

Mobilizing Students' Interpretive Resources: A Novel Take on Subjective Response in The Literature Classroom

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Abstract

A strand of research on literature pedagogy still refers to traditional, text-oriented methods in practice (Peirce, 1977; Todorov, 1982), with some studies addressing students' subjectivity through reader-response exercises involving reading logs, surveys, or journals. When looking at subjectivities in individual and collective classroom contexts, numerous studies have directed attention towards the interpretive strategies students mobilize when reading. Drawing on Sauvaire's (2013) typology of interpretive dimensions in reading, this qualitative case study investigates patterns emerging from students' written and verbalized expressions of their subjectivities in a 9th-grade literature classroom. The data point to conclusive results explaining pathways for interpretive strategies, which vary in group and individual settings.

Keywords

Texts, curriculum, subjectivity, interpretive resources

Introduction

Recent research on subjectivity in relation to literacy teaching and literature pedagogy has shown significant turns towards the use of multimodal practices (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Rowsell & Walsh, 2011; Walsh, 2010). Concurrently, findings from recent studies (Lebrun, Lacelle & Boutin, 2012; McLean & Rowsell, 2015; Rowsell, 2013) suggest that using modally complex texts in the classroom enlarges the potential to support students' contemporary literacy practices. Multimodal texts can play a pivotal role in subjective responses and peer interactions, suggesting tangible avenues for teaching and research in educational settings (Lacelle, 2012; Serafini, 2015; Sipe & Pantaleo, 2008). By multimodality, we mean the juxtaposition of plural and diverse visual, audible, kinesthetic, and linguistic modes through varying and fluid combinations—e.g. text-image combinations for comic books, or audible, visual, kinesthetic combinations for video gaming (Jewitt, 2009; Kress, 2010; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Lebrun, Lacelle & Boutin, 2012; Rowsell, 2013). In this paper, we address one aspect of multimodality in the act of reading. That is, when we stimulate, through questions and discussions, students' mental images and representations of the narrative, they draw on multimodality as they transpose the text in personal representations and subjectivity to describe their reception. The act of reading a print-based text is a multimodal activity in itself, because reading depends on the reader's ability to create mental representations of sounds, movements, scenes, characters, plot details, and so on. Bazalgette and Buckingham (2013) have previously explained that print-based texts are multimodal in nature: "multimodality theorists frequently insist that all texts are and always have been multimodal - even

print texts.” Furthermore, Rowsell (2013) refers to Bowen—a participant of her study—as an author relying on words to create fictional narratives, as to “exploit the power of words and their details and nuances to create a picture of a character or place” (p. 132). The very fact of convoking mental images of places, sounds, and imaginary worlds inscribes readers’ learning processes in multimodality. Along with Kress (1997), Jewitt (2005) has also famously defined reading as a multimodal practice:

Recognising the multimodal character of texts, whether print-based or digital, impacts on conventional understandings of reading [...] a monomodal written text offers the reader important visual information which is drawn into the process of reading [...] spatial organization and framing of writing [...] directionality, shape, size, and angle of a script [...] a variety of potentials for meaning-making with different representational principles underlying each writing system [...] both writing and reading are multimodal activities (pp. 326-327).

Looking at the implications of this pedagogical turn, we investigate the implications of a student-oriented approach to literature pedagogy, principally by looking at mobilized strategies that are channeled through students’ reading reactions, as captured in their written and voiced responses to an assigned narrative.

Literature teachers often face difficult challenges in their classrooms, such as balancing students’ opinions and reactions, often within the strict confines of curriculum demands that require one-dimensional answers. To address this, we argue that the expressions of students’ subjective interpretations in both individual and collective contexts are worthy of investment in reading.

Our rationale is that the literature classroom needs to adapt to students’ in- and out-of-school realities, keeping the dimension of subjectivity valid and current (Lebrun, Lacelle & Boutin, 2012; Beach, Appleman, Fecho & Simon, 2016; Hull & Schultz, 2002). Consequently, we argue that the practice of calling forth one’s unique mental images and representations in response to texts has the potential to bolster subjectivities in both individual and collective contexts, specifically in literature classroom settings. The data we analysed comes from reading surveys produced by grade 9 students after reading an abbreviated, pedagogically-focused version of Homer’s *Iliad*, published in 2000 at *École des Loisirs*, a publishing house focused on literature didactics editions of classic novels. We also present results emerging from conversations that were recorded between students during an in-class exercise, which aimed at developing the interconnectedness of students’ perspectives and subjectivity, as played out in the context of intersubjective literature explorations.

Conceptual Framework

Drawing on Rabinowitz’s (1987) *Before Reading* and Rosenblatt’s (1978) transactional theory of reading, we note that texts are ambiguous and inspire a plurality of subjective interpretations through, among other strategies, reader-response. We also think, as we will see later, that Jauss’s (1982) notion of horizons of expectations still rings true for today’s readers, especially in times where there has been a notifiable proliferation of literature extensions through transmediatic outlets. Reader response studies has undergone a series of changes in recent years, from incorporating multimodal response, to studying the place of commentary within subjective response (Massol & Shawky-Milcent, 2011), confirming the efficacy of reading logs (Sorin &

Lebrun, 2011), or conducting studies on reader-response through aesthetic reception to theatre (Lemieux, 2015, 2016) or poetry (Rannou, 2011, 2013). For the purposes of this article, we largely draw upon another recent reader-response model: Sauvaire's (2011, 2013) conceptual notion of "diverse subject," which stems from an emphasis on cultural diversity and identity.

