A Free Order Approach to Literary Theory and to the

Critical Analysis of Kate Chopin's

"La Belle Zoraïde"

By

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my professors, who have taught me so well, and to my family, who has loved me so much:

- to Professor Robert Evans and Professor Alan Gribben, who have been generous beyond expectation with their advice and encouragement, and who represent the best that academia has to offer to students;
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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS TOPIC

While literature and literary studies are important and naturally evolving cultural artifacts in many social systems, this thesis argues that they are especially important cultural products in social systems that are guided by individual free choice and exchange. These "free order" social systems (such as those that have evolved in Western Europe and the United States) are continuously challenged by the tension and conflict that is generated by the competing forces of cultural transformation and cultural conservation.[1] This thesis asserts that a community enhances its ability to weather these tensions and conflicts when free choice is effectively exercised and when exchange is productive. Literature and literary studies enjoy a unique opportunity to enrich the free order community's free choice and exchange activity, and thereby to contribute to the culture's survival and evolution, by strengthening individual abilities to reason, imagine, and learn and by fostering communication and trust in the community.

Recognizing the importance of literary studies in free order social systems, one might logically expect that free order cultures would generate a substantial body of literary theory and critical analysis which specifically addresses the needs and opportunities of such systems. Yet despite the wide variety of literary theories being advocated in contemporary literary studies, there seems to be no single theory that fully explores the complex dimensions and interactions inherent in the relationship between literature and a free order social system. Moreover, despite a plethora of critical approaches that are overtly founded on philosophical, psychological, sociopolitical, and

other models, there is no critical approach that consciously operates within a conceptual framework defined by free order issues. No doubt the great diversity of literary theories and critical approaches that dominate contemporary Western literary studies is itself a reflection of the free exchange of ideas that a free order culture engenders; nonetheless, the seeming neglect of a theoretical and critical framework which directly addresses free order issues is curious.

A theoretical and critical approach that incorporates a free order perspective into literary analysis can indeed be useful to a free order culture. Since the literary products that emerge from a free order culture reflect the properties, propensities, and history of that culture, a critical analysis that "objectively" incorporates these elements (that is, without a negative prejudgment of the ideology underlying free order social systems, but with an open attitude about the challenges that exist in such systems) can provide an illuminating analysis of the unique experiences and concerns associated with free order social systems. Moreover, by acknowledging and advocating the importance of literature and literary studies to a free order culture, a free order perspective can encourage the culture at large to participate in and appreciate literary experiences. Finally, a free order approach to the critical analysis of Western literature advances productive textual analysis by considering the literary product within the theoretical framework of the culture in which it was produced, thereby pre-empting the socio-political theoretical objections (such as those rooted in Marxist and other anti-Western doctrines) that often overshadow literary issues.[2] In all these ways and certainly many others, a free order perspective can enrich the individual's literary experience, the fields of literature and literary studies, and the welfare of the free order culture itself.

With these (and other) potential benefits in mind, then, this thesis represents an effort to take the initial steps toward the development of a theoretical and critical perspective founded on free order principles such as free choice, exchange, and spontaneous order. This perspective blends traditional humanist and liberal concepts (derived from scholars such as Adam Smith, F. A. Hayek, and William James) and a postmodern interest in chaos theory (as explored by James Gleick, John Holland, and N. Katherine Hayles) with the contemporary literary scholarship of theorists such as M. A. Abrams, John Ellis, and Reed W. Dasenbrock. The result is a unique theoretical framework that suggests an optimistic perspective that is at once contemporary and humanistic, as opposed to the skeptical and/or divisive perspectives advanced by many dominant contemporary literary theories (i.e., Derrida's deconstructionism, Jameson's and Eagleton's Marxism, or Staneley Fish's conventionalism).

The work has been divided into four sections: Section One explores the theoretical concepts that define free order, including free choice, exchange, and spontaneous order; Section Two considers the implication of these concepts for literary theory and criticism, especially as they pertain to language and the text, the author, the reader, and the critic; Section Three suggests the critical potential of such an approach through a free order critical analysis of Kate Chopin's short story "La Belle Zoraïde"; and Section Four surveys the contemporary atmosphere of literary studies and suggests some of the contributions a free order perspective might make.

SECTION ONE:

AN OVERVIEW OF FREE ORDER THEORY

The long view of history suggests that the forces of cultural transformation and those of cultural conservation are engaged in a dialectical symphony of novelty, tension, conflict, and resolution that directs the evolution of civilization. The "free order theory" developed in this thesis embraces this social view, and argues that the constructive evolution of cultural values and the productive integration of cultural change are best effected through the accumulated struggles of individual members of a free community to adapt to the challenges of their environments. At the social (or macro) level, this accumulation of individual activity fuels a dialectical process that engenders "spontaneous" cultural change. Spontaneous cultural change is thus the product of a continuous creative process that weaves the knowledge, talents, and values of individual members of the community into a single cultural fabric.

The optimal outcome of this dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change, free order theory argues, occurs when individuals enjoy wide latitude in their freedom to choose and when individuals and groups participate in high levels of productive exchange activity. It is important to note that "choice" and "exchange" extend beyond traditional economic concepts to include all aspects of experience in free order social systems. In fact, while a free economic marketplace provides perhaps the clearest example of the dynamics of a free order system, the individual and society are confronted daily with a

variety of marketplaces in which choices of all kinds must be made. These marketplaces involve the physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social, and moral dimensions of the community's experience, as well as the economic. In all marketplace activity, whether economic or non-economic, individuals enjoy the opportunity to optimize their conditions (that is, to improve their life experiences) through free choice and productive exchange. In other words, the unique dynamics of free order systems (that is, those forces which are spawned by free choice and productive exchange) cultivate an environment that is favorable to the individual's and the society's efforts to optimize their conditions.

Indeed, it is the creative force generated through free choice and productive exchange that fosters the efficacy of free order social systems. Specifically, free choice and productive exchange enable individuals to develop their abilities to creatively adapt to their environments; this "creative ability" involves, in part, the individual's development of reason and imagination as well as her ability to learn from experience. In a free order social system, the accumulation of individual creative abilities creates an autonomous force that directs the culture's evolution, and when this autonomous force is composed of continuously improving individual creative abilities, cultural evolution generates novelty and efficiency. Novelty and efficiency are important byproducts of individual creativity because they increase the quantity and improve the quality of options available to individuals and the community as they respond to their environments and work to improve their conditions. A social system that nurtures individual creative abilities thus enjoys an important resource with which the community can productively fuel its self-organizing activity toward constructive cultural change.

While free order theory is clearly concerned, then, with the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change (which suggests a macro perspective), it is equally concerned with issues related to free choice and exchange (which involve a micro perspective). In fact, free order theory combines a contemporary concept of spontaneous order (that is, that individuals and social systems have the capacity to achieve order through self-directed activity) with the traditional Western view that the individual is a free agent and has the right to exercise free choice in the community's exchange activity. Inherent in the concept of free agency (and, therefore, a fundamental assertion of free order theory) is the presumption that each human being represents a unique and central subject, or "Self," who possesses a creative ability (composed in part by her abilities to reason, imagine, and learn) to determine and provide for her own needs and happiness. Importantly, the concept of "free agency" also implies ownership of Self, and all forms of property (physical, economic, intellectual, or other) can be viewed as an extension of or investment in Self. Indeed, property rights are a logical and necessary component of the community's exchange activity, as the individual certainly cannot exchange something that she does not own. Along with prerequisites of free agency and property rights, two additional conditions for productive exchange are "trust" and "communication"; in order for a community to enjoy productive exchange, individuals must be able to trust in and communicate with one another. Moreover, the productive exchange that occurs in a community bound by trust and communication reciprocally reinforces the stability of that community by encouraging its members to include a moral dimension in their exercise of free choice. Under these optimal circumstances (that is, where choice and exchange occur under the auspices of free agency, property rights, trust, and communication),

individuals and groups simultaneously respond to and influence one another and their environments, and they thereby fuel the dialectical process that engenders spontaneous cultural change. Conceptually, this dialectical process and the cultural change it engenders reflect the properties and consequences of spontaneous order.[3] Therefore, the following review of the concept of spontaneous order should provide a firm basis for understanding the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change.

In brief, "spontaneous order" refers to the capability of, or tendency for, components of dynamic systems to self-organize without control from any central directing authority. The autonomous, self-directed activity that is characteristic of spontaneous order implies that freedom is an inherent property of the concept; this in turn suggests that a system that does not constrain the free activity of its constituent components provides the optimal environment for spontaneous activity. Accordingly, a fundamental assertion of this thesis is that individuals and communities represent dynamic systems that spontaneously self-order, and that a social system that promotes individual freedom through free choice and productive exchange provides the optimal environment for a productive dialectical process which, in turn, ensures the greatest opportunity for the community to benefit from its spontaneously ordered activity.

The theory of spontaneous order involves many important ideas that are relevant to free order social systems, including individual activity (i.e. free choice), interaction (i.e. exchange), and feedback (i.e. learning and the development of creative abilities). These ideas are reflected in Ethan Decker's description of the organizing activity that is characteristic of spontaneous order:[4]

> The world abounds with systems and organisms that maintain a high internal energy and organization ... What is so fascinating is that the organization seems to arise spontaneously from disordered conditions ... Somehow, the order arises from the multitude of interactions among the simple parts; the laws that may govern this behavior are not well understood. It is clear, though, that the process is nonlinear, using ... feedback loops among components at the lowest level of the system and between them and structures that form at higher levels. (Decker 2)

In a spontaneously ordered *social* system, then, the community represents the dynamic system that self-organizes into a cohesive structure according to the activities and interactions of its individual members (i.e. Decker's "simple parts"). In a *free order* social system, I argue, the interaction that occurs between individuals and institutions as a consequence of free choice and productive exchange ensures the feedback that is necessary in order for "learning" to become integrated into the community (i.e. Decker's "feedback loops"). This integration of learning enhances the creative abilities of individuals and the community so that they are better prepared to respond to the chaotic (disordered, dynamic, complex, and uncertain) conditions of their environment. In essence, then, spontaneous order represents the process by which dynamic systems (such as free order social systems) continuously pursue order in a chaotic environment.

"Spontaneous order" as a theoretical construct for social systems first gained attention with the 1776 publication of Adam Smith's seminal treatise on classical economics, The Wealth of Nations.[5] Smith's work connects the concept of spontaneous order with the Enlightenment philosophy that all individuals have a natural right to define

and pursue their own needs. Since both of these sets of ideas clearly correspond with those on which this thesis is based (the individual as a free agent, and individuals and social systems as self-ordering entities), and in as much as a free marketplace provides a clear example of free order dynamics, Smith's work and the rich tradition of classical economics that followed hold particular relevance for free order theory.[6]

The central image around which Smith developed The Wealth of Nations is that of a free order (or "free market") economy. Although Smith's work is today considered a rather tame mainstay of classical economics, it was quite revolutionary for its time; its cultural significance thus reflects the evolution of Western thought regarding social economy. In The Worldly Philosophers, Robert Heilbroner emphasizes that The Wealth of Nations' revolutionary reputation derived in part from Smith's democratic view of the market system and from his recognition that the economic system as a whole is driven by the individual self-interest of each market participant. Indeed, Smith argues that the well-being of a community at large (or "the wealth of the nation") depends on *all* the constituent members of the community having the opportunity to exercise free choice and engage in productive exchange toward their own ends.[7] It is an integrated view of social economy that values the contributions made by each individual member of the community. Heilbroner explains that, in The Wealth of Nations,

> it is not (Smith's) aim to espouse the interests of any class. He is concerned with promoting the wealth of the entire nation. And wealth, to Adam Smith, consists of the goods that all the people of society consume; ... this is a democratic, and hence radical, philosophy of wealth. (53)

Smith's primary effort in The Wealth of Nations, Heilbroner explains, is to "lay] bare the mechanisms by which society hangs together" and allocates its resources to the benefit of all members of the society (Heilbroner 53). Smith examines England's economic life to explain how it is that, in the absence of a central planning dictator, a community of self-interested individuals manage to coordinate their diverse, separate, and often incompatible activities in a manner that meets the general needs of the community. Economist Milton Friedman summarizes the theoretical substance of Smith's work as follows:

> *The Wealth of Nations* ... analyzed the way in which a market system could combine the freedom of individuals to pursue their own objectives with the extensive cooperation and collaboration needed in the economic field to produce our food, our clothing, our housing. Adam Smith's key insight was that both parties to an exchange can benefit and that, *so long as cooperation is strictly voluntary*, no exchange will take place unless both parties do benefit. No external force, no coercion, no violation of freedom is necessary to produce cooperation among individuals all of whom can benefit. That is why, as Adam Smith put it, an individual who "intends only his own gain" is "led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention." (Friedman, Free 1-2)

In other words, Smith proposes that the key to productive social organization in a free market economy lies in the concept of spontaneous order, which he describes as the market's "invisible hand." Smith explains that the invisible hand is the mechanism that directs "the private interests and passions of men" to spontaneously coalesce into an

order "which is most agreeable to the interest of the whole society" (qtd. in Heilbroner 54). Smith's concept of the free market's invisible hand clearly recalls Decker's description of the spontaneous order that arises "from the multitude of interactions among the simple parts" (2), and the free market emphasis on voluntary exchange clearly reinforces the free order concept of free choice and exchange. It is therefore clear that Smith's model of a free market directed by an "invisible hand" reflects the properties of a free order system. Indeed, through the individual's exercise of free choice and his participation in exchange activity with other individuals in the community, Smith's "invisible hand" autonomously directs the free market's self-organizing activity. Through these deceptively simple behaviors (choice) and interactions (exchange), the free order community develops and allocates resources, transfers information, creates and transfers knowledge, refines communication, and identifies values. In other words, free choice and exchange facilitate the spontaneous order that enriches the wealth of the nation.

