized that 'is at home' referred to the daughter's responsibilities, whilst 'at work' referred to where she physically was at that stage (l. 193 - 196). The ambiguity was therefore a major contribution to the defamiliarisation of the text (which will be discussed later) for 'A'.

It was also foregrounded, i.e. it stood out, because the explanation around the text was stretched out (l. 208 – 215, 223) and was accompanied by emotion (l. 80 – 90, 220, 232, 235, 309 - 313) and it brought this incongruity with it. '... maybe she was already defensive..', 'Uhhmm "BUT..." she was at work. My youngest daughter is at home BUT she is at work, you know', 'she was definitely emphasizing a point in which neither 'B' and I had asked a question towards that point' (l. 80 – 90), and 'I think the emphasis, yah at that moment, we didn't know what the thorough problem was. So when she said the eldest of them being this one, and the youngest is a year old, I thought OK maybe something happened to the one year old you know' (l. 225 ff.). It is at the pragmatic level that the ambiguity is resolved for her, as 'A' allows time to pass and tries to find out more about the context 'the meaning emerged' (l. 198).

It is interesting that this was not the case for Therapist 'B'. That this is not so supports Su's (1994) opinion that the reader has a role in actualizing the ambiguity. The ambiguity that existed for 'A' does not seem to surface at all for 'B'. In the following lines it appears as if there is an ambiguity, but at a different level, i.e. at the contextual level (l. 396 – 401).

396 'B' 'I think the way she expressed it was very subtle but for me I could sense that there was this strong sense that she was blaming the boy. And there was a lot of anger in her voice as well. Although she said that she wasn't angry. I could sense at that stage that there was a lot of anger.'

And later on (l. 409 – 412):

409 'B' 'I think it was the whole conversation in general. At that stage it seems as if she was doing the boy a favour by taking care of him and he was somehow crossed

the boundaries. Like if I take care of you how can you do this to me. That type of subtle.'

'B' mentioned the contextual ambiguity that was observed of expressing or standing for certain values, but then of opposing them in terms of how they were expressed, e.g. '...lot of words that were energized by anger, which came across as subtle.' (l. 534 – 535). Opposing thought structures were: '...saying not angry...' vs. '...a lot of anger...' (l. 397 – 399), '... doing a favour ...' vs. '...crossed the boundaries...' (l. 409 – 410), '...she was talking of the blame...' vs. '...but she didn't express that and denied that so...' (l. 428 – 430), '... doing things...the position that they have in life...' vs. '... not doing things out of the goodness of your heart ...' (l. 437 – 443). The result of this ambiguity for B appeared to be 'taken aback' (l. 537) not 'knowing what is going on' (l. 560) and confusion (l. 538, 561) and eventually anger (l. 545). The ambiguity in the content of 'text a' contributed to the defamiliarisation of the 'text b' for 'B', as it appeared that certain values expressed were not what they seemed. The type of ambiguity illustrated here falls under the category of 'context of situation' ambiguities as described previously. As such, the ambiguity foregrounded the issue of what values were important to 'B' in the therapeutic intervention.

Both therapists observed ambiguities, but experienced different ones even though both were involved in the same therapeutic intervention. What could have influenced their interpretation of an ambiguity and the importance attributed to it in the conversation? It could possibly be ascribed to their own backgrounds, or their sensitivity to stylistics of language (codes), or training in, or exposure to recognizing those stylistics in a text. Therapist 'A' appeared to be much less personally affected by her observed ambiguity than was Therapist 'B', possibly because for 'B', the observed ambiguity in her case touched on ethical issues. In both cases, the ambiguities worked hand in hand with what could be called foregrounding and defamiliarisation of the text.

(ii) **Foregrounded text and defamiliarisation – emotional language**

Normally in written text, foregrounded text would be indicated by the use of stylistics, such as metaphors, similes, ambiguities, assonance, alliteration. These codes, as Miall and Kuiken (1996) point out, influence the affect of the reader and enrich the reading experience. In spoken text, the cues are probably different in some ways. 'A' reports being intrigued by the client emphasizing the point (l. 53 – 55) that 'daughter was in charge, but was at work (l. 44 – 46), by repeating this enunciation several times, by the emphasis placed on the word 'but', also at how the client delivered a lengthy narrative (l. 211).