Recent work on reader response (Iftody, Sumara, & Davis, 2006; Pantaleo, 2013; Sumara, Luce-Kapler, & Iftody, 2008) tackles the question of reader identity by exploring subjective responses to text in the Canadian context. If we are to ask readers about their reactions to text in individual and collective contexts, we must recognize that "reading is an act of identity making" (Sumara, 1998, p. 205) and that this identity might change depending on the context in which students are placed (Sumara, 1998). As such, in a case study where students were asked to respond to images paired with text in picture books, Pantaleo (2013) demonstrated that teaching requires giving students space to respond by acknowledging, in tribute to Rosenblatt, students' cultural, social, and personal histories. Sauvaire tackles similar issues through her typology of subjective resources, and her model proves useful in addressing diverse readers in literature pedagogy.

As numerous studies show (Iftody, Sumara & Davis, 2006; Nussbaum, 1998; Sumara, Luce-Kapler & Iftody, 2008), students' literary experiences provoke empathetic responses in both individual (e.g., imagining and "feeling" a character's situation) and collective settings (e.g., explaining or justifying a character's actions in front of a group of students). The latter and former actions tie into subjective reading as they call for understandings of the Other. Our study continues in that tradition insofar as it gave students the opportunity of experiencing these commonplaces forged by the text.

There are plural contributions of Sauvaire's model for literature pedagogy. Sauvaire's model is based on the premise that a reader's subjectivity is constructed through understandings of the self and the text. Although Sauvaire does not make the connection, we can link her approach to that of Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading. That is, Rosenblatt conceives understanding a text through a continuum of efferent and aesthetic stances, where efferent knowledge has to do with content details of the text, while the aesthetic refers to the reader's personal transaction with the text. Sauvaire talks about the awareness of the transaction on the reader's end which, ultimately, leads to their self-identification as a reader. Her model, inspired by the works of French theorists Rouxel and Langlade (2004) on the subject reader, operates on two levels: 1) in the collective sphere, where diverse interpretations of the same text are considered by several readers, and 2) in the individual realm, diverse interpretations of one reader, herself diverse by nature, are taken into account (cf. Sauvaire, 2013, p. 72). In that sense, Sauvaire's typology corresponds to that of Rabinowitz's (1987) model of readers' knowledge of narrative conventions, insofar as the conventions frame readers' responses to the text. Sauvaire's model speaks to the latter as readers come with individual backgrounds that frame their interpretations of text. Finally, similarities can be drawn between Sauvaire's model and Jauss's horizon of expectations in that they both situate the reader in historical contexts that are particular to their 21st Century reader identities.

Through her model, Sauvaire (2013) defines cultural diversity as an intersubjective dynamic process, and stresses three important processes that channel subjective reading: 1) reflexivity (return to the self), 2) mediation (return to the text), and 3) intersubjectivity (diversity in interpretations). We reproduced this overarching model in figure 1. The chart helps validate the diversity and plurality of readers' interpretations.

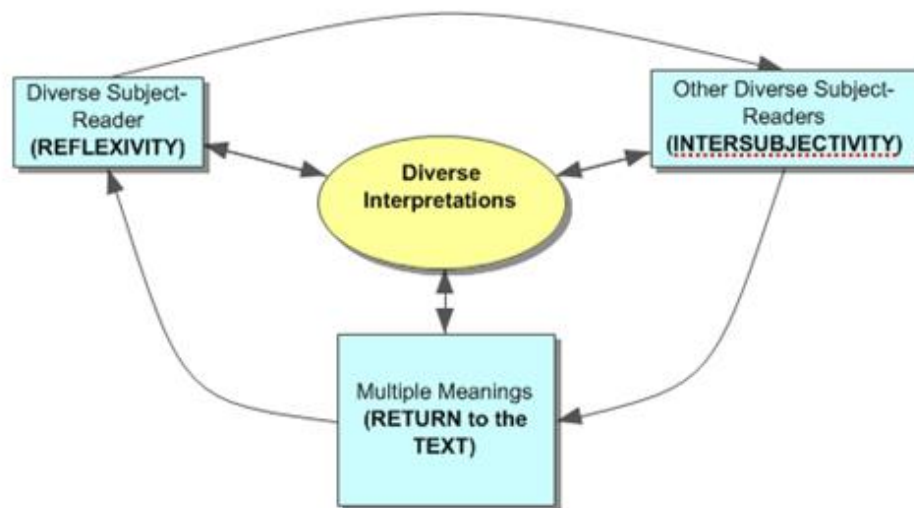


Figure 1. Sauvaire's (2013) Validation Chart of Diverse Interpretations

Building on these steps, we further owe to Sauvaire's six interpretive dimensions that the reader mobilizes in the reading act. They are of the following nature:

1. Epistemic (related to acquired general knowledge, notions, methods);
2. Cognitive (linked to cognitive processes and strategies);
3. Psycho-emotional (related to the reader's emotions, rapport with regards to reading or the book's subject);
4. Sociocultural (linked to community and/or family belonging, social relations, and cultural practices);
5. Axiological (linked to norms, moral and ethical values);
6. Material (related to the reading context –location and time, available tools and resources).