While the intellectual heritage of "spontaneous order" reaches back to Smith's eighteenth-century socio-economic thought, it has become noteworthy in contemporary studies as part of the larger body of theory revolving around the study of disorder, or "chaos theory."[8] In fact, it is the notion that spontaneous order represents a transition from disorder to order that has brought the concept to the forefront of contemporary academic and popular thought; and it is this same notion that suggests the creative potential inherent in the free order system's dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. The concept that describes the creative potential of spontaneous order is "emergence," and it too is prominent in contemporary chaos theory.[9] Specifically,

emergence theory explores the dynamics of self-ordering systems (such as free order social systems) in which the results that emerge from the system as a whole exceed those that could be generated independently by the system's individual components.[10] In other words, emergence theory explores the phenomenon of much coming from little, or of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Emergence theory is thus concerned with the synergistic interactions that occur *between* or *among* a system's component parts (or in a free order social system, for example, with the synergies created by the community's exchange activity).

In Emergence: From Chaos to Order, John Holland describes emergence as "a ubiquitous feature of the world around us," from the germination of a seed to "complex adaptive systems" such as "ant colonies, networks of neurons, ... the Internet, and the global economy" (2). Emergent systems, Holland explains, are those in which "... a small number of rules or laws can generate ... surprising complexity. ... The systems are animated -- *dynamic*; they change over time. ... and the ever-changing flux of patterns that follows leads to *perpetual novelty* and emergence" (3-4). Holland's comments suggest that, while emergent systems exhibit features of spontaneous order (such as dynamism and the transition from disorder to order), it is the novelty that emerges from their self-ordering activity that distinguishes them from other spontaneously organized systems. It seems appropriate to conclude, then, that if "spontaneous order" represents the "activity" of adaptation and self-organization, "emergence" represents the "creative and/or productive power" of such activity.

Emergence theory is therefore especially relevant to free order theory because the creative synthesis that results from the spontaneous interaction of components in

emergent systems provides a useful model for explaining the creative activity that is generated in a free order culture. Indeed, free order systems share important properties with emergent systems, including dynamism, complexity, and disorder. In addition, just as in emergent systems, the self-ordering activity that develops in free order systems is generated by free agents who are typically governed by a small number of rules. Holland provides the following description of the spontaneous order that occurs in an ant colony, for example, to demonstrate that "the generators of emergent behavior" in emergent systems act as individual agents (Holland 5):[11]

> Despite the limited repertoire of the individual agents -- the ants -- the colony exhibits a remarkable flexibility in probing and exploiting its surroundings. Somehow the simple laws of the agents generate an emergent behavior far beyond their individual capacities. It is noteworthy that this emergent behavior occurs without direction by a central executive. (5-6)

While human social systems are certainly not ant colonies, one need only look to the spontaneous order that arises in any free order community to find evidence of emergent behavior in human communities. Whether addressing the ongoing concerns of community life (such as education, community infrastructure and resources, or laws), or responding to a sudden challenge from some external threat (such as natural disasters, human error, or human aggression), for example, individual free agents come together in search of solutions that will optimally meet their needs while permitting them to maintain a high level of flexibility (i.e., freedom). Renowned socio-economic theorist F. A. Hayek similarly observes that the creative, productive, or "emergent" potential that is spawned

by spontaneous order in free order social systems results from the synergistic effects of the anonymous, local and independent actions of individual members of the community:[12]

> By tracing the combined effects of individual actions, we discover that many of the institutions on which human achievements rest have arisen and are functioning without a designing and directing mind; ... the spontaneous collaboration of free men often creates things which are greater than their individual minds can ever fully comprehend.
>
> (Individualism 6)

Indeed, throughout our human experience we see the creative and adaptive (i.e., "emergent") possibilities of spontaneous order. Friedman notes, for example, that "economic activity is by no means the only area of human life in which a complex and sophisticated structure arises as an unintended consequence of a large number of individuals cooperating while each pursues his own interests" (Free 25). Holland likewise detects the prevalence of emergent behavior in "human creative activity, ranging from the construction of metaphors through innovation in business and government to the creation of new scientific theories" (2). Language systems, scientific knowledge, humanistic studies, economic and monetary systems, and cultural values all have evolved (and continue to evolve) as the (often unintended) consequence of "voluntary exchange, spontaneous cooperation, [and] the evolution of a complex structure through trial and error, acceptance and rejection" (26). The following description of the exchange activity that occurs in academic scholarship demonstrates this emergent (or creative) potential of spontaneous order in free order social systems:

> Scholars cooperate with one another because they find it mutually beneficial [to do so]. They accept from one another's work what they find useful. They exchange their findings -- by verbal communication, by circulating unpublished papers, by publishing in journals and books. ... The whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts, as one scholar builds on another's work. His work in turn becomes the basis for further development. Modern physics is as much a product of a free market in ideas as a modern automobile is a product of a free market in goods.
>
> (Friedman, Free 26)

Friedman's references to free order concepts such as free choice, self-interest, exchange, and communication suggest that the possibility for an emergent outcome (i.e., an outcome which is optimal and/or novel) in human creative activity (e.g., academic scholarship) is enhanced by the productive exchange that is encouraged in a free order environment.

The prevalence of emergent spontaneous order in free order social systems is no doubt related to the potential for "learning" that individuals and human communities possess. Holland notes that "the possibilities for emergence are compounded when the elements of the system include some capacity, however elementary, for adaptation or learning" (5). Free order social systems cultivate this "capacity for learning" in part by providing the individual with feedback through her participation in exchange activities. "Learning" occurs when the individual incorporates this feedback (along with information she gleans from environmental cues and reasoned reflection) into her value assessments and her decision-making. This learning at the individual level is then

transferred to and reinforced in the community through the individual's subsequent exchange activities. The incorporation of "learning" into a free order social system is thus a product of a continuous feedback loop involving the individual's choices and her participation in exchange (recall Decker's feedback loops). When exchange is productive, it increases the opportunities for and expands the reach of learning in the community; conversely, greater learning in the community contributes to more productive exchange activity.

Indeed, the prevalence of individual learning in an environment of productive exchange will fuel the dialectical process toward spontaneous cultural change that is constructive rather than destructive. In essence, the micro activity of individual learning that occurs throughout a free order community coalesces through exchange activity into a macro effect of "learning in the community" that fosters constructive cultural change. Since the *process* of learning is an individual activity, "learning in the community" is actually a synergistic product of the localized learning of the individuals in the community. Therefore, the potential for cultural change to be emergent (i.e., constructive) is undoubtedly magnified in social systems (such as free order social systems) where free choice and productive exchange stimulate individual learning.

The free order assertion that learning occurs at the individual level (rather than the community level) is based on the free order assumption that the world (or "reality") is experienced at an individual level. Indeed, experience is an individual phenomenon. We can try to share our experiences with one another, we can suggest systems of thought around which to organize our experience, and we can debate the meaning of experience; but the actual experiencing of reality can only occur on an individual basis. This

singularity with which individuals experience reality is a product of the "chaotic" nature of reality combined with the uniqueness of the individual. Specifically, reality is "chaotic" because it is complex, dynamic, unpredictable, and mysterious.[13] At the same time, every individual is unique in that she occupies a particular position in time and space that causes her to experience this chaotic reality from a unique perspective or vantage point. In addition, each individual is also unique in form, being represented by a singular organism that possesses distinct characteristics and a particular history. The combined effects of the individual's uniqueness in time, space, and form influence her interaction with her environment as well as her impressions of that interaction, both of which comprise her experience. As a result, each moment of experience is unique both within the single individual's life span of experience as well as between different individuals' immediate experiences.

In his theory about the evolution of "human consciousness" through experience, the American philosopher William James develops an idea similar to the free order concept of "emergence through learning" by emphasizing the uniqueness of individual experience. James explains that reality is composed of a continuous stream of novelty:

> 'The same returns not, save to bring the different.' Time keeps budding into new moments every one of which presents a content which in its individuality never was before and will never be again. Of no concrete bit of experience was an exact duplicate ever framed. [Indeed,] real novelties may be leaking into our universe all the time. (Qtd. in Boller 180)

James thus suggests that the individual encounters a continuous stream of novelty through her unique experience of reality, and the evolution of human consciousness is a

consequence of her continuous efforts to assimilate this novelty into her previous experience. Paul Boller explains in Freedom and Fate in American Thought:

> It was [James'] thesis ... that human consciousness is a continuing flowing, ever changing stream whose elements never repeat themselves identically from moment to moment. ... Our memory of earlier [experiences], our physical and emotional states..., and the new environing conditions themselves will make [even the same activity] in some degree a unique experience which had never occurred before and will never recur. And this is true of all our concrete perceptual experiences. (Boller 180)

Boller's explanation further suggests that, while novelty continuously stimulates the individual to process her unique experience, the individual's continuous (and unique) processing of experience generates additional novelty that she (and other individuals with whom she interacts) must further process.

From a free order perspective, individual learning is this continuous processing of experience that fuels James' evolution of human consciousness. In other words, whereas "experience" reflects the individual's unique interaction with her environment and her impressions of that interaction, "learning" reflects the individual's unique integration of experience into her Self. Specifically, learning involves a continuous, dynamic, self-directed process (i.e., "spontaneous order") in which the individual tries to make sense of her experience (i.e., to bring order out of disorder). To do so, the individual uses her creative ability (reason and imagination) to assimilate her current experience into her reservoir of total experience. This assimilation of experience creates "learning" through

its expansion of the individual's experience base (or "reservoir of knowledge") as well as through the exercise of her reason and imagination (or her "creative ability").[14] Learning thus provides the individual with more information from which to draw in assessing future experience, and the various activities involved in the learning process (such as comparing, contrasting, and organizing experience) strengthen the individual's creative ability. Since every element of this process is unique to the individual (including her experience, her creative ability, and her Self), learning can be viewed as an emergent process that fuels and uniquely shapes the individual's personal development. This unique personal development represents a "creation of Self" (or "Self-creation") that reflects the individual's continuous self-directed ordering and integration of personal values, and it is analogous to the community's dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change.

While individual learning (which fuels Self-creation) and learning in the community (which fuels the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change) are both emergent products of a free order social system, it is their synergistic interaction that enhances the potential for constructive (rather than destructive) cultural change. Synergy is enjoyed when individual learning both stimulates and is stimulated by learning in the community. By expanding the individual's knowledge base and strengthening her creative ability, learning enhances the individual's ability to respond to her environment, to effectively exercise choice, and to contribute to productive exchange. In effectively exercising free choice and in participating in productive exchange, the individual continuously contributes to and encounters the novelty that is stimulated by learning in the community; these encounters, in turn, stimulate related learning experiences.

Learning in the community thus stimulates individual learning, and individual learning accumulates into learning in the community. When individual learning and learning in the community interact in this way (that is, synergistically), they advance the community's dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change toward an optimal outcome (that is, an outcome which is constructive rather than destructive).

If learning in the community is a product of individual learning, then the creative abilities that enable individual members of the community to process their experiences are especially important to the community's evolution. As noted previously, the anchors of these creative abilities are reason and imagination. However, reason and imagination are not "always fully and equally available to all humans" (Hayek, Individualism 8), nor is the development of one's creative ability predetermined or assured. Instead, "reason" and "imagination" are capacities, resources, or tools that individuals enjoy in varying degrees and in combination with other abilities by virtue of their membership in the human race. An individual's potential for creativity (including her abilities to reason, to imagine, and to accumulate knowledge) is therefore like a muscle that must be exercised and developed, and the choices the individual makes and the exchange activity in which she participates influence the development of this creative muscle.

Important as it is, the creative ability is only one of many resources that each individual enjoys as a birthright. Each individual is born with a unique combination of resources: natural resources including those derived from her physical and intellectual aptitudes, and acquired resources including those derived from the conditions of her birth (for example, economic, family, and national associations). This "resource pool" comprises the "toolbox" from which each individual must draw in meeting the challenges

of her environment. While it is true that the particular mix of resources with which the individual begins her life is to a large degree simply a matter of chance, this mix is not fixed at birth. On the contrary, the individual's toolbox is specially fitted to enable it to grow and evolve through her accumulation of knowledge and her reflection on experience (i.e., through learning).[15] As individuals enhance and expand their resource pools, they enjoy more effective tools with which to create Self.

Self-creation is a slow, ongoing, interactive, and accumulative process. At its best it is an evolutionary progress through which the individual will enrich and balance her Self. The "Self" can be thought of as a complex and multifaceted composite of primary and secondary dimensions: the primary dimensions of the Self include the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of one's being, while the social and economic aspects of being can be thought of as secondary dimensions that may be employed by the individual as means toward the development of her primary dimensions. The individual feels needs and desires associated with these multiple dimensions of the Self, and she directs her choices to fulfill these needs (or, in other words, to optimize her condition). The Self therefore represents the central point through which the individual reflects on and integrates her experiences, evaluates her shifting needs, develops her resources, and seeks to optimize her condition.

The pursuit of optimization requires that the individual first achieve equilibrium in her condition. Equilibrium may be defined as an acceptable point at which the individual's condition is in balance; that is, it is a point at which the benefits gained from being in that condition equal the costs of maintaining that condition. The human condition is exceedingly complex, however, and optimizing one's condition involves

optimizing each of the dimensions of the Self, as well as achieving a balance between these frequently competing dimensions. The effort to optimize therefore involves a continuous series of decisions and adjustments to achieve and maintain a state of equilibrium. Indeed, the optimal condition at any point in time may be that one in which the individual achieves the best possible balance among the various dimensions of her Self.