53 'A' 'But she said it twice or three times, and I thought OK , why is she emphasizing this? She was emphasizing for us to know that the children are not left alone?'

The use of contrast and repetition actually led 'A' to misunderstand the importance of some aspects of the conversation.

225 'A' 'I think the emphasis, yah at that moment, we didn't know what the thorough problem was. So when she said the eldest of them being this one, and the youngest is a year old, I thought OK maybe something happened to the one year old you know, because this one maybe be raped, the one year old but you know, because there was something in the language and also I think that's when I picked up the frustration ...'

She is 'led' into misinterpreting (that the anger may be the result of 'rape' instead of an accident) what is important by the contrast being made between the client and his young cousin (l. 239 – 240) and the repetition of certain facts ' ... she kept referring to the ages so I thought there was something significant ...' (l. 243 – 246), which seemed to imply that something important was about to be said (l. 244). The body is also used to foreground certain text. 'A' becomes aware of frustration in the client from the body posture (for example how the client

holds on to her chair (l. 233 and 235)) and tone (l. 333), the repetitions (l. 53) and the emphases (l. 85).

'A' picks up that there is 'a lot of emotion ... into what she was saying..' (l. 283 – 285), and identifies the emotion as she (the grandmother) 'was angry and trying to control..' (l. 356) and also 'defensive' (l.85 – 86). It is especially the 'but' which is foregrounded for her in the ambiguity discussed above and leads her to think the client is defensive (l. 85). She reacts to the emotions of the grandmother, but with perplexity to the emotion of the story (l. 322 ff.). She is puzzled by the content of the story which is in contrast to the masked emotion of the grandmother L. 33 – 35 as quoted above, suggests the grandmother emphasized a point: 'And I thought: "She said it twice." And I remember thinking: "OK How is this related to the story?"').

The defamiliarisation taking place in 'A' can be described through her reported reactions and emotions. 'A' indicates being intrigued by some of the client's emphasis on the daughter left in charge, her reactions and postures. She is also perplexed by the repetitions and emotion used in the story (l. 322 ff) and puzzled by the content (l. 33 - 35).

'B' speaks about sensing emotions in the client that do not correlate with how the client speaks, '...expressed ...subtle...' (l. 395). 'B' senses a strong position of judgement '... a lot of blame..' (l. 393) as well as '... a lot of anger in her voice..' (l. 397, 399). 'B' cannot always pinpoint that she is sensing something. She therefore uses the client's language as a means of reflection back to the client (l. 523 – 525) so as not to impose her viewpoints on the client (l. 528). Because of the subtlety of what is sensed, 'B' reaches a conclusion based on the complete therapeutic conversation with the family.

425 'B' 'Not really a good picture I suppose, because it seemed like the relationship she had with the boy seemed sweet and rosy on the outside but underlying what she was saying was something different and I think the boy picked up on that but there was a stage when he started to cry when she was having this conversation

and he sensed the disappointment she was talking about the blame but she didn't express that and she denied that so'

What 'B' observes, she then summarizes as 'conditional love' (l. 433).

What is also interesting is 'B's' reaction to what she observes. She remarks that the client was not 'aware' of the effect of her anger on the other clients in the family session (l. 529 – 530) and the invalidation of the grandmother's story of the other client's stories (l. 556). At the same time 'B' expresses her confusion at the progress of the session (l. 537 – 539, 558 - 561) and even anger at the other role players in the therapy session (l. 545 – 555). She picks up on the grandmother's need to hear about the grandson's pain in order to move on (l. 566 – 567), but reacts herself with anger, e.g. 'I'm seeing now why I was so angry and pissed off with this session and the reflecting team' (l. 571 – 574).

'B' does not comment on specific sentences so much as the stylistic aspects of the language. From a stylistic background, one would then have to discount foregrounding and the defamiliarisation caused by it. However, from her account of the session it became clear that foregrounding for 'B' was evident in the ethical and moralistic stances of the clients and this is related to their positioning in the therapeutic session. The ambiguity in this position has already been discussed. What apparently became foregrounded for her was the grandmother's lack of consistency, by not implementing the moralistic laws of religion and behaviour to which she, the grandmother, subscribed. The defamiliarisation occurring in 'B', is expressed by her when she calls this inconsistency in the grandmother as 'conditional love' (l. 433). The affect generated, in her is anger.