Due to its completeness and elaborate nature, and contributing to extant research in this area, we argue that Sauvaire's model provides a suitable model to investigate the diversity of subjectivities covered in our study. Following the research that has been undertaken in Europe on the theory of the "reader as subject" (Langlade & Fourtanier, 2007; Mazauric, Fourtanier & Langlade, 2011; Rouxel & Langlade, 2004), Sauvaire (2013) explains that her notion of the diverse reader falls within the hermeneutics of the self (Ricoeur, 1985) and preconizes readers' self-reflexivity in shaping their subjectivities (Sauvaire, 2013, p. 76). According to Sauvaire, both subjective and reflexive dimensions should be addressed in pedagogical reading activities, because it helps shape learners' interpretive diversity when reading. This reminds us of Fish's (1980) *interpretive community* of readers, insofar as diverse readers interpret the meanings of the text by using reading strategies that operate in particular social contexts, considered plural and diverse, as they are typically shaped in classrooms. Sauvaire's model does not stem from the same epistemological foundations as literary theoretical tradition in reading research in North America, for it addresses research on readers' identities in Francophone school settings based on the principle of reflexivity development, i.e. readers' reflections on the resources they mobilize when reading. Sauvaire's typology proves useful for contemporary research in reading pedagogy, as it sheds light on ways to shape diversity and alterity in students' reading development. Another

contribution of Sauvaire's model is that it is situated within a strand of research on literature teaching that values categories that have the potential to determine how subjective interpretations differ when expressed individually and collectively.

In light of this framework, we contribute to the conversation around diverse subjectivities by expanding on the concrete activities that we conducted with high school students. For the purposes of this article, we analyze the cognitive, psycho-emotional, sociocultural, and axiological resources present in students' responses. As such, we aim to answer the following research questions: What resources do students mobilize when individually involved in reading? How is one's subjectivity reflected in the collective encounters as prescribed in classroom contexts?

To answer these questions, we show how students in this study used different resources depending on the moments where they reacted to text individually, in subsequent instances where they voiced these individual interpretations in collective settings. This analysis gives insights into the types of individual transactions with which students engage with text, all the while showing how reading is a multimodal act that is determined by individual mental images made by readers-when-reading.

Methodology

In winter 2014, we conducted a three-month study with high school students from an all-girls private high school located in Montreal, Québec. The research took place within the context of a literature class with 9th grade students, and one of the requirements consisted in asking students to complete a portfolio, comprised of a pre-test, a reading questionnaire, a table to draw comparisons between the original text and its multimodal adaptation, a document to produce multimodal reproductions/extrapolations of the narrative, and a post-test. We audio-recorded students' re-articulations of their individual reading questionnaire responses when they were in their small groups. We identified a corpus of texts that were usually taught in grade 9 classrooms. From this selection, the teacher chose the five texts she wanted to explore with students in her class. We present the results from a group that chose (among the other offered books) the *Iliad* as their main narrative, and who presented the most variety in terms of their responses, as well as their individual responses in front of their peers. As such, in this article, we are specifically interested in students' responses as they were evolving in two contexts: 1) when they wrote individually in their reading questionnaire, and 2) when they explained the same responses to their peers. The latter discussions were audio-recorded in groups of five students. The questionnaires themselves were divided in two parts. The first part was designed to prompt mental images that students shaped when reading the *Iliad* (e.g. material representations of fictional characters, or anticipated sounds or images linked to the narrative). The second segment was developed to address questions related to axiological judgment, which focused on critical judgement about the narrative, likes and dislikes about characters, changes of opinions, and emotions (e.g. "Which character is the most endearing?" or "Which excerpt made you change your mind about a character?").

We use a moderate inductive approach (Richard, 2015; Savoie-Zajc, 2000; Van der Maren, 2007). That is, we had a predetermined research framework that "developed through time, and based on a retrospective back and forth between data collection and analysis" (Barrette, 2011, p. 241, our translation). In our case, we used Sauvaire's model, and in the data we observed, gender representation became evident and could not go unnoticed. Recent research (Sunderland, 2015) points to the importance of looking into students' interpretations and perceived representations of male and female characters in books and calls for the investigation of such issues. While certain

studies emphasize students' representations of gender in reader response settings (Harper, 2007; Rice, 2002), others focus on representations of masculinity and femininity in ancient texts like Homer's *Iliad* (Lev Kenaan, 2008; McAuley, 2010). Our study offers a modest contribution to these conversations, as is demonstrated in our data analysis.

Participant readers discussed their subjective readings in small groups of 4-5 students. We do not show the verbatim of these intersubjective discussions as it is not the ultimate focus of the analysis section of this paper. Rather, we show an application of Sauvaire's model in a literature classroom, as shown in students' individual written reflections, and the subsequent articulation of these responses at the collective level, in front of their peers. In other words, we are not addressing the scope of intersubjectivity in this article, as we are not analyzing how students verbally express themselves in interaction with others. Rather, we are interested in students' comments in the context where they are asked to explain their responses to peers, shedding light on the differences between the resources mobilized in individual, written responses compared to verbalized explanations in front of her group.