When torn between conflicting claims from the multiple dimensions of her Self, or when challenged by the demands of her environment, the individual must employ her personal resources (or her "toolbox for living") to creatively address her needs. An essential resource that all individuals possess to varying degrees, I have argued, is a creative ability (which is composed of the abilities to reason, imagine, and learn). At a certain level of mature development, this ability operates in such a way that it provides the individual with "vision." The capacity for vision is especially important to individuals in a free order social system because it enables them to become "planner" of their own lives. For the individual who possesses vision, participation in exchange with other individuals is the means by which she executes her plan.[16] Indeed, in a free order system where individuals act as free agents, the individual's choices reflect her plan (including the choice not to choose and to accept instead the consequences of inaction; or, in other words, the plan to have no plan).

In order for an individual to be able to plan, however, she must also be able to predict to some degree the actions of other individuals. "In a society based on exchange," Hayek notes, "some of the data on which any one person will base his plans will be the expectation that other people will act in a particular way; ... [thus] one

person's actions are the other person's data" (Individualism 38). The ability to productively predict is enhanced in a free order social system by the spontaneous development of social processes through which information is continuously communicated and acquired. In a free order culture, it is the exchange process that performs this communicative function while also enabling individuals to fulfill their individual needs.

The relationship between the individual and her environment (which includes her community) is a symbiotic one, then: The individual's interaction with her environment provides her with stimuli and information that engages her creative ability. Through her repetitive and successively more demanding use of reason and imagination, and through the emergent creativity that is stimulated by learning, she develops her ability to employ "vision." Employing "vision," she is able to apply her creative ability to evaluate her environment and develop a "plan" for her continuous Self-creation. The individual thereby takes an active part in developing her Self, including assessing her needs, determining her preferences, identifying her alternatives, exercising her choices, and participating in exchange. This active participation in Self-creation simultaneously exercises her creative ability, which in turn enhances her ability to address challenges and to influence her environment.

Self-creation is emergent when, through her active participation, the individual optimizes her condition and thereby enhances her existence. As noted previously, optimization requires that the individual seek a balance, or equilibrium, among the various claims made by her multiple dimensions of Self. In free order social systems where individuals act as free agents, the individual pursues equilibrium through free

choice, and the quantity and quality of options from which she might choose are expanded through her participation in exchange. Obviously, the greater the number of individuals participating in productive exchange, the greater the novelty and number of potential alternatives for individuals to choose from in addressing their needs.

At the same time, however, more alternatives create greater complexity, and greater complexity in the environment creates greater uncertainty for the individual. Uncertainty is also generated by the infinite and mysterious potential of individuals in a free order social system. Specifically, a community is composed of unique, thinking individuals, each biologically and psychically separated from one another, yet all participating in the same realm of experience. It is a realm where each individual operates in her personal sphere of reality while intersecting with the spheres of realities of other individuals. Trust and communication, I have argued, are necessary conditions for productive exchange; therefore, the uncertainty that emanates because of the psychic separation between individuals continuously challenges the community's ability to enjoy productive exchange. In order to reduce this uncertainty and enhance the potential for prediction, individuals in the community tend to prefer to engage in exchange activity with individuals whom they feel they can understand and trust.

While trust between individuals is sustained by the mutual benefits they derive from participating in exchange with one another, it is initially inspired by cultural bonds that suggest shared values and that reinforce understanding. Hayek emphasizes that a free order culture transmits its values spontaneously, through

> the traditions and conventions which evolve in a free society and which, without being enforceable, establish flexible but normally observed rules

> that make the behavior of other people predictable in a high degree. The willingness to submit to such rules ... is an essential condition for the gradual evolution and improvement of rules of social intercourse. ... [Indeed,] the existence of common conventions and traditions among a group of people will enable them to work together smoothly and efficiently with much less formal organization and compulsion than a group without such common background; ... coercion can probably only be kept to a minimum in a society where conventions and tradition have made the behavior of man to a large extent predictable. (23-24)

In a free order social system, it is the widely shared belief that mutual benefits will be derived from the preservation of freedom that provides the cultural bond and reciprocal commitment that encourages individuals to "submit" to the "flexible" rules represented by the community's conventions and traditions. Moreover, when individuals enjoy confidence in their abilities to communicate with and trust in one another, exhaustive and rigid rules become unnecessary and, in fact, counterproductive because of the limitations they impose on the individual's use of her creative ability.

By organizing around the central value of "freedom," and by demonstrating this value in the community through free choice and exchange, individuals in a free order social system assume both the benefits and responsibilities associated with free agency. For example, in her efforts to meet her own needs, the individual discovers that participating in exchange with other free agents in the community often provides her with benefits beyond those that she can generate herself. Through participation in exchange, though, she also learns that exchange is most productive (and choice most free) when she

and other participants assume a shared responsibility for sustaining the community's liberty by exercising free choice within certain moral boundaries. Free order theory thus argues that the fundamental value that stabilizes the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change is the shared desire to preserve free choice.

Indeed, a free order culture's ability to reconcile tensions and address challenges (that is, to enjoy productive cultural change) is largely dependent on the widely shared belief in the mutual benefits of free choice. However, this cultural bond -- the preservation of free choice -- depends on the community's capacity to communicate and trust. I have posited that productive exchange both requires and enhances a community's capacity to trust and communicate, and that, moreover, culturally productive change is an emergent byproduct of the productive *ex*change activity that occurs in the community. This emergent outcome occurs in part because productive exchange expands options and generates novelty, and thereby provides individuals in the community greater freedom of choice and more opportunity to exercise their creative abilities. Since the exercise of one's creative abilities serves to strengthen those abilities, individuals who enjoy greater freedom of choice enjoy a corresponding improvement in their potential to adapt creatively to the challenges of their environments. Moreover, the accumulation of improved individual creative abilities enables the community as a whole to become more capable of constructively integrating cultural change. The constructive integration of cultural change (rather than the destructive integration) thus represents an optimal outcome for the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change, and it is fostered by a community that enjoys a widely shared commitment to freedom and high levels of communication and trust.

As the "dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change" suggests, the evolution of a free order social system is a piecemeal affair. It does not occur in a uniform, centralized, or symmetrical manner, nor can it be dictated or directed into being by a few elite individuals. Instead, empirical observations of Western cultures (like that of the United States) suggest that these kinds of social systems evolve spontaneously, in a decentralized and continuous (though gradual) fashion. Moreover, this evolution involves the spontaneous development of a social system infrastructure that is composed of interdependent but separate and asymmetrically developed components, or subsystems. These subsystems, which are themselves composed of groups, individuals, and institutions, fulfill particular functions or needs in the social system. The fact that a subsystem evolves spontaneously suggests that, over time, the community has deemed the functions it serves to be valuable to the culture's ability to self-order and preserve freedom. For example, the infrastructure that has evolved in the United States indicates social functions that American culture values: a free market economy develops and allocates resources; democratic or participatory governments determine and enforce rules; an active and free media disseminates information and encourages public discourse; academic communities develop and disseminate knowledge while simultaneously enhancing public discourse; and broad and vigorous creative communities encourage creative self-expression, respect for the individual, imaginative thought, and (ultimately) communal bonding through shared experience.

The subsystems that compose a social system's infrastructure have, of course, distinct (and sometimes ancient) histories, and I am not suggesting that they are unique to free order social systems. What does appear to be unique to free order social systems,

however, is the spontaneous and participatory nature of these subsystems as well as the cohesive consequence of their unique (and sometimes contentious) interactions with one another. As the individuals, groups, and institutions in these subsystems interact with one another, the subsystems are continuously recreated and modified, thereby enhancing the community's overall ability to adapt to changes and challenges. The free order social system's infrastructure is thus an "emergent" system composed of independent yet integrated and synergistic subsystems.

Applying the concept of emergence (i.e. "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts") emphasizes the contributions made by different subsystems to a free order social system's capacity to spontaneously self-order. It is true, of course, that cultures sometimes seem to value one subsystem of the infrastructure more than others (e.g., government, or entertainment), or one institution within a subsystem more than others (e.g. the Presidency, or movie stars). Nonetheless, the viability of a free order social system depends on the health and vigor of all its subsystems. Indeed, the creative and adaptive benefits that derive from spontaneous order in a free order social system are dependent on the vitality and interaction of the various components of the culture's infrastructure. John Dewey emphasizes this important interactive and synergistic relationship when he poses this rhetorical question:

> Is there any one factor or phase of culture which is dominant, or which tends to produce and regulate others, or are economics, morals, art, science, and so on only so many aspects of the interaction of a number of factors, each of which acts upon and is acted upon by others? ... Shall our point of view be monistic or pluralistic? (Dewey, Freedom & Culture, 20)

Free order theory clearly takes a pluralistic view.[17] Indeed, one of the essential strengths of a free order social system is the generation and integration of novelty that can occur as a diverse culture evolves around a variety of subsystems, interests, and/or needs. Paradoxically, though, this strength also poses a challenge to the free order community because of the corresponding tendency for the culture to gravitate to an increasingly complex and pluralistic form.

This gravitation toward pluralism is in part a consequence of the specialization and segmentation that is a natural by-product of self-organizing activity. In a free order culture, for example, individuals assign a high value to emerging ideas and technologies which they find useful for meeting the challenges of their ever-changing environment; this value is communicated throughout the community via exchange activities. Through their participation in exchange, individuals are thus encouraged to focus their creative efforts toward specialized activities so that they might command the maximum value for their efforts. Moreover, as the environment becomes increasingly complex, any single individual is unlikely to be able to absorb and reconcile all the available complementary and competing ideas, nor to adopt all possible technologies. In an effort to achieve a more structured and ordered existence (which in turn enables them to focus their creative activities more productively), individuals seek refuge and find satisfaction in specialized segments of culture; as a result, the social order becomes increasingly pluralistic, and the population increasingly diverse.

Certainly, specialization and segmentation generate a wealth of creative ideas that filter through the community and provide value to individuals. Indeed, the continuous improvement in the quality of life in Western culture provides dramatic evidence of the

material benefits of specialized creative activity. For example, more people are living longer, healthier and happier lives because of medical and biological advances that have reduced the infant mortality rate, increased the average life span, and eradicated many of the debilitating afflictions that historically eroded the quality of life. Similarly, technological inventions have produced laborsaving appliances, communications devices, and travel opportunities that have transformed and enhanced daily life. Efficient production and distribution organizations -- a product of specialized business management activities -- have extended the affordability and availability of these modern products and services so that even the poorest members of the community can enjoy a high degree of benefit.[18] The widespread affordability of these various products and services is also an indication of the strong economic systems and robust job markets that have developed as a result of increased specialization. Moreover, a specialized field (or "segment") committed to educating and training the population has evolved, extending and improving the community's literacy and thereby providing an important mechanism for the transfer of knowledge and the improvement of individual creative abilities.

Nonetheless, despite all the unarguable benefits of specialization and segmentation, the drift toward a more diverse, pluralistic society also presents a number of threats to a free order social system. Most importantly, the free order community's excessive gravitation toward pluralism has the potential to erode the culture's capacities for trust and communication. Erosion of these capacities will inhibit the community's potential for productive exchange, and thereby decrease the effectiveness of (and the potential for an emergent outcome from) the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. Understandably, the complexity of reality and the unique nature of Self motivate

individuals to not only specialize their efforts, but also to associate with other individuals who are similarly minded. As a result, different segments of the community (individuals and groups of individuals) may become increasingly isolated from one another, and this isolation may be reflected in the inability of these segments to engage in productive exchange with one another. As noted, exchange is the mechanism through which a free order culture maintains its ability to adapt and evolve in response to the changing environment. Deterioration of the culture's ability to generate productive exchange opportunities will therefore have a negative effect on the dialectical process through which cultural change spontaneously evolves, inhibiting the culture's ability to enjoy an emergent outcome. Clearly, then, the pluralism that naturally evolves in a free order culture encourages a "cultural diversity" that has the power to exert either positive or negative effects on the community.[19]

Positive diversity is characterized by productive communicative exchange (i.e., communication) between individuals and segments so that the community enjoys cultural understanding despite the diverse uniqueness of its membership. When a free order community's diversity exerts positive effects, the points of difference between individuals and groups have the potential to stimulate novelty rather than animosity. In addition, positive diversity expands choice and promotes productive exchange so that individuals are better able to develop resources and meet their needs. In its abilities to stimulate novelty and integrate change, to address challenge and reconcile difference, positive diversity encourages an emergent outcome for the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change.

Negative diversity, on the other hand, obscures cultural understanding by stifling dialogical exchange (i.e., communication) between individuals and segments of the community. When a community's diversity exerts negative effects, individuals and groups identify so closely with their points of difference that they become isolated from other segments of the culture and unable to engage in productive exchange with them. Ironically, in an atmosphere of negative diversity, the uniqueness of the individual's Self becomes overpowered by her allegiance to the element that she feels differentiates her from other, dissimilar, individuals. In such an atmosphere, debate often becomes contentious rather than productive, and attitudes often turn to mistrust rather than trust. As a result, the community's ability to achieve cultural understanding through dialogical exchange is hindered, and the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change may become destructive rather than constructive.

In a sense, then, negative diversity has the potential to undermine and poison a free order culture, while positive diversity has the power to nurture emergence in the free order culture's dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. The idea that diversity can have negative consequences is, admittedly, not a popular one in contemporary American culture. Concerns about exclusion and bias often lead to a simplistic assertion that diversity "on its face" (that is, the simple *existence* of a diverse population without concern for the dynamics that exist in that population) is adequate to achieve the benefits of positive diversity. I conclude instead that a diverse population that lacks trust and the ability to communicate will, instead, reap negative consequences for a free order community. Diversity will only exert positive effects in a culture where trust and communication prevail, where dialogical exchange (i.e., debate and communication) is

productive, and where all individuals enjoy the potential to develop their creative abilities and actively participate in Self-creation.