It is clear that what is foregrounded for the co-therapists differs from each other. For 'A' foregrounding comes from what is said in language and how it is said; for 'B' it is more about what is not said and shown.

(iii) The Reader's Progress

Bortolussi and Dixon (2003) describe the reading process as akin to a dialogue taking place between the reader and a narrator. It could even happen that characters could join in this discussion. It is even possible for the reader to distinguish between positions that differ with his or hers and also to be able to construct different speech representations required for different positions. The question is whether this is possible within an oral situation, which is possibly much more complex, more fluid and tacit than the reading process. Codes themselves just disappear into thin air and re-readings are seldom possible?

Therapist 'A'

Narrator: Therapist 'A' reports in several places (l. 33, 246, 257, 270 – 271, 274 - 275) of thinking about what the client has been saying and quotes her thoughts almost as if they come from a character. When asked with whom she was in conversation, she replied 'Myself' (l. 116). It was however difficult for her to describe 'Myself' (l. 125).

112 Q 'Yahh. But you were in this conversation with yourself why is she repeating this? Is that not what you sort of said'

114 A 'I do'

115 Q 'With whom were you talking when you were saying this?'

116 A 'Myself'

117 Q 'OK how does this myself look like?'

118 A (laughing) 'I don't know Dirk how does myself look like. I think its myself sitting there, I don't know Dirk what do you want to know?'

She could discern more versions of 'Myself', which could actually interact with each other in conversation as distinct voices, e.g.: 'But it does happen even though I'm not sure about the picture. The question with myself and then another myself saying, no don't, ask the question, don't be presumptuous, you know' (l. 145 – 147), and 'You know the other myself saying:

'Listen', the other one saying: 'What is she trying to say?', And then the other myself saying: 'Why don't you ask the question,...?'" (l. 155 – 160) , 'Following day because she went to the following day and described following, I said OK and then what's happening you know. I mean yah, definitely having a mental dialogue with myself there.'(257 - 271). She could actually discern three voices; (l. 165), e.g.:

164 Q 'So you were actually having conversation with two my selves?'

A 'Three'

Other characters: She reported that she constructed a picture of the youngest daughter (who was not the daughter in the session) of the grandmother (l. 175) during the process of therapy, someone of whom had she only heard (l. 185). A model for this picture was the eldest daughter, who was present at the therapy session, but who did not look like the mother. Furthermore she could recall having a picture of the grandmother with whom she was having the conversation, as someone who should have been dressed differently, more formally (l. 309 – 313), and position herself to this mental picture (l. 317).

Transparency: The reader looks for cues in the person's behaviour and words which will provide insight into their character and then conclusions are drawn from those cues (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003). There was an apparent interest in therapist 'A' to achieve transparency in the constructed story of the grandmother: '...and I tried to understand it' (l. 25). But she reported being confused by the story and the character and she came to the understanding that the real person was somehow not really showing who she was, or was even hiding something. The character of the grandmother remained opaque. She told her story in a circular way, e.g. '...But the background was so long and I remember thinking of her, because she did say that my car is finished because of you who did this and then he went to on provide the background and I thought of ... maybe there's something more, its not just crashing the car, do you see?' (l. 210 – 215). She was struggling to tell her story in English, but still continued, '...struggling with the

language. She could be meaning what she is saying you know but I do that a lot' (l. 171). 'A' thought that the grandmother should have been dressed differently, e.g. in a formal dress ('I had sensed that she actually wanted to stand. And I remember looking at the way she was dressed and it looked inappropriate for her. I thought she would look much better in formal clothes') (l. 309 – 313).

301 Q 'Yah, I'm not sure whether its because she usually churched'

302 A 'So the picture of her with church uniform. So she was dressed differently here in the dialogue'

From the code that she 'read', she constructed an image of the grandmother as an apparently strict, moralistic and judgemental person with little inclination to listening. Other codes which seem to support this 'mental picture' are, the children are not like the grandmother, are quiet and reserved and that the grandson is timid and remorseful.