We examine the responses and exchanges of four participants within a group who read an abbreviated version of the *Iliad*. These four students were selected as one of the three groups that had to read the *Iliad*, and we present their responses with the aim of showcasing the depth of their individual and collective reactions. Each response showcases different types of collective and individual involvement patterns. To assess if a student is invested in their reading, we refer to Sauvaire's (2011, 2013) markers of individual investment (cf. Sauvaire, 2013, p. 265). Investment in reading is measured by the number of the aforementioned resources used by the student, following Sauvaire's model (Sauvaire, 2013) and as demonstrated in other studies (Lemieux, 2015, 2016; Lemieux & Lacelle, 2016; Langlade, 2006, 2007, 2015). Numerous studies point to the correlation between mobilized subjective resources and reading engagement. For instance, Langlade's (2007) typology of subjective reading processes determine instances of reading engagement. Indeed, for Langlade, engaged readers manifest themselves through negotiations between themselves self and the text, through the types of interactions they undergo when reading (Langlade in Mercier, 2002). In light of this, our study shows that if a student mobilized four resources or more, she is invested in her reading; three or less would indicate moderate to low degrees of reading involvement. Participants' real names are undisclosed and transposed into pseudonyms in all cases.

Table 1

Results

| | Invested individually | | Invested collectively |
|----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Participant 1 (Anna) | | Number and type of resources | Gave 10 replies to 9 questions out of 10. Not able to provide reflections and alternative thoughts/new perspectives towards Achilles's crying. |
| | Part 1 | 1/6 (cognitive) | |
| | Part 2 | 2/6 (psycho-emotional, sociocultural) | |
| | Total | 3/12 | |
| | | Number and type of resources | Took the lead in the discussion (10 instances out of 10) |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--------|---|---|
| Participant 2 (Cassandra) | Part 1 | 3/6 (cognitive, psycho-emotional, axiological) | questions); her written responses materialized in reflective thoughts. |
| | Part 2 | 3/6 (psycho-emotional, axiological, sociocultural) | |
| | Total | 6/12 | |
| Participant 3 (Susan) | | Number and type of resources | Answered seven questions with multiple, answers of variable length (7 verbal interventions) |
| | Part 1 | 3/6 (psycho-emotional, axiological, sociocultural) | |
| | Part 2 | 4/6 (sociocultural, cognitive, axiological, psycho-emotional) | |
| | Total | 7/12 | |
| Participant 4 (Heather) | | Number and type of resources | Answered all questions with replies of minimal depth and length (one or two lines). However, contributed in volume through 16 interactions, as opposed to in-depth replies. |
| | Part 1 | 2/6 (cognitive, psycho-emotional) | |
| | Part 2 | 2/6 (sociocultural, axiological) | |
| | Total | 4/12 | |

The Iliad

As main text, the teacher chose to assign an abridged version of Homer's ancient Greek epic poem *The Iliad*, specifically designed for 12-16 year olds. This foundational story depicts the very beginning of the Iliad with ten years of Greek occupation and battles with Trojans for Helen's beauty and the city of Troy. However, Achilles retires from the battle, as he is infuriated and emotional. Led by Hector, the Trojans head down the hill, and soldiers meet in battle as per Zeus' will. How will students interpret Achilles' quest: heroic, sensitive, manly, weak (as potential choices)? And what can we learn from grade-9 students' responses to such a masterpiece?

Anna's Responses

Anna's answers to the survey show traces of her individual implication in reading. In the first part, which looks at mental representations and interpretations, she provided a detailed description of Hera's behavior and actions towards her entourage. She referred to Hera's flair and seductive techniques, which are indicative of her ability to mobilize mental images, a category of cognitive strategies (Sauvaire, 2013, p. 139):

Hera uses *her flair* so that Zeus stops sending lightning when she sees her brother in combat. She goes to Aphrodite and asks her a favour: to end the unnecessary fight. With all her good will and innocence, she asks for the favour and Aphrodite executes her demands. She gives her a piece of cloth that she will tie to her heart, this will help her in asking what she wants. Her desires will be accomplished.

Through the narrative analysis of the first part of her responses, only the cognitive aspect was emphasized, which gave the impression that her response was purely descriptive. As such, Anna did not: judge, tell an anecdote, draw parallels with other texts/authors/stories, or relate the

character's actions to her own experiences. Thus, her perspective was limited in terms of these criteria (cf. Sauvaire, 2013).

In the second part, Anna developed her judgement in her writing from the first sentence onwards, when she states, "I did not like." This affirmation falls under the psycho-emotional category, which calls forth one's ability to express likes and dislikes. Anna strengthened her opinion by adding that Achilles' actions *annoyed* her, thus showing another psycho-emotional resource marker:

I did not like...when Achilles mourns his mother just because he was offended and he does not want to die. This part annoyed me a bit, because it showed me that Achilles acted like a coward and he did not know how to deal with people's comments and he needed someone to find a solution to his problem: his mother, who asks Zeus to help out Achilles, her son.

Anna referred to Achilles as a coward and dependent man, qualities that could be seen as unmanly. This remark derives from Western sociocultural resource, as it brings forth stereotypes indicating how men should act to be included in the socially constructed notion of masculinity. This tendency to judge Achilles according to this criterion emerged in other participants' responses in this study. We will address this pattern later in the paper.

Notwithstanding this emphasis, Anna testified that there was an event that made her change her mind about Achilles, specifically when "he demonstrated vigilance and determination when he fought for his peer soldiers." Again, the notion of masculinity is defined by the student in terms of the hero's willingness to fight for the common good, and to demonstrate his combat abilities.