Of course, the threat of negative diversity exists throughout a pluralistic society, from ethnic tensions to professional myopia. In his book Language, Thought, and Logic, John Ellis provides an example from the academic community of the loss in creativity and productivity that can occur when exchange between specialized segments of the culture is impeded by negative diversity. Ellis notes that the intense competition between intellectual efforts that exists within an academic discipline often results in sub-segmentation, or fragmentation, *within* that specialized segment. As a result, diverse members of an academic discipline (or cultural segment) may become embroiled in internal political battles between these competing sub-segments and thus may not be cognizant of academic activities which might complement their own work that have occurred or are occurring in other areas. Considering the developments in linguistic theory that occurred during the last half century, for example, Ellis observes that a loss of continuity in thought has resulted from the "fragmentation" of linguistic scholarship.[20] Since "concepts in the theory of language are among the basic tools of thought in all intellectual inquiry, ... many fields use and are dependent on linguistic theory," Ellis argues; therefore, "new thought can come from many quarters" (2). Yet despite the potential for synergistic scholarship that such ubiquity promises, academic progress was impeded when scholars were unable to synthesize various linguistic theories which originated in the diverse fields of anthropology, philosophy, and linguistics:[21]

> The intellectual limitations imposed by the horizons and internal politics of a particular discipline prevented the original contribution of a talented

> thinker from taking its place in a wider, unitary context of theoretical reflection on the nature of language, and hindered the development of a larger picture that could have resulted from the piecing together of different parts of the puzzle. (7)

The result of such fragmented scholarship, Ellis concludes, is confusion and duplication of effort. In the field of linguistics,

> The strong involvement of many different disciplines in linguistic theory has therefore been not more and better thought but a greater state of confusion and a marked tendency for everyone to return to the starting point regardless of how much progress may have been achieved in previous work. The fragmentation of the field not only prevents the achievement of one area from adding to and deepening that of another but has actually led to a devaluing of everything. (8)

The fragmentation in linguistic theory that Ellis describes can, no doubt, be found in most if not all highly specialized professional segments of a free order culture (e.g., scientific research, medicine, business, politics, etc.). Likewise, similar examples could undoubtedly be provided to highlight the negative diversity that emanates from population differences such as race, ethnicity, or religious belief. Such examples provide evidence of the obstacles to productive exchange and optimal self-organization that challenge the free order culture because of its tendency to gravitate toward a pluralistic order. These obstacles seem especially threatening in light of the increasing complexity faced by individuals in contemporary life. Many of the problems that confront contemporary culture require both depth and breadth of knowledge and extensive

exchange of ideas. Contemporary problems are often not "black or white" with easy answers, but shades of "gray" in which ethical and social issues make easy answers improbable, and productive exchange imperative. For example, advances in bioengineering promise the opportunity to one day manipulate an individual's genetic structure; such an activity clearly raises important and difficult ethical issues that a free order culture will need to address. Similarly, the extensive application of computerized technology in contemporary society expands the availability of alternatives from which the individual may choose yet, at the same time, poses a threat to individual freedom as a result of its potential to compromise the individual's privacy. Clearly, despite all the social and economic benefits of segmentation and specialization, there is a risk associated with pluralism that the culture must confront.

A healthy free order social system will respond to this risk with the spontaneous evolution of a variety of infrastructure subsystems that reinforce the community's capacities for trust and communication. For example, an active political process can encourage debate about, and facilitate establishment of, rules; a competitive marketplace can encourage interdependence while providing a check against excessive self-interest; an objective media can disseminate information and hold special interest groups accountable; and a variety of creative systems such as literature, art, and music can provide (among other things) opportunities to explore new ideas, examine concepts of meaning, and reinforce cultural bonds.

Indeed, literature and literary studies provide an important means by which the free order community can develop and reinforce its ability to maintain cohesion in the face of pluralism. As stewards of the literary tradition and advocates for literature,

literary scholars thus represent a necessary and potentially influential cog in a free order culture's exchange mechanism. As with other segments of an increasingly pluralistic culture, however, it is only natural that literary studies have evolved into an increasingly distinct and specialized area of study. Moreover, the field of literary studies itself has increasingly diverged into specialized segments, as evidenced by the proliferation of theoretical schools based on language, sociopolitical issues, textual forms, and more, or of scholastic approaches based on, for example, historical context or authorial ethnicity. As noted previously, specialized segmentation can certainly enhance the culture through its focused study and development of specific ideas. However, just as the risk of specialized segmentation in the culture at large is one of isolation and estrangement between (and within) segments (i.e., the risk of "negative diversity"), so too does the field of literary studies run such a risk. Moreover, in addition to the risk of estrangement between different segments within the academic and literary fields, there is a more significant risk that highly specialized segments of literary studies (such as literary theory and criticism) may become specialized to the degree that they become isolated from the community at large and thus loses their cultural relevance.

Surely literature and literary studies can and should make important contributions to a culture that is directed by free choice and exchange; in fact, there exists a constructive, symbiotic relationship between literary studies and a free order culture. Yet without proper stewardship, some segments of literary studies may not only lose social or cultural relevance but, worse, they could be used in a manner that erodes or undermines the culture's ability to enjoy emergent spontaneous order. Since a free order culture provides the optimal environment for the proliferation of a rich and varied range of

literary work, sub-optimal choice and exchange activity will necessarily have a limiting effect on the field of literature itself. Thus literary scholars have not only an opportunity, but a responsibility as well, to maintain the vital, symbiotic connection between literary studies and the free order culture.

To this end, free order theorists must ensure that literature remains relevant to individuals in the free order community and that literary studies function as a mechanism for the exchange of ideas. Free order theory and criticism are therefore concerned with fostering a culture of positive diversity; that is, a culture in which new and competing ideas are encouraged, in which intellectual curiosity is nurtured, and in which varied alternatives and rewards are available to individuals who choose to make an intellectual investment in literary activities. As mediators between the community and literature, literary scholars and critics can provide contextual understanding of traditional works, explore new ideas and new literary works, and re-evaluate traditional ideas and literary works in light of the culture's contemporary experience. Moreover and importantly, literature and literary studies have the potential to enhance each individual's Self-creation, and to thereby contribute to the free order community's aggregate capacity to self-organize in a manner optimal to meet the needs of its individual constituents. In other words, literature and literary studies play an important role in a free order social system's ability to achieve an emergent outcome in the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change.

It is clear from the preceding discussion that free order theory embodies a number of important concepts, such as free choice, the Self, reason, imagination, learning, spontaneous order, social organization, exchange, communication, and trust. The

objective of this introductory section has been to sketch these basic concepts and outline the mechanics of free order theory. To develop a theoretical construct, I examined the theoretical foundations of free order theory, including the concepts of spontaneous order and free agency. I emphasized contemporary scholarship in the social sciences involving related theories of chaos and emergence, and I explored the special features that inspire emergent behavior in self-ordering systems, including "agency" and "learning." Throughout the discussion, I tried to relate the concepts of spontaneous order, chaos, and emergence to the relevant features of free order social systems; my purpose in so doing has been not only to demonstrate that free order social systems embody the properties of self-ordering, emergent, and/or chaotic systems, but also to illustrate that many of the fundamental constructs underpinning free order theory already enjoy widespread acceptance in the academic community.

In this section, I also examined the importance of free agency in free order theory. Specifically, I noted that the individual represents a significant subject, or "Self," who operates as a free agent in a dynamic, complex, and mysterious universe which is characterized by transitions between disorder and order. In her efforts to define meaning and attain self-fulfillment in her existence, she "self-orders" her existence by applying her creative ability (reason and imagination) to meet the challenges of her environment and to attend to her unique needs and desires. In her efforts to self-order, the individual participates in meaningful or productive exchange with other individuals in the community. Through the aggregate of the community's exchange activity, the culture at large participates in a dialectical process that engenders spontaneous cultural change.

I have further argued that a necessary prerequisite for, as well as an enduring byproduct of, this exchange activity is the ability and willingness of individuals to both communicate with and trust in one another. Paradoxically, the novelty and efficiency that are generated in a free order system social system encourage segmentation and specialization, and there is a risk in this natural gravitation toward pluralism that the culture could be undermined by the effects of negative diversity. Like other cultural subsystems, literature and literary studies provide a free order culture with a unique opportunity to defend against negative diversity by building and reinforcing both trust and communication in the community. Free order communities are thus enriched by cultural subsystems such as literature, which enhance the community's exchange activities and strengthen the individuals' creative abilities. Therefore, literary studies have the potential (and the responsibility, this thesis argues) to contribute significantly to the free order social system's viability and efficacy. The following section explores the important implications of free order theory for literary studies, including an analysis of the dialectical function that is performed in free order communities by cultural systems such as literature.

SECTION TWO:

THE IMPLICATIONS OF FREE ORDER THEORY

FOR LITERARY STUDIES

The previous discussion argued that free order social systems evolve "spontaneously" through numerous individual self-ordering activities, and that the fundamental value that influences this evolution is individual freedom, or free agency. Empirical observation further indicates that a free order social system's evolution involves the spontaneous (though often gradual) development of subsystems which compose the culture's infrastructure. Through these subsystems, individuals direct their efforts to meet their unique needs; and through the aggregate of this individual activity, the community generates the dialectical process that fosters spontaneous cultural change. For example, representative governments have evolved to ensure individual liberties in the civil realm, and free markets have evolved to effect individual free choice and to facilitate productive exchange in the economic realm. Similarly, cultural artifacts such as literature, art, and music are products of cultural subsystems that have spontaneously evolved in part to support the free exchange of ideas.[22] The spontaneous evolution of these and other infrastructure subsystems thus reflects the community's desire to protect, maintain, and enhance free order values.

Indeed, a survey of Western culture demonstrates that the values underlying free order theory enjoy a long and rich heritage in Western civilization, and traces of the

process of spontaneous cultural change are correspondingly evident throughout the artifacts of Western culture. For example, the inspirational theme of the enduring quest for freedom is illustrated in Western literature from Odysseus's tenacious trek home in Homer's classic Odyssey to Celie's self-awakening in Alice Walker's twentieth-century novel, The Color Purple. Likewise, recurring novelty in both the form and style of literature and other art forms reflects the struggles of individual creators and society at large to recreate self-expression by freeing themselves from the constraints of traditional conventions. Specifically, the lyrical ballads of Romanticism, the stream of consciousness narration of Realism, and, in art, the fragmented color forms of Impressionism each represent efforts to supplant the perceived impersonality of established conventions with the novelty of a more subjective form of creative self-expression. Similarly, within the record of Western history there are numerous accounts of individuals who were inspired to organize spontaneously in pursuit of liberty and self-determination. For instance, the early Greek philosophers encouraged freedom of thought through Socratic dialogue; the Reformation dissidents pursued spiritual freedom through religious choice; and the Enlightenment activists claimed self-determination through representative government and free markets. Unarguably, the principles of free agency and spontaneous self-organization have influenced the Western tradition and, over time, the various elements of this free order tradition have coalesced into free order social systems (such as those enjoyed in the United States, Western Europe, and other free societies).

The free order tradition and its dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change continue today, especially in social systems that have been stabilized by the

institutionalization of free order values. Environmental, technological, and social changes thrust new challenges upon even the most stable free order social systems, as evidenced by contemporary issues such as human cloning, internet privacy, and racial profiling. Individuals and groups committed to the preservation of freedom explore and debate the complex relationships between human beings, social systems, and their environments, and they continuously challenge the status quo with new interpretations of old ideas. Paradoxically, though, while the expansion of freedom that is characteristic of free order social systems stimulates novelty, it also increases complexity and uncertainty in the social environment. As a result, individuals are continuously in need of tools that they can use to enhance their ability to creatively adapt to their increasingly dynamic and complex environments. In addition, the free order culture's natural gravitation toward a segmented, pluralistic order can obscure the community's shared values, thus undermining the trust and communication that support productive exchange (which, in turn, fuels the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change). Within this context, literary studies provide a powerful tool for the enhancement of creativity, trust, and communication, and literary scholars enjoy the opportunity to facilitate exchange, to enhance cultural discourse, and to contribute to productive cultural change.

Clearly, then, the long history of recorded thought supports one of the primary assertions of this thesis: while literature and literary studies are important and naturally evolving cultural artifacts in any community, they are especially important cultural subsystems in a free order community. Communities that enjoy a high degree of self-determination, as do free order social systems, no doubt are faced with the practical need and ethical duty to ensure their capacity for self-determination.[23] Literary studies provide

one critical mechanism by which such communities can develop and gauge this capability.

The contribution that literary studies can make to the free order community's capacity for self-determination is in part a result of the function that it can perform in the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. Because literature involves both the rational and the imaginative capacities of the individual, and because literature employs language as the means of communication, it is an especially valuable cultural system for the exchange of ideas in a free order community. As explained in Section One, literature has the capacity to facilitate creative and dialogical exchange in the community, thereby contributing to the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. For example, literature and literary studies introduce new ideas into the community, stimulate analysis of and debate about new and existing ideas, and, ultimately, help integrate the most productive ideas into the culture at large. In addition, literary studies enhance the value of language as a medium for the exchange of ideas by contextualizing linguistic meaning and identifying nonlinguistic meaning in shared cultural experience. Specifically, literature provides the community with a context in which it can explore and resolve tensions, challenges, and misunderstandings; reconcile meaning and enhance communication; and assess competing values and interests. These social functions which literature and literary studies serve are all necessary if a free order culture is to maintain an environment of positive diversity that is conducive to exchange and optimal for self-ordering activity.