Perspective: That different representations initiated a debate in the mind of 'A', is probably an indication of different perspectives that have been given a 'voice'. Under the heading of perspective, one looks at how a referent's spatial position is described through cues such as perceptual verbs (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003). Several perspectives emerge from the reflection of 'A' on the therapy session. There appears to exist a hierarchical structure starting with the grandmother then leading to her daughters and then the grandchildren, e.g. ...she (the grandmother) was going on and on about who lives at home and so forth...' (l. 6 – 7). 'A' became aware of the perspectives that lie at the level of text a. At this level, one finds descriptions by the grandmother of herself and her youngest daughter and the grandchildren who were in the house. At this level, there are also perspectives appearing between the different stories told. 'A' makes a distinction between a 'background story' (l. 6) and the story of the accident (l. 15) as related by the grandmother (text a). Then there was a story of the people living at home and then another of the accident. Another perspective emerging from the reflection of

therapist 'A' had to do with the positioning of the clients during the therapeutic conversation. Therapist 'A' becomes aware that the grandmother may have expected 'a blaming stance' from her (l. 94) and therefore the grandmother '...was already defensive' (l. 80).

Represented speech: According to 'A' the grandmother had a moralistic powerful voice. Of the clients, she is the only one who appeared to have a voice. Therapist 'A' reports nothing of the voices of the other real people or characters, but she reports on different voices within herself. The other voices were the different 'My self's' about which therapist 'A' reports, e.g. 'The other one saying why don't you ask her why are you saying she is struggling with the language. She could be meaning what she is saying you know but I do that a lot' (l. 170 – 173). She does not report what the voices 'looked' and sounded like (l. 125, 141). Only one of the 'My self's' voices was narrating to the researcher. In this narration, one becomes aware of the self-awareness, the reflexive ness and the thoughtfulness of the narrator. The language is modulated, e.g.:

- 80 A 'So maybe she was already defensive ... '
- Q 'OK'
- A 'About that ...'
- Q 'Did you maybe at stage from the language that she was using pick up on the defensiveness?'
- A 'Uhhmm "BUT..." she was at work. My youngest daughter is at home BUT she is at work, you know'
- Q 'So you could pick up the defensiveness, but you didn't really know where that comes from, where it was coming from'
- A 'But she was definitely emphasizing a point in which neither 'B' and I had asked a question towards that point.'

The speech of the narrator is that of a therapist, who has insight and can reflect on herself,

e.g.:

155 A 'You know the other myself saying listen, the other one saying what is she trying to say, what is she saying, how can a person be at two places at the same time, maybe she is struggling with the language. And then the other myself saying why don't you ask the question, why don't you find out from her what she is trying to say instead of being presumptuous about the language factor'

Therapist 'B'

Narrator: Therapist 'B' also reported having a conversation in her head with the client about the client's grandson (l. 420). She had formed a 'picture' about the client with whom the conversation took place (l. 425), which she described as 'Not really a good picture..' (l. 425), e.g.:

417 Q 'But where were you concerned about the boy, so, was the sort of like conversation taking place between you and the boy. But ... were you conversing at that moment?'

420 B 'I think with the grandmother'

Q 'So you actually had a conversation with the grandmother'

B 'In my head I suppose'

Q 'How did the grandmother look at that moment in your head. Do you like have a mental picture of your grandmother'

425 B 'Not really a good picture I suppose, because it seemed like the relationship she had with the boy seemed sweet and rosy on the outside but underlying what she was saying was something different and I think the boy picked up on that but there was a stage when he started to cry when she was having this conversation and he sensed the disappointment she was talking about the blame but she didn't express that and she denied that so'

Other characters: The characters, outlined in the narration, is that of the sad and cringing grandson who is receiving very little mercy from the harsh grandmother ('And I remember

feeling a bit concerned about the boy because I'm sure that he's heard that story before and now within this context he's hearing the same story again and it seems like the re-telling of the story.' (l. 377 - 379) and: '...but I still felt that the boy was in a lot of anguish and pain.' (l. 383)). In the corners lurk the onlookers, like the 'reflecting team', which is trying to gloss things over and does not see the pain of the grandson, or even acknowledge it, e.g. '... I was so angry at the reflecting team, ...' (l. 546).

Transparency: The narrator and characters are transparent such that different readers can understand their thoughts, attribute emotions to them and understand those emotions (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003). 'B' deduces some of these attributes from the grandmother's tone of voice, e.g.: 'I think the way she expressed it was very subtle but for me I could sense that there was this strong sense that she was blaming the boy. And there was a lot of anger in her voice as well. Although she said that she wasn't angry. I could sense at that stage that there was a lot of anger' (l. 396 – 400). 'B' also read her own voices as well as the grandson, the daughter and the reflecting team, in a similar way, as the quote from l. 425 above also suggests.