During group work, students exchanged their views on characters and plot, Anna expressed her subjectivity through numerous detailed responses that mostly were directed towards Achilles' behaviour, thus expanding on her initial subjective responses. For example, she explained that, despite his willingness to fight for victory, he still cried "like a little kid in a young man's body." It seems as though Anna's reflection towards Achilles did not go beyond these remarks. Our interpretation is that her capacity to analyze Achilles' pathos seems to be limited. Never was there a verbalized thought about alternative meanings of crying, such as the capacity to express emotions or simply, be human. This perspective was absent from any student discussions or individual responses regarding Achilles. Overall, although she actively collaborated to the collective exchange, it seems as though the content and essence of her responses were constructed and limited by gendered stereotypes. These themes are typical of the heroic tales children often read growing up, and embedded in one's act of reading.

Cassandra's Responses

Cassandra displayed important manifestations of her subjectivity in the individual setting, as demonstrated in her reading survey. The first part of her survey presents the following answers:

Due to her considerable seduction abilities, Hera was able to make Zeus fall asleep to do what she wanted to favour the Greeks on the hill. *This struck me*, as I underestimated Hera's power, her actions seemed to me to be very intelligent and judicious...*I imagine* Hera to be a *young seductive woman with a sensual voice*. She walks in a distinguished manner and she is very attractive. She is *charming and confident* in front of Zeus. She helps people she loves and judges by herself what is good and what is wrong. I imagine that a large number of young men would fall in love with her for all these reasons.

Cassandra defined the narrative world with complex details and adjectives, and used descriptive terms to qualify Hera's attitude (e.g., "charming and confident," "seductive"). She explained that she did not anticipate Hera to be as powerful as she was, and that her actions "seemed to [her] to be very intelligent and judicious," as she found a way to make Zeus fall asleep by using her seduction techniques. Cassandra's response is thus elaborate and triggers, in this case, the cognitive, psycho-emotional, and axiological interpretive dimensions of Sauvaire's model. The resources are: 1) cognitive because Cassandra used strategies such as imagining and visualizing ("I imagine") Hera with particular character traits ("charming" and "seductive"); 2) psycho-emotional, as Cassandra expressed emotions herself; and 3) axiological because she provided a judgement towards Hera's ability to make men fall in love with her. Cassandra finally expressed in her writings that she would not have done anything differently in terms of characters' actions, for these exist for a reason and we should not change the sense of the events, and that one's reactions are individual—thus diverse—in their very nature. This stance demonstrates Cassandra's critical approach and reflectivity in response to her own reading and understandings of the narrative. Mobilizing three resources, she was thus moderately invested in her individual reading. In the second part of the survey, Cassandra wrote:

When I was reading, *I did not like Achilles' attitude*. He would always do what his mother said. I thought he should have acted *like a real strong Greek soldier*. He had a cowardly attitude. He could have been braver and be less fearful of danger and of the consequences of the actions that were taking place... When he went to fight the Trojans, *my perception of him changed* completely. In my eyes, he became a strong soldier, tenacious and courageous. His determination was so evident that he gave it all to satisfy his long-time friend.

In this second part, Cassandra mobilized as many resources as in the first part: 1) psycho-emotional resources by expressing she did not like the character's attitude; 2) axiological resources as her perception towards him changed (reflexivity towards her initial judgement), and 3) sociocultural, as she expressed what a "real strong Greek soldier" ought to look like. The sociocultural aspect is refined through stereotypes indicative of socially constructed descriptions of masculinity and war.

The recorded transcriptions of Cassandra's collective involvement and interactions seemed more important than ever. In 10 occasions out of 10, she took the lead by asking questions in her group so that the activity would go smoothly, and often confirmed her own subjective reading with that of her peers. At one point she even expressed: "So we're thinking the same thing." However, perhaps since she took a moderator role, at times she did not answer her own questions, letting instead the others voice their responses. That being said, she had strong opinions towards a question regarding which scene is most likely to make the reader react: "when she gets married, everyone will be like 'Why is she getting married?' I think it'll touch the readers. 'As if she did that! As if she had the courage to do that!' She already had a husband and then there she went sacrificing herself!" In this moment, Cassandra seemed to be very expressive and enthusiastic about her opinions. In terms of reflexivity (Sauvaire, 2013), she displayed visible aspects of a concern for the other, that is how she thinks others will react to a scene she deems important. This capacity certainly shows her individual reading investment and capacity to reflect in a collective setting.

Susan's Responses

Susan offered detailed responses to our questions. As such, in part 1, she qualified Hera as a fierce seductress whose intent was to manipulate Zeus. According to Susan, Hera's ways of getting what she wants were elevated by her beauty, scents, and determination, clearly favouring the Achaean population:

Hera, wife of Zeus and queen of Greek gods, *pampered herself to seduce Zeus* so that she could *manipulate him* so that he would do what she wants. She put her beauty *to her advantage*, she perfumed herself, and she lied not only to Aphrodite but to Zeus as well. She *knew* the only way to distract her husband, king of gods, and she executed her plan without anyone noticing it. She did everything in her power to favour the Achaeans. *I imagine Hera as very beautiful and feminine*, dressed with a white toga and gold ornaments. Her *long hair*, tied in a bun, and her staggering eyes fixated on Zeus on Mount Ida. With a *lilac and camomile perfume*, she approached him with a calm, yet authoritarian voice.