At the individual level, literature likewise provides a context through which the individual can explore meaning, address conflicts and challenges, and sharpen his

creative ability. Moreover, literary studies provide a means by which the individual can broaden and deepen his knowledge base. This expansion of the individual's knowledge base not only strengthens his abilities to learn, reason, and imagine, but also provides him with a reservoir of shared meanings which enhance his ability to communicate with other members of his culture.[24] As a result, literature and literary studies not only have the potential to enhance the individual's ability to make effective choices toward Self-creation, but also to enhance his ability to engage in productive exchange with other members of the community. Since, as previously asserted, productive exchange stimulates constructive cultural change, the potential contributions of literature and literary studies to both the individual and to the culture at large can significantly influence, either directly or indirectly, the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change.

An Abrams Model of Free Order Literary Theory

In extending free order theory to literary studies, this thesis suggests both the application of free order principles to the critical analysis of literature as well as, on a more theoretical level, an exploration of the function and features of cultural systems (such as literary studies) in free order societies. I have argued that the fundamental principles on which free order literary theory rests are spontaneous order, free agency, and the social significance of literary studies. Specifically, free order literary theory asserts that novelty (or emergence) is generated in a free order culture through spontaneous order; that spontaneous order is actualized through free choice and productive exchange; that the individual is empowered as a free agent to create his Self

through the development of his creative ability (i.e. his abilities to reason, to imagine, and to learn); and that the individual's Self-creation is an important component in the community's dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. These free order principles suggest a particular approach to critical analysis, and they imply particular views about certain highly debated issues within literary theory.

One helpful approach to exploring the implications of free order theory for literary studies is to isolate aspects of the theory according to its assumptions about "the role of the writer, the features of the text, the traits of the audience, the nature of 'reality,' and the functions of the critic" (Evans xvi). This schematic approach, developed originally by M. H. Abrams and expanded by other scholars, promotes a comprehensive and systematic understanding of the different components of a theory. Abrams argues that any theory that hopes to offer a sophisticated approach to literature must discuss at least four basic components of literature: the author, the text, the audience, and the relationship of all these to "reality" (however that term is defined). Particular theories (Abrams argues) will tend to emphasize one of these components as the central or most important component of literature. Moreover, each theory will tend to discuss the interrelations among the components in distinctive ways. For this reason, any given theory will also tend to make particular assumptions about the purpose of literary criticism and the tasks of the literary critic. Therefore, using the Abrams scheme as a mode of analysis can help strengthen one's understanding of the relationships between the components within a particular theory, as well as the differences between a particular theory and other theories. As one attempts to detail the application of free order theory to literature, then, the Abrams scheme appears to offer a useful method of analysis.

Therefore, the following discussion uses these five components (i.e., reality, text, author, audience, and critic) to outline and summarize some basic assumptions that are inherent in free order literary theory.

Free Order Assumptions about the Nature of Reality

In Section One I argued that the concept of spontaneous order is related to chaos theory, in that spontaneous order represents a system's self-directed effort to achieve order out of disorder (or chaos). Free order theory (to which the notion of spontaneous order is central) correspondingly views reality to be chaotic. That is, free order theory assumes that the reality in which human beings exist is complex, dynamic, mysterious, and uncertain; and that, moreover, it is in response to such a reality that individuals and communities are motivated to spontaneously order their activities.[25]

Specifically, free order theory perceives reality to be complex in that the human mind (as we know it today) cannot fathom the full spectrum of potential variations that the environment might take. For example, it is not possible for the human mind to quantify the number or identify the full variety of elements that compose the environment, nor is it possible to quantify the number or fully describe the different kinds of relationships that might exist between any two or more of these elements. Man's inability to quantify or fully describe his complex reality is in part a consequence of the dynamism of reality. That is, the elements that compose the environment, as well as the relationships between these elements, are mutable, all being affected by time and space. Reality is also mysterious in that, even if the human mind could quantify and describe all the potential variations of the environment, it is not possible for the individual or the

human species to know with certainty whether or when full and absolute knowledge about reality has been attained. Indeed, the elements that compose the environment are interrelated in sometimes knowable and often unknowable ways, creating an incalculable number of imaginable and unimaginable variations. Finally, reality is uncertain in that its complexity, dynamism, and mystery ensure the impossibility of the human mind's precise anticipation of the future.

Free order theory's perspective on reality appears to challenge the Enlightenment assumption that there is a timeless set of basic truths which are knowable with certainty, which represent the "key" by which humanity opens the door of progress, and which lead, ultimately, to the perfectibility of mankind. The philosopher Isaiah Berlin argues that this Enlightenment assumption reflects a basic Western attitude that stems from the Platonic tradition, and which presumes that the universe (or reality) is a perfect whole for which there exists a perfect, ultimate design. In Berlin's words, this Platonic ideal suggests

> in the first place that, as in the sciences, all genuine questions must have one true answer and one only, all the rest being necessarily errors; in the second place that there must be a dependable path towards the discovery of these truths; in the third place that the true answers, when found, must necessarily be compatible with one another and form a single whole, for one truth cannot be incompatible with another... This kind of omniscience [is] the solution of the cosmic jigsaw puzzle. (5)

Free order theory does indeed challenge the notions that discovery about reality is a single, integrated process; that the paths to discovery are certain and final; and that it is

possible to solve the "cosmic jigsaw puzzle" (or rather, to be certain that we have solved it) when the human mind cannot fully conceptualize the cosmos, or reality. It would be a mistake, however, to interpret this challenge to the Platonic tradition as a modernist, existential assertion of a meaningless reality, or as a skeptical rejection of human reason. In fact, free order theory does not deny the *possibility* of a perfect universe or an omniscient solution, nor does it dispute the human ability to learn and know through reason. Instead, free order theory challenges the presumption that humanity can achieve (much less agree upon) a *certain* and *complete* knowledge of reality. In other words, it disputes man's ability to know with rational or empirical certainty (or "intellectual certainty") all that reality encompasses.[26]

Clearly, then, while free order theory challenges the Enlightenment vision of natural law and empirical certainty, it does not promote the Romantic counter-argument that reality is unknowable through rational methods. Indeed, free order theory respects the potential contributions of rational enquiry, as well as empirical observation and intuition, in man's effort to understand his reality. Free order theory asserts that there are many ways of "knowing," and it is the full spectrum of understanding that humanity must embrace if it is to create a productive and enduring civilization. Moreover, free order theory asserts that while it is not possible for an individual to achieve intellectual certainty that he has attained a complete understanding of reality, it is rather the process of trying to understand his reality that provides each individual with the tools that he needs to be a creative and productive human being. Through the development of such tools, the individual becomes ever more effective at responding to the uncertainty in his environment and exploring the mysterious nature of his reality.[27] Free order theory

further argues that it is the aggregate of such effective individuals that provides the community with the mechanism for transforming the challenges of an uncertain environment into creative, productive, and spontaneous cultural change.

Free Order Assumptions about Language and the Text

Based on the previous discussion about the free order perspective of a chaotic reality (i.e., that it is complex, dynamic, mysterious, and uncertain), one might assume that free order assumptions regarding language and the text would suggest relativity and indeterminacy. Indeed, free order theory does regard language to be fluid and flexible, but, paradoxically, it is a fluidity and flexibility that permits understanding within a realm of mutability. Meaning, though mutable, can be validated in any particular situation through choice and exchange; in other words, in general, choices are made and exchange occurs when individuals believe understanding has been achieved. Thus language is not indeterminate or meaninglessly relative because its meaning is established by acts of choice and/or exchange. While it is popular in many postmodern literary theories, then, to question the capacity for language to express meaning, the primary value of language in free order literary theory lies in its capacity to facilitate understanding for the purposes of choice and/or exchange.

As a tool of choice and exchange, language must be concrete enough to organize and transfer existing knowledge but flexible enough to adapt to and help create new knowledge. In this sense, language systems reflect the properties of emergence that were discussed in Section One: they are dynamic systems, they are constrained by few rules, and they generate complexity and perpetual novelty through spontaneous order.

Specifically, language facilitates choice and exchange through the emergent abilities that it provides individuals to *categorize* their experience and to *communicate* with other individuals. Through categorization, individuals structure experience in a way that enables them to evaluate, value, and prioritize (i.e. choose) various phenomena. Through communication, individuals and the community exchange resources, enhance learning and creative abilities, and promote trust. Through categorization and communication, language makes possible the choice and exchange that generates the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change.

In Language, Thought, and Logic, John Ellis develops his theory that categorization is the most basic aspect of language because it enables us to simplify the infinite number of possible variations that we experience in our chaotic reality.[28]

> The problem is that the facts of experience are infinitely variable: no two situations are exactly alike. The notion of a different label for each different situation is an impossible one. ...To say something about a situation is to place it among other possible situations, and this requires not a set of labels but a system of categories. (28)

Categorization requires the "imposition of equivalence" whereby situations that are not exactly alike will be categorized the same and "treated *as if there were no difference between them*" (29). "Through categorization," Ellis explains, "a *working* equivalence is established for a particular set of cases, and this equivalence in turn establishes a working difference between those cases and other sets of cases" (30).

Meaning, then, depends on a situation's place in the individual's system of categories. "The meaning we want cannot exist without a scale derived from a number of

experiences, and a place on that scale" that places a particular situation among others (28). Ellis acknowledges that this idea of meaning recalls Saussure's idea of contrast, where

> no word can be meaningful by itself but only in relation to a system of terms and a choice between them ... the meaning of each term [being] defined primarily by its place in the system. ...The unity of a concept [is found] not primarily in what it refer[s] to but rather in its being differentiated from other possible choices in the language. (39)

The idea that meaning is determined through categorization presumes that the individual exercises choice when he categorizes a situation or experience in a particular way. Ellis observes that a word "embodies a decision to treat a particular range of things as if they were the same, and then to treat everything that falls outside that range as different" (30). He also notes that Wittgenstein's analogy of word use being like a move in a chess game similarly presumes the concept of choice, because it characterizes the use of a word "as a choice from a finite set of possibilities, where meaning is a product of the choice" (40).

The individual's assignment of equivalence and difference through the categorization process thus represents choices which, Ellis argues, are made according to the purposes of the individual:

> The basis of linguistic categories must be functional: we distinguish one set of cases from another because we want to treat them differently, to do something different with them, to behave differently toward them. ... categories relate to our purposes primarily, and to the actual differences of the real world secondarily. (36)

Since, as I have argued, choice and exchange are motivated by the individual's needs as expressed through the multiple dimensions of his Self and by his desire to optimize his condition through equilibrium of his Self, then surely the purposes to which his categories relate are determined by his Self.

In a free order culture, the optimal categorical structure that an individual can choose is one that empowers his Self-creation by expanding his creative ability and his knowledge base. "To know something," Ellis asserts, "is not to have a direct intuition of it but to classify it and relate it to other things" (41-42). In other words, the classification and relation of experience represent knowledge, and it is linguistic categories that enable us to reduce the infinite world of experience to a finite set of categories making knowledge possible (40). Indeed, the process of categorization involves the individual's use of his creative ability (especially reason and imagination) through comparison, contrast, evaluation, and prioritization, and it generates learning for the individual through his integration of experience into his Self. The process of categorizing is thus an emergent aspect of language because not only does it bring order to chaos by organizing experience, but it also enhances the individual's abilities to reason, imagine, and learn. In addition, the use of categories is also an emergent aspect of language in that, through a finite set of categories, the individual enjoys an infinite reservoir of meaning with which to work in communicating with other individuals. As a consequence of these emergent properties of categorization (i.e., its powers to organize experience, to exercise the individual's creative abilities, and to provide an efficient and flexible communicative tool), the individual's abilities to exercise choice constructively and to participate in exchange productively are empowered and strengthened.

But if, as I argued in Section One, experience is an individual phenomenon, then the categorization of experience must also be an individual activity, and the uniqueness of individual experience would instead seem to suggest that categorization would hinder rather than aid communicative exchange. Indeed, categorization is an individual activity, for it occurs according to the purposes of the individual's Self; just as the individual's uniqueness in form, time, and space influences his experience, the uniqueness of his needs and/or desires similarly influence the purposes to which he categorizes his experience and produces meaning. Moreover, individualized meaning through categorization is important for free choice and exchange because it provides the individual with a flexible structure through which he can establish values and make choices. Working with the same objective criteria, each individual is able to customize his decision process according to his personal needs. But wouldn't individualized meaning create barriers to communication? If meaning is determined by the individual's particular purposes, and if every individual is unique in form, time, and space, how can communication ever be effective enough to facilitate productive exchange? The answer to this question lies in the emergent quality of linguistic communication, and specifically in the creative and innovative power of learning to transform language.

The free order perspective suggests that a successful communicative exchange reflects an "agreement of understanding" that involves both intention and interpretation. Importantly, the agreement of understanding is not the same as absolute certainty of meaning, but instead implies a *workable exchange of meaning*. The agreement of understanding occurs spontaneously, "out of the voluntary interaction of individuals ... seeking to trade ideas or information ... [because] two parties who want to communicate

with one another both benefit from coming to a common agreement about the words they use" (Friedman, Free 25). Linguistic communication (where communication implies at least two parties) is thus an intentional activity in which individuals wish to achieve understanding through linguistic exchange.