Therefore she was self-aware of her own stance towards the story, because she had a 'Not really a good picture...' (l. 425)

Perspective: It appears as if the perspectives that are portrayed by 'B' emanate from what she observed in the therapy room (text a and a1), and not so much from the content of the conversation with the clients. The positions of the role players in relation to each other in text c1 appear fairly static. That is, they are in unchanging positions in relation to one another, as they appear in the therapy session. The grandmother appeared to be angry with the grandson and blamed him. In the same room also sat the two therapists and the eldest sister. It is interesting that for 'B' this is an unfulfilling session and confusing ('And I think 'A' and I were taken back so much that you know you start getting confused and you're not sure what is appropriate and

what's not appropriate' l. 538). For 'B' this session stands in relation to an equally unfulfilling follow-up session with the reflecting team who did not acknowledge his hurt, e.g.

546 B 'The reflecting team was just talking about positive outcomes and how you
- could move forward positively. And yet in the session its like he wasn't
553 acknowledged, his pain and the deep sense of disappointment'

In 'B', one finds voices opposing each other. On the one hand, she seemed to have taken a blaming stand against the client / grandmother about the apparent conditionality of her love for her grandson (l. 425, 431, 441), as if she was doing something from 'the position that they have in life and not doing things out of the goodness of your heart ...' (l. 448 – 449). On the other hand, although 'B' raised this opinion, she felt that it was judgemental, e.g. 'To the mental picture I'd ask that question but at the same time it would seem like I'm judging' (l. 450). It also appears as if it is a voice coming from another 'character', a voice warning against being judgemental (l. 454 – 457) about what the role of parents should be. 'B' describes this position as functioning at a meta-perspective 'where you move beyond yourself' (l. 464 – 467).

Her picture of the discussion she described, resembled that of a moral debate, with an angel and devil on opposing shoulders (l. 474 – 476), e.g.:

474 B 'I think it would be more academic but as well as being more humane and
possibly, you know when you have the little devil on one shoulder and you've
got the little angel on the other shoulder, I'd say that voice would be the angel'

The approach is academic (l. 479) and the speaker female (l. 481). The judgemental voice she describes, she calls her 'subjectivity', which takes a harsher stand against the position described above of the client, '...What I'd bring with me into the room my experiences, my subjectivity' (l. 490 – 491). This aspect or voice reacts to the observed harsh treatment of the client's grandson.

From 'B's' discussion, her perspective emerged in the way in which opposing viewpoints about the clients, and of the clients, were placed against each other and weighed up.

Represented Speech: Therapist 'B' ascribes, like 'A', a moralistic voice to the grandmother, but also senses her hypocrisy because there was 'blame attached' (l. 394) to what she said about the grandson's actions. This was done with subtlety however. On the one hand, she sensed 'blame' and 'anger' in the grandmother's voice (l. 398 – 399). She thought it was subtle because '... it seemed as if she was doing the boy a favour by taking care of him and he has somehow crossed the boundaries. Like if I take care of you how can you do this to me. That type of subtle' (l. 410 – 412), and: '... by the position that they have in life and not doing things out of the goodness of your heart' (l. 443 – 444).

'B' herself, makes judgemental pronouncements about the grandmother, e.g. '... relationship she had with the boy seemed sweet and rosy on the outside but underlying what she was saying was something different' (l. 424 – 425). At the same time, there is also a voice of reason that reflects on what she is saying: '...I have to respect what the person is saying even if I think what the person is saying is not honest' (l. 456 - 457). This voice is described by her as: 'I think it would be more academic but as well as being more humane ... be the angel' (ll. 474 – 475). It would be 'definitely a women, definitely my intuition as well as, as well as what 'C' called last week the sensible side of me .. perspective or reflexivity mode' (l. 481 – 482). On reflection of the interview, she describes herself as using different faces with different thought processes (l. 515 – 517).