In this example, Susan utilized an axiological process to articulate that she perceived Hera as one who calculates and plans her actions meticulously with blatant manipulative intentions. Similarly to Cassandra, she mobilized psycho-emotional resources in this excerpt, for she expressed her opinions through the pronoun "I," indicative of positionality, personified opinion, self-empowerment, and ultimate marker of subjectivity. However, the use of "I" comes a little late in the excerpt (i.e., in the 5th sentence). Furthermore, she used cognitive resources the moment she wrote "imagine," drawing on the visualizing ability to conceive a character without seeing or meeting them. Susan described with precision the image she made of Hera, her hair, perfume, clothing, and so on. This last element not only strengthened Susan's cognitive resource identified earlier, as she mentally imagined Hera's character traits, but also suggested the emphasis on a more subtle sociocultural resource; that of the conception of femininity. Susan's socially constructed portrayal of Hera as "beautiful and feminine," with additional attributes such as her "lilac and camomile perfume," "long hair tied in a bun," or her white toga. Femininity is depicted as having a double-function: 1) it is attainable through a woman's external and visible traits, and 2) it is understood as a manipulative tool through which seducing a male counterpart becomes possible. Susan's answers are thus similar to those of Cassandra's who also depicted Hera as seductive. However, Cassandra did not bring in the notion of femininity (that is, a socially- and culturally-constructed notion). Anna also referred to Hera's flair without mentioning femininity at any point. We could thus argue that Susan mobilized three resources in the first section: 1) axiological 2) psycho-emotional, and 3) sociocultural.

In the second section, Susan continued to exhibit sociocultural aspects in her meticulously detailed subjective responses. As such, she tackled the subject of masculinity ("being manly") in terms of the expected images of brave soldiers. Introducing the social anticipated role of men with the words "socially-speaking," Susan definitely engaged—some would argue perhaps at a superficial level—with notions and understandings of masculinity and femininity.

At the beginning, I thought I did not like Achilles. I found him a bit of a wimp. He did not want to fight because he felt insulted by Agamemnon, he always looked for his mother's help... all that struck me as not *being manly*. He would prove otherwise during fights, but apart from that, *socially-speaking, he did not look like a brave soldier*.

Susan expressed that her opinion towards Achilles changed from seeing him as a soft to contemplating him as a strong character who demonstrated, in her opinion, clear signs of “virility.” For Susan, masculinity materializes through the use of adjectives such as “courageous,” “strong,” and “determined” as opposed to actions typical of a character who is “drowning like a young girl”:

I changed my perspective towards a character in a chapter with Xanthan and Hephaistos... *I realized* to what extent Achilles was *courageous, strong, and determined*. He was passionate and wanted to avenge his friend. He dismissed a god’s advice so that he could continue to kill and for that reason *I think* he is *very courageous*. He did not want to die by *drowning like a little girl*, so he prayed, which was a smart decision in my eyes. He proved his *virility* in this struggle and that made me change my mind about him.

The change in perspective resulting from choosing to box a character within a binary understanding of gender is indicative of a reflexive state (i.e., the change of mind) that is of a sociocultural nature. The adjectives Susan used to describe conceptions of masculinity and femininity are not opposed, but rather typical of common unrefined stereotypes associated with gender. That is, men are strong and courageous, women can be determined if they want, but to achieve their will they have to be pretty and seductive (see Susan’s notes on Hera), if not they are just destined to fail (e.g. “drowning like a little girl.”)

In this excerpt, we note that Susan used three more resources, the first being cognitive, for she demonstrated the ability to summarize a plot event and reflect upon it. The second is axiological, as she qualified Achilles’ decision as a judicious one, and justified his actions as she felt he was right in defending his compatriot. The third one is psycho-emotional because Susan ascribed Achilles with psycho-affective intentions (i.e., “he did not want to die by drowning like a little girl.”)

In the group exchanges, Susan mostly articulated generalizations and preferences as manifestations of her subjectivity. She exposed her ability to ask questions and she even answered them: “Is it by jealousy that Paris did not choose Athena as the prettiest woman? Probably. She is ardent and manipulative.” Without implicating a causality between Athena’s manipulative tactics and her beauty, Susan did juxtapose the idea that manipulation and beauty are incompatible. According to that logic, had they been congruent, Athena could have been considered the prettiest woman.

Susan did come back to her initial individual response by repeating that the only time she found Achilles manly was when he went to combat. She restated that “when he was crying and asking his mother for help, I didn’t like him,” without further explanation. She demonstrated a modest collective implication, repeating answers from her survey, but also adding new information and commentary on characters like Paris. Her reflective capacities remained, however, limited: she did not provide deep critical thinking that could have nuanced her opinion towards gendered roles and attitudes (e.g., the act of crying).

Heather’s Responses

In her individual written responses, Heather briefly described Achilles through her own narrative imagination and mental imagery:

Achilles was not expecting Patrocle’s and Ulysses’s presence, he greeted them. I imagine

that Achilles immediately stood up, with a very welcoming voice. He was probably wondering why they were there.

This passage certainly testifies that Heather mobilized her cognitive abilities through mental imagery, portraying Achilles' demeanour, voice, and reaction to an unforeseen visit. Her last sentence is connected to a psycho-emotional resource, as she formulated the hypothesis that Achilles is likely wondering about the reason behind the visit. Yet, the reader has no indications of Achilles's state of mind about this event.