In Truth and Consequences, Reed Way Dasenbrock explores how understanding can occur despite the mutability of meaning. Dasenbrock draws heavily from the work of contemporary analytic philosopher Donald Davidson, especially Davidson's theory of intention:

> For Davidson, utterances mean what we can successfully make them mean. ...[In other words,] what I intend to mean must be recognized as intended for it to mean what I intend it to mean. ...Thus the interpreter is brought in from the start by the speaker, who speaks in a way that he expects (or at least hopes) to be understood as he expects or hopes to be understood. (72)

Dasenbrock explains that we bring to a communicative exchange our understanding of the standard or normally accepted meaning of a word, which Davidson calls a "prior theory," but this prior theory must give way to a "passing theory" of meaning:

> Everyone enters a communicative situation with a "prior theory," a set of expectations about what the words the other uses means. However, because our prior theories never perfectly match one another, the prior theory with which each of us approaches any communicative interaction never works perfectly. But this does not mean that understanding is impossible. What happens is that each side develops a "passing theory," a

> modification of the prior theory to fit the particular usages of the person one is talking to. Understanding takes place when the passing theories that interpreter and speaker develop in their interaction converge. (73)

In Davidsonian intentionality, then, interpretation is guided by intention not in the traditional sense of the interpreter seeking absolute truth about the speaker/writer's meaning, but in the sense of seeking an agreement of understanding with the speaker.

Intention and interpretation both are creative activities, and the successful communicative exchange is an emergent one. Intention is creative because the speaker/writer must develop a linguistic structure that provides the interpreter with adequate clues of his intended meaning. Interpretation is creative because the interpreter must analyze and process those clues into a passing theory of meaning that achieves an agreement of understanding. The entire communicative exchange is emergent in that the interpreter expands his knowledge base (i.e., structure of categories), both parties exercise and strengthen their creative abilities (especially abilities to reason and imagine), and -- where standard meanings are changed -- novelty is introduced into the culture's language system.

Moreover, successful communicative exchange is emergent for the culture as a whole because it provides the community with shared experiences that reinforce its capacity for trust and communication. As noted in Section One, the ability for individuals to trust in and communicate with one another is critical for productive exchange to occur, and it is productive exchange that optimally advances the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. Dasenbrock explains that Davidsonian

intentionality suggests a dynamic, fluid world in which individuals respond creatively to change and difference,

> in which every communicative situation -- some only slightly, others more radically -- provokes in the interpreter a new passing theory, a provisional understanding of what the speaker or writer means by his or her words. ... We necessarily begin the interpretive process by positing a broad area of agreement on beliefs and meanings. ... Because beliefs and meanings differ (not totally but appreciably), interpreters find that their assumption of shared agreement on beliefs and meaning needs modification in places. Thus our end point is not a reification of our own prior theory ... [Instead,] interpreters adjust their prior theories [according to the demands of the interpretive occasion] in the direction of what they take to be a provisional agreement between speaker/writer and interpreter. In Davidson's model, we need not begin in the same place to understand each other; but beginning in different places, we have the ability to move toward the position of greater understanding. (74-75)

The agreement of understanding is thus the emergent product of an exchange process in which two (or more) individuals spontaneously order their experience into a category structure that enables them to achieve a workable exchange of meaning. As is typical of emergent systems, learning is the critical element in this process. Dasenbrock explains that it is our ability to learn that enables us to achieve an agreement of understanding:

> What enables us to do this is our ability to construct passing theories to interpret anomalous utterances. Faced with an anomaly, faced with something that does not fit our prior theory, we adjust that theory, incorporating what we learn from encountering the anomaly into a new passing theory. ... The scene of interpretation for Davidson is therefore a scene of learning. We learn when we interpret because the interpreter is not imprisoned in a world of his or her beliefs. The final crucial point about Davidsonian interpretation is its stress on how the interpreter changes, adapts, learns in the encounter with the anomalous. In short, we assume similarity but inevitably encounter difference. The encounter with difference, however, is productive, not frustrating, because it causes change in the interpretive system of the interpreter. (75)

That linguistic communication is not only possible but emergent as well, despite the mutability of meaning, suggests that language use is a creative and innovative activity. In fact, Dasenbrock argues, language provides an important means by which novelty can be generated by and integrated into the culture:

> In emphasizing the mutability of meaning, the way speakers can change the language they inherit in substantial as well as trivial ways, Davidson establishes innovation and creativity at the very heart of language use. ... The fact that the interpreter's and the speaker's or writer's prior theories never match is ... something ... we can actively take advantage of -- or even create -- ... by challenging a listener's or reader's prior theory, by confronting and overturning received conventions. Every speaker or

> writer can ... [violate] a convention or prior theory in such a way that the listener or reader comes to understand what is meant anyway; ... prior theories [thus] give way in the face of a new meaning or an unconventional expression. (70-71)

Indeed, literature is a special use of language that possesses this potential to create new meaning and new ideas. By nurturing this creativity and innovation in language and thought, literature facilitates productive communicative exchange and advances the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change.

A literary text, then, is a fixed linguistic structure through which understanding flows and meaning is created. As a conduit of understanding, it is also a point of cultural exchange. Donald Calnes proposes a biological analogy to suggest that emergent cultural subsystems such as literature play an important part in advancing productive cultural change:

> The term "culture" embraces all aspects of the way a community lives, including its language, morality, religion, art, government, [etc.] ... Analogies have been drawn between cultures and living organisms[:] ... both have a complex structure with specialized parts contributing to the good of the whole, and they both have to adjust to a changing environment. Just as organisms have evolved through mutations, ... cultures undergo change through the introduction of new information (concepts, observations, values) that is transferred to later generations by narrative and custom. (Calne 67-68) [29]

Calne's description of a culture's "specialized parts [e.g., literature] contributing to the good of the whole" clearly parallels the features of emergent systems and thus suggests that cultural subsystems such as literature generate novelty in free order cultures. In addition, by emphasizing that a culture's adaptation process includes the transference of information and knowledge through "narrative and custom," Calnes' analogy highlights the various contributions to cultural change that are made by cultural subsystems such as literature and literary studies.

From the free order critical perspective, an emergent literary text is one that contributes to spontaneous cultural change through its synergistic effect and its ability to facilitate novelty. Specifically, a literary work is synergistic if the effect of the total work is greater than the sum of the effects of its parts, and it facilitates novelty if it exhibits new ideas, generates cultural novelty, or aids in cultural integration of novelty. Indeed, as Ernst Cassirer acknowledges below, art forms such as literature are remarkably powerful in generating emergence through the aesthetic experience:

> Aesthetic experience is ... pregnant with infinite possibilities which remain unrealized in ordinary sense experience. In the work of the artist these possibilities become actualities; they are brought into the open and take on a definite shape. The revelation of this inexhaustibility of the aspects of things is one of the great privileges and one of the deepest charms of art. (Cassirer 930)

The emergent aesthetic experience, I argue, is one in which the "inexhaustibility of the aspects of things" (or novelty) is "revealed" or inspired through synergy. Since an emergent text can inspire novelty at a number of junctures (including creation,

interpretation, and evaluation, for example), emergence as the generation of novelty will be explored more specifically in later discussions about the author, the reader, and the critic. Emergence as creative synergy is more directly dependent on properties of the text, however, and is therefore explored in greater detail here.

In a literary text, the revelation (as Cassirer calls it) or inspiration of novelty occurs through the unique synergistic combination of form and content, which I call "creative order." Consider that, for all who participate in the literary experience (i.e., writer, reader, and critic), the literary text involves both the imaginative and rational components of human thought, and it synthesizes both the intellectual and the sensible aspects of human experience. Consequently, a synergistically emergent text is one that most efficiently combines these components of thought, and that most effectively synthesizes these aspects of experience, into an aesthetically powerful combination of content and form. This combination, or the text's "creative order," is not simply additive, but actually implies an especially productive, synergistic relationship between content and form. The free order concept of a text's creative order thus involves textual content, textual form, and the synergy generated between the two.

This concept of creative order as a synergistic relationship is similar to Cleanth Brooks' concept of poetic structure, where

> the structure obviously is everywhere conditioned by the nature of the material which goes into the poem. The nature of the material sets the problem to be solved, and the solution is the ordering of the material.
>
> (Brooks 961)

Since Brooks' concept of poetic structure (which is similar to the free order concept of creative order) is closely related to the New Critical concept of "complex unity," it may appear that free order literary criticism is simply an adaptation of New Criticism within a socio-political (i.e., "free order") theoretical framework.[30] It is indeed true that, like complex unity, emergent creative order can be developed through a variety of literary effects, including imagery, word choice, word and image patterns, character development, narrative technique, etc. However, unlike New Criticism's complex unity, an emergent creative order does not direct the reader or interpreter to one certain, determinate meaning. Instead, an emergent creative order is one that is rich in possibilities -- indeed, rich in *valid* possibilities -- of meaning. Free order literary criticism assumes a flexible yet demanding interpretation of textual meaning (an idea which is explored in greater detail in the discussion about reader interpretation); as a result, it does not demand that a text have a single, determinate meaning for it to be either meaningful or valuable. The criterion of value in free order critical analysis lies in the synergistic power of the text, through language and thought, to facilitate novelty and to influence exchange in a manner that contributes to productive cultural change.

Free Order Assumptions about the Role of the Writer

The primacy with which free order theory views the individual has important implications regarding assumptions about the writer, the audience, and the critic. I argued in Section One that human beings are creatively adaptable individuals who are motivated by their own needs and desires to pursue a state of balance, or equilibrium, in their existence. The central point through which all efforts to achieve balance converge

is the individual's Self. The Self is composed of the individual's various dimensions (i.e., physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual) which compete for the individual's limited resources. This internal competition for resources, along with the challenges presented by a chaotic environment, impel the individual to develop and integrate novelty into his experience in his efforts to achieve equilibrium. The pursuit of equilibrium thus motivates the individual to employ -- and enables him to develop -- his unique combination of natural and acquired resources (what I called his "toolbox" for living), especially his creative ability (i.e., reason, imagination, and the ability to learn) and his reservoir of knowledge (or categorized experience). The individual's continuous struggle to spontaneously order his experience in a manner that advances his pursuit of equilibrium is reflected in his exercise of free choice and in his participation in exchange. Individuals are most free to spontaneously organize their experience, exercise free choice, and participate in productive exchange in a free order social system; such a social system spawns a free order culture. A free order culture provides the optimal environment for the individual to achieve equilibrium through Self-creation, and for the culture at large to productively generate and integrate cultural change.

It should come as no surprise that the fundamental respect for the individual that is espoused by free order theory extends to a respect for the creative efforts of the individual. The author is not dead in a free order culture. Instead, he is the creator of a fixed linguistic structure through which he intends for understanding to flow. He expresses his intention through the choices he makes in creating his text, and those choices in part reflect aspects of his Self, including his creative ability (i.e., ability to reason, imagine, and learn) and his reservoir of knowledge (i.e., categorized experience).

Indeed, the creative process is a dynamic one in which the writer attempts to organize elements of a chaotic reality into a particular experience that reflects or implies a general, or "universal," human experience.[31] Through this combination of particularity and universality, and through the achievement of an emergent creative order, the effective writer creates a text that has the power to generate in his readers an aesthetic or poetic experience with emergent qualities.

The view that the author holds some importance as the creator of a text is grounded in the humanist tradition that underlies the concepts of free agency and productive exchange.[32] In Doing Things With Text, M. H. Abrams describes the humanist influence on literature, which he refers to as the "traditional, or humanistic paradigm of the writing and reading of literature," as a communicative exchange between author and reader:

> Literature ... is a transaction between a human author and his human reader. By his command of linguistic and literary possibilities, the author actualizes and records in words what he undertakes to signify of human beings and actions and about matters of human concern, addressing himself to those readers who are competent to understand what he has written. The reader sets himself to make out what the author has designed and signified, through putting into play a linguistic and literary expertise that he shares with the author. By approximating what the author undertook to signify the reader understands what the language of the work means. (269-270)[33]

Abrams' description of literature as a transaction between human beings suggests that communicative exchange cannot be productive unless individuals believe that they have achieved an agreement of understanding. Agreements of understanding, I have argued, come about as a result of intention and interpretation, where the interpreter adjusts his prior theories about meaning into passing theories to resolve areas of confusion in the interpretive process. In an interactive communication (such as a conversation), roles change as the speaker becomes the listener and as the listener becomes the speaker; this change of roles provides opportunities for the individuals to solicit and provide additional clues to meaning. In a non-interactive communicative exchange such as a text, however, the writer enjoys only one opportunity to communicate his intention to his readers.

Let me digress for a moment and reiterate that the writer does indeed intend to communicate to readers; otherwise he would not bother to submit his creative effort to them. He may want to share an entertaining story, suggest a moral, or argue an ideology -- indeed, all texts are not inspired by the same muse. Every writer does share, however, the burden of finding the most effective creative order for his text; that is, every writer seeks the synergistic combination of content and form that he believes will most effectively communicate his intention. In the earlier discussion about language, I noted that the effort to communicate intention is a creative activity. Indeed, the writer's effort to develop an effective creative order in his text represents a particular type of intention and, as such, it is a creative effort that calls upon the writer's creative ability (reason, imagination, and learning) and his reservoir of knowledge (categorized experience). Free order theory asserts that the writer's employment of these resources (and, no doubt, of

others) in the creative effort reflects a spontaneous process through which he both creates novelty and further develops his creative ability.