The other clients, the eldest daughter and the grandson do not receive much attention in this conversation, but it is significant because it raises the question on to whether they would ever have an opportunity of having their voices heard. Actually the grandson appears to be described as abused, a martyr, e.g. 'I think the boy picked up on that but there was a stage when he started to cry ...' (l. 428), and: '... sees the boy as being in a lot of pain' (l. 509), again: '...about the

boys pain' (l. 549). The reflecting team, like the grandmother appeared to be in the same category insensitive to the boy's needs: 'My reflection was about the boys pain and how it was invalidated by the grandmother and the reflecting team' (l. 549).

(iv) Broad Hermeneutical Processes

Finally, it seems useful to look at how the participating therapists integrated the process into forming a sense of meaning from the whole of the session.

Therapist 'A'

'A' was forced into trying to come to an understanding (fusion of horizons) or maybe a conceptual bending quite early on in the conversation (... said that twice and I tried to understand it. l. 25) because of an observed ambiguity (l. 24 – 25) that occurred in what the client was saying. She found this strange (l. 25) – defamiliarization took place - and this started a process of coming to an understanding (l. 33 ff) in which a discussion with the self began. 'A' tries out several solutions to the question 'why is she saying this?' (l. 34, 54). She also tries to find out what the level of importance is, i.e. that it may be an indication of a serious crime that had occurred previously (l. 264 ff.) for which the grandmother might be blamed (l. 75 ff.). The observation of the stylistics employed in what is seen as foregrounded text, is debated internally by 'A' in trying to come to an acceptable solution. An additional voice cautions again into expecting too much (l. 145 – 147, 153) as the problem might be related to a basic language problem. It appears, according to the discussion under 'Hermeneutical considerations' (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000) that much of the discussion with 'A' focuses on levels I and II – where the focus is on the author and the investigation of the text a, i.e. on the story as told by the grandmother. Examples of level I processing are:

24 A 'My youngest daughter is at home but she is working'. I think she said that twice and I tried to understand it'

33 A 'And I thought "She said it twice". And I remember thinking okay "How is this

related to the story?'"

53 A 'But she said it twice or three times, and I thought OK , why is she emphasizing this? She was emphasizing for us to know that the children are not left alone'

60 A 'Yah, but at the same time the words, that's why I said even the problem of language because I couldn't understand. It was not immediately clear to me that it was significant, because she said my youngest daughter is at home, as if at this present moment she is at home, but she is working.'

At the end of the discussion (l. 322ff.) 'A' pointed out that she had started to progress to level III because she began to ask herself whether she was not missing something. Consequently, there was realization that she may not have experienced a 'fusion' with the clients (l. 340ff., 346ff) which in fact prompted her to reassess her understanding of the interview.

322 A 'I was just perplexed. There's something really that struck me because I didn't and I thought I don't believe they have come here just for nonsense. There must be something more to this, you know, that was my feeling'

347 A 'To question seriously what was happening, whether I was missing something or... you know I wanted to tell to the...to see her own reaction what was she thinking. Maybe she could mirror my own thoughts...'

Therapist 'B'

The interview with 'B' highlights the processing that took place in order to achieve a position of understanding. 'B' focuses on the author of the text (Level I), but at the level of interaction in text a or on text b. She tries to make sense of the actual message the grandmother is sending the grandson. The grandson is obviously unhappy, but according to 'B' :

438 B 'To me in my head it seemed like it was an obligation for her to take care of the boy, obligated either by her spiritual life or Christianity and so take this on as a means of validating her position in life. So my conversation was about

questioning those type of practices...’

Messages of ‘Christianity’, of care, appear to elicit a sense of disappointment as the grandson ‘... picked up on that but there was a stage when he started to cry when she was having this conversation and he sensed the disappointment’ (l. 425 – 430). To ‘B’, it appeared that the client experienced her responsibility for the grandson as an obligation connected to the position she held rather than from any ‘goodness of your heart’ (l. 438 – 444).

Therapist ‘B’ constantly moves from observation to level II and focuses on the text, e.g. ‘Where is this going, why is this happening?’ (l. 365) and ‘And I remember feeling a bit concerned about the boy because I’m sure that he’s heard that story before and now within this context he’s hearing the same story again and it seems like the re-telling of the story’ (l. 376 - 380). It is the conversation taking place in her mind, or the meta-perspective (l. 464 – 468), that is helping her to deal with the confusion she is experiencing, as she starts looking at what she is thinking and doing, at that particular moment. L. 417 - 420 quoted above also seem to support this, especially ‘B’s’ reply in l. 420, e.g. ‘I think with the grandmother In my head I suppose’

This causes her to look at the complex messages that she is receiving and to which she is responding with complex reactions, e.g. being judgemental and at the same time cautionary (l. 499 – 503), sensing something and waiting to use the clients words (l. 524 – 526). Finally she moves to phase III when she starts looking at her own confusion and anger (l. 541 – 545, 559 – 562, 565 – 568) and starts making sense of what that means for her. A clear example comes again from l. 574, e.g. ‘And I couldn’t understand that myself, so I couldn’t explain ... I’ve done the reflection ... with this I’m seeing now why I was so angry and pissed off ...’