Similarly to her peers, Heather engaged in a discussion that also resulted in the description of a stereotyped masculinity, in the second section. Like Susan and Cassandra, Heather changed her perception of Achilles, this time in a pejorative way. She went from admiring Achilles as a "courageous, brave, and real Roman soldier" to thinking he was a weak character because he cried. In this response, the underlying message brings to light the stereotype that a man expressing his sadness and fears through tears cannot represent a virile figure. Her perspective falls under the category of sociocultural resource mobilization, because it is related to socially constructed notions of gender roles and attitudes.

When Achilles cries and asks his mother to solve the problem. He is a soldier, who fought a lot, and he *cries for something that is not important*. I changed my mind about him, because he previously fought like a *courageous, brave, and real Roman soldier*. I would have acted differently than that time when Achilles went crying to his mom so that he could get revenge. I would have acted *like a man*, and I would have found a solution by myself.

Heather voiced her opinion on the actions she would have taken if she had been in Achilles' position. For that reason, she mobilized an axiological resource, as she envisioned what she would have done in his place. Interestingly though, and perhaps most shockingly, she stated she would have acted *like a man*, rather than like herself, the young woman she is. In reading her last sentence, Heather also hints at the underlying message that women cannot find solutions by themselves.

In the group discussion, Heather replied in multiple, short answers, rarely saying more than two sentences. She often agreed with her peers (e.g., "yes, that's it," "that's what I wrote too.") When the conversation came to the topic of Achilles, she seconded her peers' comment in saying he was feminine, and explained it was "stupid" that he went crying to his parents because he was offended and knew his death awaited him. Expanding on her responses, Heather added: "it's obvious that Aphrodite is the pretty one, and so it's obvious that men will fall in love with the goddess of love and beauty. They won't choose the woman who has attitude and thinks she's the best... like Athena." If this citation was taken out of context, the logic behind Heather's remark could suggest that men would be interested in women who are physically appealing, as opposed to strong-willed, determined women (e.g. Athena). In any case, the meaning-making emerging from Heather's statement underlies that beauty overpowers intellect and ambition. Looking at Heather's opinions on and description of manly and feminine behaviours, her degree of reflexivity towards gender stereotypes seems to be limited, for the reasons outlined earlier. More nuanced perspectives would have taken into consideration other alternatives that might represent manhood and womanhood. For example, the student could have envisioned the possibility that a strong or empowered woman would be attractive to men. She could also have described Hera and Athena's own, independent qualities, rather than qualifying them in their relation to men.

Outlining Diverse Subjective Instances

While we did not originally anticipate that the individual subjective responses and collective discussions would cover, consciously or unconsciously, the topic of gender and stereotypes, we can assuredly argue that students' responses to the *Iliad* triggered further conversations around the perceived meanings of "manly" and "feminine" in socially constructed views. That is, the underlying messages emerging from the discussions highlight that femininity emanates from beauty and physical attributes, while masculinity depicts "virile" actions such as participating in combat and war. In other words, a real man goes to war as a strong soldier, fighting for his peers and comes back bearing a victorious flag. While we must concede that, within the narrative whose version derives from an oral tradition dated more than a 1000 years, there is no space in this story for women to be "manly soldiers." That is, in this abridged version of the *Iliad*, the characters, most of which are gods and soldiers, exude stereotypical traits and virtues to which we previously pointed in this article. As a brief example from students' writings, narrative situations seem odd and unusual when male characters adopt "feminine" traits (e.g., crying or complaining) and when female characters develop "manly" attitudes (e.g., Athena's determination keeps her from being pretty). However, this may not have been the original goal of the tale. All depicted gods have great strengths and flaws, which are to be looked up to and feared by mere mortals.

Nevertheless, this notion does not keep us, as teachers and educational researchers, from addressing the underlying meanings of stereotypes in narratives in general. For students, like their teachers, typically read texts with a normal historical and sociocultural situation, as Jauss (1982) previously demonstrated in his well-accepted horizon of expectations theory. That is, an audience or readership will always tend to impose—consciously or unconsciously—their societal concerns, norms, historical postures, and previous readings that shape reading perceptions and subjective receptions. In our case, reading in the 21st Century poses questions that regard social justice, socially constructed gender roles and attitudes, as well as the production of narratives that exhort reflections and thoughts reflective of subjectivities. We further maintain that these variables need to be addressed and discussed as part of classroom-based practices involving children and critical reflections on reading.

Our premise was that influences on reading engagement are understood on two levels. The former is personal because the reader enters a world of intimate reactions to the reading object, and the latter is social, as the first stage of interaction takes place between the author and the reader. The subsequent interaction stages take place within social contexts, as we are social creatures capable of identifying with people and events in the story, we can share our meaning making with others.

Looking across the individual written responses of four students, we found that the main tendencies of subjective writings were cognitive (n=5), psycho-emotional (n=6), axiological (n=5), and sociocultural (n=5). Only the epistemic and material categories were not solicited in students' narrative. Potential reasons explaining this absence are two-fold. First, the epistemic resource implies procedural knowledge about either narrative structures or literature-based notions (e.g., genres, historical trends, and literary criticism). In the four individual and collective cases we presented, adolescent readers did not gather these aspects, nor did they pay attention to material aspects that relate to their personal reading of the *Iliad*. Indeed, we could not identify a single reference to the book's format features, reading locales and temporalities, supporting devices or tools. We argue that the questions we asked did not directly prompt reflections regarding the physical formal qualities (i.e. book features) of the literary work. Nevertheless, not asking

questions pertaining to formal qualities should not keep students from exploring or mobilizing such perspectives in their subjective manifestations emerging from the reading act. We must also note that the topic was neither broached in individual reading surveys nor in-group exchanges.