The free order concept of spontaneous order, I have explained, involves the self-generated organization of disordered experience into order. This concept of spontaneity does not necessarily connote impulsiveness nor does it suggest that poetic writing is the product of a spontaneous overflow of emotion.[34] However, the creative process is not strictly rational, either, nor is the writer disinterested. Instead, the creative process is one in which the writer combines intention, experience, and his creative ability (reason, imagination, and learning) in an effort to generate novelty. In addition, the creative process is an iterative process through which the writer develops his resources (his "toolbox"). For example, his effort to anticipate his reader's needs in order to develop an effective creative order exercises his abilities to reason, imagine, and learn; in addition, it expands his reservoir of knowledge by prompting him to develop and consider alternative schemes by which to categorize experience. The *emergent* creative process is one in which the writer's synergistic application of his creative resources (i.e., his "toolbox") enhances his Self-creation and simultaneously produces a text through which the reader/interpreter enjoys an emergent poetic experience.

T. S. Eliot's theory about individual talent and the creative process provides an interesting model with which to compare and contrast this free order concept of an emergent creative process. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot describes the synergistic power of the emergent creative process by comparing it to the catalyst in a chemical reaction.[35] The creative process, Eliot explains, "is a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences which to

the practical ... person would not seem to be experiences at all" (764). The idea of the creative process as a catalyst is clearly similar to the free order concept of synergy. Further study of Eliot's position suggests, however, that in contrast to free order theory, his theory seems to minimize the role of free choice in the creative process. Eliot's creative process is one which occurs unconsciously and without deliberation, through the medium of the poet's mind; the poet's mind, Eliot explains, is

> a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together. ... [Thus] the poet has, not a "personality" to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. (763)

For Eliot, the creative process is depersonalized by the writer's consciousness of the past, or of the literary tradition. As the writer's talent becomes more developed, his personality becomes overwhelmed by the medium:

> The mind of the mature poet ... [becomes] a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations. ... What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality. (762-763)

Clearly there are similarities between Eliot's theory and the free order concept of an emergent creative process. For example, the concept of the mind as a receptacle is

similar to the free order idea of the individual's reservoir of knowledge (i.e., categorized experience) which he expands through learning. Similarly, Eliot's analogy of the poet's mind as a catalyst, which combines experience and feelings into a work of art, corresponds to the free order concepts of synergy and creative order. However, where Eliot's theory proposes that the creative process is one of increasing depersonalization, free order theory suggests instead that the creative process is integrally involved in the writer's Self-creation and is thus a constructive, productive, and potentially emergent organization of experience.

The free order view that the creative process is an organization of individual experience that is potentially emergent through Self-creation obviously contrasts with Eliot's concept of a depersonalized creative process. However, it finds similarities in William James' view of freedom as creative effort. Boller explains that James "thought of freedom not as an abstract concept, but as a concrete, living, inner experience involving attention, effort, purpose, and choice on the part of the individual, ... and that evidence for it lay in the experience of the creative effort itself' (185). For James, the individual's intent and effort to understand his experience creates a "causal initiative" that produces creative insights which, in turn, generate new creative efforts (185). Boller explains:

> Creative effort depends on knowledge and understanding. Without an awareness of the possibilities of experience, there is little likelihood of innovative activity. ... Conscious effort, in short, stimulate[s] subconscious activity and sets deeper forces to work in the psyche... Freedom [lies] in the individual's exercise of causal initiative; and the

> incursions from the subconscious [are] responses to the individual's conscious efforts and not the major source of creativity. (181-182)

James' theory clearly corresponds to the free order idea that individuals are creatively adaptable free agents who, through acts of free choice and exchange, enjoy the opportunity to pursue balance, or equilibrium, through Self-creation.

That a writer contributes to his Self-creation through the creative process does not ensure that his creative product will be understood, however. As noted previously, the literary exchange involves both intention and interpretation. The writer must be successful in creating a text through which understanding can flow, I explained, and to this end he will apply his creative ability and his reservoir of knowledge in his efforts to develop an emergent creative order. The literary text, then, is a product of the writer's intentions manifested through the choices he makes during the creative process.

Yet as many postmodern literary theories have demonstrated, "authorial intentions in no way actually limit the interpretive freedom of a reader or control the meaning of a text... [Indeed,] it is in the reader's power to do with any text what he or she wishes, to read as he or she wishes" (Dasenbrock 99). But while the reader is free to read as he chooses, Dasenbrock argues that disregarding the author's intentions (and at the extreme, insisting on his insignificance) "involves an ethical choice: a choice to treat the work under discussion as a text, not a work, as the product of a person not in significant relation to oneself, a person one feels free to ignore" (104). Dasenbrock further asserts that, because individuals would not read the text of someone for whom they care in this way (i.e., brazenly disregarding the author's intent), anti-intentionalism involves an ethical incoherence because it leads one to treat "different people radically differently for

no statable or defensible reason" (106). "We can therefore insist on good faith having priority over bad faith," Dasenbrock suggests, "only if we insist on an ethics of interpretation in which because authors are persons, they must be respected in the way persons in general must be respected" (99).

With its emphasis on free agency, free order theory obviously supports an ethics of interpretation that acknowledges the dignity of the individual and the creative efforts of the writer. Moreover, the flexibility of free order critical analysis promises that such an acknowledgement does not necessarily imply that authorial intention dictates meaning.[36] But there is another culturally relevant argument for respecting the intention of the writer in reading and interpretation. I previously asserted that the effective literary text is a fixed linguistic structure through which understanding flows, and that, in addition, it is a point of cultural exchange. In the first sense, the text represents a communicative exchange between the writer and the reader; thus, if the reader chooses to disregard the writer's intentions in her reading, it is a personal choice with little, if any, repercussions. However, as a point of cultural exchange, the text is a conduit for dialogical exchange (i.e., discourse) that has the power to generate and integrate novelty into the community.

In order for dialogical exchange to be emergent, though, individuals must be able to communicate with and trust in one another; in short, they must be able to achieve an agreement of understanding about their dialogue. The author's intention, I have argued, establishes the creative order that initiates the exchange through which the agreement of understanding is achieved. The text, as a fixed linguistic structure through which understanding flows, provides a fixed point through which the community can explore

meaning and reconcile differences. But if every element of the text reflects either relativity or indeterminacy, then there is no fixed point around which a productive dialogue can be developed or through which cultural understanding can be achieved. The text becomes unimportant as a point of exchange. Moreover, if theoretical or critical approaches that emphasize relativity and indeterminacy dominate literary studies, then literature's contribution to the community's ability to trust is eroded, and its value as communicative exchange is undermined. In such a case, the role of literature is reduced to one of entertainment only; or alternatively, of fueling negative diversity by reinforcing self-serving ideas within specialized segments of the community, a process which simply encourages the isolation that inhibits productive exchange between a free order culture's plurality of segments. In either case, it is of far less value than its potential suggests in fueling the dialectical process that advances emergent cultural change.

Free Order Assumptions about the Traits of the Audience

Every reader comes to a text as an individual. In other words, each individual brings to the literary experience his unique combination of needs and desires, his unique combination of resources, and his unique history of experience -- in short, he brings his unique Self. Moreover, as was previously noted, experience is an individual phenomenon. Thus it seems obvious that every individual will experience a literary text in a personal and unique way, and that this experience will translate into a unique and distinct meaning. When a text is especially productive in generating meaning for an individual, it is emergent. The fact that individuals experience unique and separate meanings through the literary experience does not mean, however, that individuals cannot

achieve an agreement of understanding with other individuals about a text. While the agreement of understanding will not exhaustively cover all the various elements of the literary experience, it can provide the basic elements for a dynamic exchange of ideas, which I have referred to as the dialogical exchange. Therefore a text can also be considered emergent when it is especially productive in facilitating an exchange of ideas.

There are, then, two potential types of exchange that the reader can experience through literature: the creative exchange that generates personal meaning through the individual's unique interpretive experience, and the dialogical exchange that advances cultural understanding through the medium of the text. When a text is optimally emergent, these two exchange experiences work synergistically together, creating a dialectical exchange that generates novelty and integrates it into the culture. Such dialectical exchanges are emergent, and every emergent dialectical exchange represents a productive link in the community's aggregate dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. When the aggregate dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change is emergent, I have argued, the community is strengthened through its improved ability to address challenge and reconcile difference. Literature therefore has the potential to strengthen a community through the many and various creative and dialogical exchanges that it generates. To better illustrate this potential, a separate review of each type of exchange (creative and dialogical) that composes the dialectical exchange is provided below.

Although the interpretive experience that inspires the creative exchange is unique to each individual, it is not destined to be an exercise in solipsism. As demonstrated in the discussion of Davidsonian interpretation, the interpretive experience can instead be a

scene of learning and creativity. Interpretation requires that the individual apply his creative ability and his reservoir of knowledge to organize his reception of the text into a meaningful experience. Discerning the intent of the author (i.e., reaching an agreement of understanding) is only part of the reader's achievement of meaning, though. Meaning is enriched when the individual applies his understanding of the text to address his personal needs and to nurture his Self-creation. This integration of understanding into a deeper personal meaning constitutes a learning process and a creative activity, and it thus reflects an emergent literary experience for the reader.

Literary scholar William Paulson agrees that the literary (or poetic) experience can be an emergent one.[37] Paulson argues that, because a text displays a complexity that cannot be explained by any single element (e.g., language, literary conventions, or culture), interpretation (and thus understanding) must be achieved through the reader's spontaneous efforts to achieve order from disorder (or chaos, which Paulson calls "noise"); these efforts involve learning. As the following explanation demonstrates, Paulson's view of interpretation as an emergent process resembles the Davidsonian idea that prior theories give way to passing theories:

> Although texts are made of language, the passage from linguistic structure to textual effect cannot be described with ...the regularity or predictability ... [of] grammatical description... The text is not fully determined by the linguistic features of which we know it to be made. We suppose, for example, that a poem presents itself to the reader as a complex system of relations. ... The reader brings to her assimilation of the poem a knowledge of the linguistic codes ... [and of the usual relational structures

> of language and literature]. But she does not begin with precise, operational knowledge of how all these different phenomena will interact and thereby contribute to the poem's effect, exactly how they will combine to produce what she will call the poem's meaning....
>
> This situation arises not from the individual reader's incompetence, but from the nature of literature... The specific relations between elements of a text are to some degree unique to that text and so cannot have been learned anywhere else. ...The literary utterance...is precommunicative, for whereas writer and reader share the natural language in which the text is written, the reader does not yet possess the specific literary codes pertinent to the diversity of that [particular] text. ... "Poetic diversity"... in the absence of an understanding of its articulation, can be experienced only as noise. The reader's construction of a meaning for the poem seems to proceed by a process of self-organization from noise: variety (and kinds of variety) not explainable in and of themselves become ingredients of a new level of explanation, a new context in which they may be informative rather than noisy. (Paulson 47-48)

Paulson's description of interpretation suggests a continuous reorganization of thought that is iterative and interactive with the text, so that as the reader progresses through the text (and, indeed, every time he rereads the text), he applies the understanding he has achieved up to that point. In essence, each subsequent moment of interpretation involves the incorporation of learning so that the individual continuously interprets from an increasingly higher level of complexity and understanding.

The incorporation of learning into interpretation provides evidence that the interpretive process has the potential to be emergent. Evidence of an emergent *outcome*, however, must be found in the novelty that is generated when the interpreter extends his understanding of the author's intention into a personal meaning. Such an outcome is possible because the interpretive process is a spontaneous one through which the reader's creative ability and his reservoir of knowledge stimulate new ideas. An emergent interpretive experience is therefore a creative effort. As such, it resembles William James' description of the creative activity that he attributes to superior minds:

> We have the most abrupt cross-cuts and transitions from one idea to another, the most rarefied abstractions and discriminations, the most unheard of combinations of elements, the subtlest associations of analogy; in a word, we seem suddenly introduced to a caldron of ideas, where everything is fizzling and bobbing about in a state of bewildering activity... According to the idiosyncrasy of the individual, the scintillations will have one character or another. They will be sallies of wit and humor; they will be flashes of poetry and eloquence... But whatever their differences, they will all agree...that their genesis is sudden and, as it were, spontaneous. (qtd. in Boller 176)

In other words, while the interpreter selects the ideas that seem, logically, to be most relevant to the rest of the text and therefore best suited to reflect the author's intentions, divergent and seemingly errant ideas are also stimulated through the interpretive experience. New ideas are thus stimulated as the individual incorporates his understanding of the text into his personal experience, drawing from and simultaneously

building his creative ability and his reservoir of knowledge. This stimulation of new ideas reflects an extension of meaning beyond the interpreter's understanding of the author's intent, into the interpreter's personal experience. The reader's achievement of personal meaning through his interpretation of the text thus provides an emergent literary experience that enhances his Self-creation.

The reader obviously benefits from the contributions that an emergent creative exchange makes to his creative ability and his reservoir of knowledge. However, an individual's emergent creative exchange can also contribute to the community's dialogical exchange and thereby to its ability to productively advance spontaneous cultural change through a dialectical process. In other words, individuals bring to the cultural dialogue the novelty that is generated by their unique interpretation of a text, and through a dialogical exchange, these ideas are shared and, indeed, spur successive novelty. But if the interpretive experience is unique to the individual, how can different individuals understand one another's personal meanings so that they might share with one another?

The reason that the culture can enjoy a productive dialogical exchange is because it is a type of communicative exchange in which there is intention and interpretation, and therefore it is possible for individuals to achieve an agreement of understanding. However, the dialogical exchange that is mediated by a text involves not only the reader's interpretation of the author's intention, but also the reader's interpretation of other readers' interpretations. Rather than complicating understanding, these other interpretations enable the individual to distill the text into points of empirical validity

through which the exchange of ideas can flow. This empirical understanding is what M. H. Abrams' refers to as a "warranted assurance of meaning."