During this internal dialogue, one can say that a fusion of horizons had started taking place with the client and her grandson and which ‘B’ discovered when the dialogue led her to her ‘inner self’. As Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) point out, the one circle path led to another – and eventually to the one involved in this research.

CONCLUSION

As hermeneutic endeavour, this research became part of the spiral circle of discovery for both participants and for the researcher. In listening to them and to the conversation the researcher was sent back to find better ways of representing what the participants were saying theoretically. In this process, his own research gained on several levels, from material which formed the foundation of this research, to the material actually utilized which became the tools of this investigation. In an effort to understanding the therapeutic process a fusion of horizons indeed took place (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). The therapists attained an increased understanding of the therapeutic conversations they were involved in and the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the process in which these therapists were involved. The literary theories were useful as they assisted the researcher in reading texts c1 and c2 in a systematic way in order to come to this understanding.

Of course the warning of Giddens (1976) about the influence of a double hermeneutic is still valid, i.e. that the concepts influence the meaning of what is researched and that what is researched tends to become one with the concepts applied. For the researcher the danger remains that literary concepts could influence the reading of concepts which could then be justified by supporting evidence. In the process however a circular argument could arise and other valid viewpoints may be missed.

Theories already discussed, formed the main superstructure to this process, i.e. the theories of ambiguity, of foregrounding, of the 'psychonarrative', all of which seemed to form the structures of this hermeneutical involvement in the different texts that presented themselves, not least of which was the one with which I am struggling at present. It has become clear to me that the theories used are useful tools from which to approach understanding of texts, whether they be written texts or spoken ones. Spoken and oral texts are of course much more volatile and are of a more transient nature than written texts and can therefore not always be revisited.

Written texts carry with them an aspect of permanency and maybe contribute to a more relaxed approach, which is why it is possible to spend more time in devising strategies for unlocking the codes in which the written word is embedded. A written text has the appearance of greater simplicity than a spoken one, as it appears to have less complex wrappings. But as the different theories have pointed out, this is not the case. Readers of texts may themselves generate more intricacy and complexity, than simplicity.

The theories applied in the therapeutic setting, were (i) a theory on ambiguity, a (ii) theory on foregrounding and finally (iii) a theory on psychonarratology (as described in the 'readers progress') which deals with a constructed narrator as a reading partner. It was found in this research that ambiguity had indeed played an important role in influencing the therapy process, as it caused the therapists to reconsider what they had observed. The therapists were aware of this influence, but not as a 'stylistic code' in the language (Su, 1994; Miall & Kuiken, 1998). For both the therapists, and the researcher, the ambiguities became foregrounded text. For both the therapists, and the researcher, the respective texts were defamiliarized, as they became strange and asked for new methods of understanding. The therapists had to re-evaluate their conversation, questions and reactions in the light of the ambiguities in order to find ways of achieving understanding. The researcher had to assess whether these instances of foregrounded text should be called ambiguities and whether they influenced the therapists' reading of the therapeutic conversation.

Not only the ambiguities need new methods of understanding. Certain repetitions occurred which accompanied these ambiguities. For example, during the interviews the therapists had to evaluate the importance of certain statements. Sometimes this led to wrong interpretations, or to further interest, or even to confusion.

That a text is more than a collection of letters from the alphabet is what Miall and Kuiken (1998) appear to be saying. They make an important contribution by saying that text is a

collection of emotional codes and to which the reader relates. Language, in an oral situation, can function in a similar way. It is only to be expected that the cues or codes in the oral situation will be much more complex to understand than a reading situation. For therapist 'A', it was specifically an ambiguous sentence repeated several times, as well as the length of the narrated story that focussed her attention and increased her interest. For therapist 'B', the foregrounded text also arose out of an ambiguity, but a more subtle one, in which what was expressed and what was sensed seemed to be in opposition to each other. She seemed to experience, in herself, the affect which she had observed, and described this as anger. The possibility of, and how, the transference of emotions take place in specifically the reading of conversation and language code invites further investigation in a psychological setting.