Reviewing recorded discussions, we observed the number of contributions for each student in the group. After tabulating this numerical indicator of collective investment, we considered the topics in which students engaged. In so doing, we studied students' potential to reflect on their responses, as prescribed in Sauvaire's (2013) scheme for mobilizing resources as subjective interpretation measures. Through close investigations of intersubjective play between students' speeches, we found that one speaker, Cassandra, took the floor to guide the discussion, rather than each student sharing moderator agency, democratically taking turns to ask questions and drive the discussion forward. Though we instructed students to choose a moderator for group work, we never assigned this responsibility to a specific student.

The data emerging from students' conversations point to an inevitable comparison between individual and collective response settings. Indeed, students expressed a deeper involvement in their individual written texts compared to their verbalized responses in peer discussions. This was the case for Susan, who mobilized more subjective resources than her peers in the individual work, but offered few responses of variable length and depth in the shared opinions exercise. A diametrically opposed example surfaces in Anna's case, as she had just a few individual responses, while during the group recording she contributed by providing 10 replies to 9 questions, despite a lack of reflective instances towards the sociocultural resources she mobilized regarding Achilles's behaviour. We saw in Heather's case that her individual involvement was moderate, with four subjective interpretive aspects. Her replies during group work were numerous (16 instances), yet lacked length and depth. Cassandra demonstrated fairly extensive individual involvement in her individual reading survey, and showed her outspoken leadership qualities in-group discussions. Overall, the analyzed data demonstrate individual involvement patterns representative of subjective and interpretive aspects of their writing. However, this individual interaction with the narrative does not always manifest itself in-group discussions. The opposite has proven to be true: while some students might be less comfortable in writing, their voice might shine if they feel comfortable enough in live exchanges.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we explored individual and collective expressions of subjectivities in response to a well-known classic that is still taught in schools all over the world. Looking across the individual written productions of four students working in the same group, we found that all readers mobilized at least one resource from Sauvaire's (2013) model of diverse interpretations through multiple subjective processes. Readers either used cognitive, axiological, psycho-emotional or sociocultural strategies when narratively expressing their responses. Cognitively-oriented reactions encompassed channelling mental images about characters or the plot, summarizing main ideas about the text, engaging narrative imagination and producing mental images. Axiological responses pointed to students' expressions of personal values through their preferences, dislikes, and judgements towards characters' actions and attitudes. We further highlighted excerpts in which readers expressed emotions through affective practices, as exemplified in passages where readers attributed psycho-emotional intentions and motivations to characters. Finally, sociocultural-embedded reactions presented statements that related to notions of masculinity, virility, and femininity associated with characters' actions and attitudes in the *Iliad*. Furthermore, we demonstrated that in collective instances some students felt more comfortable

leading the discussion by asking the questions, while others preferred answering with either simple or detailed answers expanding on their initial individual responses. These verbal exchanges did not specifically operate in parallel with students' previous individual written responses.

We acknowledge a few limitations in this study. First, we identify some time requirements in the close monitoring of discussions. As we originally intended in the research design, recorded verbal exchanges tracked students' opinions; however, we did not set a specific time for each student to take the floor, nor did we nominate a discussion leader. Rather, we empowered students by giving them the choice to make these decisions themselves. It would have been difficult for us to do otherwise given our constructivist background. Indeed, constricting discussion time and format would likely have produced artificial and close-ended discussions, even without taking into account the levels of stress that such tracking can inflict on participants. Second, the questions in our reading survey did not aim to incite epistemic and material resources in students' subjective responses. These resources were rather explored in our work on transfiction and transmodalization (see Lacelle & Lebrun, 2015; Lacelle & Lemieux, 2014). Third, we did not specifically point to differences in students' culture or identity as we intentionally focused on subjective resources mobilized by students. It can be argued that cultural and identity ties are the very foundations of subjective interpretations, and we acknowledge that this might be the case in this study, without it being the scope of the present research. We strongly encourage social studies experts, as well as social and cultural reader-response theorists who adopt these perspective in all-encompassing ways to pursue further studies in this area as it is much needed.

This study offers new insights into adolescent readers' ways of reacting to text, first individually, and then collectively when asked to present the same responses in peer groups. We showed evidence of student readers' mental images when reading, and how subjective reading instances, while situated in time, are *lieux* for showing how reading is a multimodal act. Future avenues for classroom research might include studies that detail individual responses and collective work on stereotyped actions, as occasionally prescribed in well-known narratives of children and young adult literature. A potential way of conducting such studies would be by drawing on strategies that call forth diverse interpretive states through participant-developed moment-by-moment reactions (Lemieux, 2015, 2016). Alternative research possibilities should be beneficial in addressing manifestations of fiction through multimodal productions as responses to narratives, building on the recent applied investigations conducted both at the elementary (Pantaleo, 2007, 2010, 2013) and high school (Lacelle, 2014; Lacelle & Lebrun, 2015) levels. With these objectives in mind, educational researchers must envision the inevitable necessary subjective instances of adolescents reacting to the texts they are given in curriculum-driven contexts.

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