Bortolussi and Dixon's (2003) theory on psychonarratology was also useful as it highlighted the mental processes of interpretation taking place in the therapists, of which one might not always be explicitly aware. This is not a new discovery, as discussions about self talk or inner speech have been around for quite a while (Vygotsky, 1981). What is useful in this approach is the way in which it is made explicit. The thought processes are externalized as characters. In this way, it becomes easier to listen to the sometimes conflicting processes that may sometimes be very confusing and also emotional. It is when this happens that the therapist can become aware of the 'hidden forces' influencing his or her own involvement in therapy, as a subjective participant.

What also became apparent was how aspects of these theories became the bricks and mortar of a hermeneutical process, which functioned at various levels, firstly at the level of the original therapy session and reflecting team (texts a1 and a2), then at the level of the videotape (text b), followed by the reflection of the therapists on text b (texts c1 and c2) and finally this reflection text d. These levels are not supposed to be watertight. Both therapists moved with ease from text b to text a and even to stories preceding the conversation. In her reflection, therapist 'A' focussed

more on the stories told by the clients (stories from events preceding and texts a1 and a2), whereas therapist 'B' focussed on the process of the conversation and how the stories were told, i.e. more on texts a1, a2 and b. This could be the result of each therapists own background, training and sensitivity to reading certain stylistic cues. Again for the reader of this text, depending on his/her context, differing conclusions may be drawn about the style of the respective therapists, and their intuitiveness. That is not the focus of this research.

At the critical (social) level, this research appeared to highlight how influential our own contexts are on how we interpret texts. Both therapists were involved in the same therapy session, but their focus or what they remembered and sub sequentially discussed was clearly very different. In a therapy session this variance in interests can be both stimulating and confusing. This research highlights once more how critically important it is in a social setting to make certain of its meaning when we use language. It may easily be ambiguous to the 'reader'. Behind the spoken language may lie a huge difference in the mental processes and interests involved. In South Africa with a population which speaks 11 languages and represents as many cultures, the research serves as a warning against complacency in the processes used for understanding.

It was necessary in this research to choose, at the outset whether the 'narrator' of this research would be first person, or third person narration, since it could have consequences in the presentation of this paper. In order not to take the focus away from the therapists it was decided to stick to the third. The one disadvantage is that there is no overt contribution from the researcher as participant in the hermeneutical process. The danger of not heeding Giddens' warning about the 'double hermeneutic' was also ever present, i.e. that data has a tendency to 'adapt' to the requirements of the theory. However this was avoided as the data actually forced the therapist to look for theory to meet its needs, i.e. the inclusion of theory on ambiguity. One also has to remember that this research is limited by selecting one text out of potentially an unlimited number. By focussing only on one text, the researcher restricted this report to the

hermeneutical processes at that level, although it was clear that the therapists moved much wider in their reflective processes. It was also decided to restrict the report to the hermeneutical processes of the therapists alone, giving an added impression of 'one-dimensionality'. This was necessary because of the intricacy of what was researched and its intuitiveness. In order to provide a fuller or richer picture, the contribution of the clients would have been invaluable. It was unfortunately necessary to restrict this research to this single conversation, although this adds to the restriction on the findings.

Another disadvantage of using one session was that the researcher had to use the material quite extensively in the reading and interpreting process, which led to a re-reading of the same in different ways and the quoting of the same material for different purposes. On the one hand this could lead to repetitiveness, laziness and boring reading. On the other hand this process recorded here highlights how different readings (re-readings) lead the reader to discover new perspectives and horizons in the hermeneutical process and how one can make different meanings from the same material. In that sense the re-reading of the same material, hopefully, adds to the deepness, or richness of the meaning made from the process.

Several unanswered questions have been raised by this research. What are the possibilities for increased cooperation between literary criticism and psychology? How can theories of psychology add to research in literary criticism? How can these and other literary theories be usefully employed within a psychological environment? Can these theories throw more light on typically psychological theories, such as the matter of transference of emotions? Could transference be the result of increased affect resulting from how certain codes are read?

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