Abrams' suggestion that a "warranted assurance" of the author's intended meaning is adequate for understanding corresponds to the free order concept of an agreement of understanding. In the earlier citation of Abrams' description of the literary transaction, he notes that, "by approximating what the author undertook to signify[,] the reader understands what the language of the work means" (269).[38] Abrams' recognition that the reader "approximates" what the author intends admits to the dynamic (and slippery) nature of language; however, it also emphasizes that it is the warranted assurance, or the agreement of understanding, that enables a dialogical exchange to occur. In the foreword to Abrams' book, Michael Fisher explains:

> For Abrams, ... our assurance (that the sentences composing a text mean what we understand them to mean) is warranted by the assent of competent readers engaged with us in what Abrams calls the "evolving give-and-take of dialogue" ... [Only through the subsequent] convergence of diverse perspectives ... [can we approach] (without ever finally achieving) the vision-in-depth that constitutes humanistic truth. (xi-xii)

When readers achieve a warranted assurance that they share a common understanding about the basics of a text, they can use these textual points of empirical validity to develop a dialogue of greater depth, complexity, and abstraction. The agreed upon points (i.e., "points of empirical validity") act as recurrent checkpoints against which readers can continuously reconcile and extend meaning. In the Davidsonian model, then, the agreed upon understanding of the text represents a prior theory that the readers share

about a text's meaning (and this prior meaning suggests that a particular categorical structure be employed in assimilating the various elements of the text). When a reader attempts to extend this shared understanding by introducing ideas from his personal meaning, the other readers must evaluate and categorize those ideas into a new passing theory. This reconciliation of new meaning is credible because it builds on the agreed understanding (or the points of empirical validity) and on the categorical structure suggested by the prior theory. By introducing novelty into the dialogue, this new passing theory has the potential to stimulate new ideas in the minds of the other readers, who may attempt to share their ideas and thereby further extend textual understanding. The dialogical exchange thus has the potential to expand exponentially and, when it does so, it is indeed "emergent."

A culture's "evolving give-and-take of dialogue" (about which Abrams speaks) involves (in part) the dialogical exchange activity that occurs around the community's cultural artifacts, such as literature. Abrams' "give-and-take" suggests the ethics of interpretation that Dasenbrock recommends; in fact, both the free order agreement to understanding and Abrams' warranted assurance require that trust be an integral part of the communicative exchange. The importance of trust and interpretive charity does not mean, however, that a free order culture's dialogical exchange will not be controversial or passionate. Instead, the free order culture's dialogical exchange can be an exciting and challenging arena in which ideas are generated, shared, and integrated into ever-greater cultural understanding.

It seems fair to claim, then, that the dialogical exchange that is mediated through a literary text can reinforce the community's ability to trust while facilitating

communication, introducing novelty, and integrating cultural change. When the creative exchange that the individual enjoys through his unique interpretive experiences interacts synergistically with the dialogical exchange mediated by a literary text, the culture's literary experience is enriched and emergent. Indeed, evidence that emergent dialogical exchange is generated through the literary experience can be found anywhere that literature facilitates productive communicative exchange between individuals. For example, in neighborhood book clubs, in literature classrooms, around the workplace water cooler, at the airport, on the commuter train or bus, or in newspaper and magazine reviews, individuals freely and enthusiastically participate in the exchange of ideas that are generated by their participation in the literary experience.

In free order literary theory, then, the text, writer, and audience converge into a point of dialectical exchange that advances cultural understanding and thereby contributes to productive cultural change. In other words, the writer's creative effort, the reader's creative exchange, and the community's dialogical exchange fuse synergistically through the text into a link in the culture's dialectical process. When *emergent,* this dialectical exchange strengthens the individual's and the community's abilities to generate and integrate novelty, and it contributes to the dialectical process through which the culture addresses challenges and reconciles differences.

Free Order Assumptions about the Functions of the Critic

Literary critics and the field of literary criticism play a significant role in the creative and dialogical exchange that percolates around a free order culture's literary artifacts. Through studied discourse about literature, scholars and critics create a "critical

exchange" that has the potential to add value to the community's literary experience by influencing the creative exchanges through which writers and readers generate novelty and the dialogical exchange through which cultural understanding flows. Literary critics and scholars thus enjoy the opportunity to enhance the community's ability to reap the benefits of literature, and to thereby promote the emergent literary experiences that constructively advance the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change.

In a free order culture, literary criticism represents a "critical exchange" of ideas about literature and the literary experience that is conducted through the medium of words, or language. Morris Weitz describes criticism similarly, as "a form of studied discourse about works of art[;]... a use of language primarily designed to facilitate and enrich the understanding of art" (qtd. in Abrams 40). Linguistic exchange about literature is different from linguistic exchange about other forms of art, however, because literature itself is a linguistic art form; that is, literary criticism is a linguistic activity relating to another linguistic activity. As such, the critic's experience with and communication about a literary artifact directly engages his Self through the emergent abilities that language provides individuals to categorize their experience and to communicate with other individuals.[39] In other words, within the context of literary criticism, literary critics and scholars categorize their literary experiences into categorical structures that reflect their unique purposes of Self while enabling them to communicate with one another about literary studies.

The "purposes of Self," I previously argued, are motivated by the individual's needs as expressed through the multiple (and competing) dimensions of his Self.[40] The categorical structures that the individual chooses to organize his experiences -- those

categorical structures that reflect his unique purposes of Self -- are therefore those that he expects will provide him with the greatest opportunity to optimize his condition through equilibrium of Self. In organizing the literary experience, critics likewise choose categorical structures that meet the unique needs of their Selves; and through critical exchange activity, they develop agreements of understanding about these structures that allow them to share ideas and create novelty. To facilitate such communication among themselves, critics develop and adopt theoretical frameworks around which to organize the literary experience, and they conduct critical activities (including description, interpretation, and evaluation) in their analyses of the literary experience. The theoretical framework within which a critic works and the critical activities that he conducts thus constitute important elements of the critical exchange.

Since the theoretical approach that a critic chooses is one that effectively addresses the unique purposes of his Self, it also provides insight into the values that motivate the critic's creative efforts. Indeed, the literary theory that a critic chooses suggests a particular "lens" through which to conduct critical analysis or a unique vantage point from which to participate in critical exchange, and it thus provides the critic with a productive model (or categorical structure) to use in addressing those elements of the literary experience that s/he finds meaningful. In his essay "What's the Use of Theorizing about the Arts?," Abrams explains that "the theorist takes his stand on one of many possible vantage points that will provide what strikes him as the most revealing perspective on the area of his interest" (48). Rather than functioning as an essential definition of "criticism," then, Abrams argues that a literary theory actually functions as a working definition that "serves, in a preliminary way, to block out the area

of [the critic's] inquiry, and also to introduce some categories that he will use to organize his inquiry into that area" (41). Invoking Coleridge's visual analogy, Abrams thus concludes that "the use of a critical theory is not to reflect the given artistic facts, but to serve as a 'speculative instrument' that will arm one's critical vision" (48).

It is not surprising that the rich and varied cultural subsystems enjoyed in a free order social system generate a plethora of unique perspectives and creative efforts; in the world of literary criticism, such creative efforts are reflected in a wide diversity of literary theories. Abrams emphasizes that this diversity of theory need not be a detriment to critical exchange. Diverse theories "may in fact serve as alternative and complementary procedures for doing the critic's job, with each theory, from its elected vantage, yielding distinctive insights into the properties and relations of poems" (30). Indeed, the chaotic nature of free order reality (i.e., that it is complex, dynamic, mysterious, and uncertain) suggests, as does Abrams below, that no single theory can ensure a comprehensive critical analysis of a literary text:

> No theory is adequate to tell the whole story, for each one has limits correlative with its powers. As a speculative instrument, it has its particular angle and focus of vision, and what for one speculative instrument is an indistinct or blank area requires an alternative speculative instrument if it is to be brought into sharp focus for inspection. (48)

Abrams' intellectual charity is sustained by his conviction that "a profitable theory ... is not a science like physics but an enterprise of discovery" (29). Consequently, the pursuit of humanistic truth (such as that pursued in literary studies) requires a broader concept of rationality than the "narrow logical-positivist views of rationality -- based on formal logic

and empirical reasoning" which is typical of the pursuit of mathematical and scientific truth. A wide diversity of profitable theories, Abrams argues, provides this "vision in depth [that] is a characteristic feature of humanistic truth" (84-85).

Yet the possibility that multiple, seemingly competing theories can each make valid contributions to a culture's critical exchange activity does not mean that all theories are valid or productive. Abrams explains:

> The test of the validity of a theory is what it proves capable of doing when it is put to work. And each good (that is, serviceable) theory ... is capable of providing insights into hitherto overlooked or neglected features and structural relations of works of art, of grouping works of art in new and interesting ways, and also of revealing new distinctions and relations between things that (from its special point of view) are art and things that are not art. (48)

Abrams' test for the validity of a theory corresponds to a free order standard that values a theory according to its ability to generate novelty and enhance the community's critical exchange activity. In fact, the free order perspective suggests that the proliferation of "valid," "serviceable," or "profitable" literary theories can foster an atmosphere of positive diversity that facilitates spontaneous critical exchange activity. Positive diversity coupled with productive critical exchange can thus increase the likelihood that the culture's literary experiences will generate the creative and dialogical exchange that contributes constructively to the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change.[41] From a free order perspective, then, a profitable literary theory is one that nurtures emergence in the culture's spontaneous critical exchange activity, thereby generating

novelty and integrating it into literary studies and the culture at large. Indeed, profitable theories will enhance the positive diversity in a community, while unprofitable theories harbor the potential to encourage the negative diversity that can undermine a free order culture.

Abrams suggests that the profitability of any particular literary theory can be evaluated according to whether or not it is an "open" rather than "closed" theory; whether or not it uses working definitions rather than legislative definitions; and whether it provides useful terms and devices for critical analysis. These qualities clearly support the properties of emergent systems, and Abrams' criteria for evaluating the profitability of a theory are therefore useful in a free order analysis. For example, the spontaneous activity (i.e., dynamic and self-generated) that drives emergent systems demonstrates the creative potential of an open (and profitable) theory. Likewise, an emergent system's capacity to generate and integrate novelty through learning is reflected in a profitable theory's application of working definitions and its development of useful devices for critical analysis. The similarity between the properties of emergent systems and Abrams' criteria for evaluating profitable theories thus suggests that a critical analysis performed within a free order theoretical framework, when emergent, will also be profitable.

Abrams contrasts "open and empirical theories" which are capable of evolving with "closed theories" which are regulative or legislative in character. Drawing from Weitz's work, Abrams argues that open theories are flexible in "allowing for application to new and unforeseen cases" while closed theories are constrained by essential and defining concepts or necessary and sufficient conditions (36). Art forms such as literature are best studied using open theoretical concepts because, as Weitz explains,

"the very expansive, adventurous character of art, its ever-present changes and novel creations, makes it logically impossible to ensure any set of defining properties" (qtd. in Abrams, 36). To apply closed concepts to literary analysis, then, presupposes that the character and products of a literary text are fixed and predetermined, that the critic has nothing new to discover or create, and that the critical exchange cannot generate or integrate novelty. Such presuppositions are contrary to the creative potential of free order cultures since the spontaneous order by which such cultures organize, and the emergent potential of spontaneous organization, are dynamic, generative, and productive. Moreover and importantly, the strict application of legislative or regulative concepts has a dampening effect on critical exchange activity. Not only might it constrain the divergent thought processes through which novelty is often generated during the literary experience, but it also could create a cult of conformity and uniformity that stifles trust with the fear of noncompliance.[42] When individuals feel unable to trust one another, they become reluctant to risk sharing new ideas; as a result, investigation is foreclosed, individual expression and novelty are squelched, dialogical exchange suffers, and ultimately, negative diversity takes root and proliferates.

One reason that open theories are so profitable as speculative instruments is that they permit the critic to use working definitions rather than regulative or legislative definitions in his analysis. Definitions, Abrams argues, should play an exploratory rather than legislative role in the critical inquiry. When definitions are legislative, the resulting critical analysis tends to focus on proving the theory's regulative definitions rather than on discovering important literary aspects of the work itself. Abrams suggests that the

literary theory developed by Aristotle in his Poetics is an example of a profitable use of working definitions:

> Of this theory, ... definitions certainly do not constitute a major part, but are used only briefly and passingly, as a way of introducing one or another area of investigation. And the body of the theory does not consist of an attempt -- whether vain or successful -- to support and "prove" the definition. It consists instead of putting to work the terms, distinctions, and categories proposed in the initial definition ... in the analysis of the distinctive elements, organization, and characteristic powers of various kinds of poetic art. (Abrams 45)

Abram's concept of a working definition as a structure around which the critic can build his analysis is similar to the free order ideas of knowledge as categorized experience and of learning as the expansion and/or manipulation of the individual's categorical structures (or reservoir of knowledge). In other words, working definitions reflect the categorical structure (and the theoretical framework) from which the critic draws his "prior theories" about various elements of a text. As he performs a variety of critical activities (such as description, explanation, and evaluation), learning occurs and novelty is generated. During this part of the critical exchange, the critic is involved in a creative effort that draws upon and expands his creative ability (i.e., his abilities to reason, imagine, and learn) and his reservoir of knowledge (i.e., his categorized experience). When emergent, this creative effort contributes to his Self-creation and enhances his capacity to participate with other critics in productive critical exchange. The use of working definitions within

an open theoretical framework therefore improves the potential that the critic's creative effort will be emergent and that his participation in critical exchange will be productive.

An important by-product of the critic's emergent creative effort is the development of useful analytical techniques. Abrams argues that the analytical devices and terms that are generated by a profitable theory make a "valid contribution to knowledge" because they provide critics and readers with tools that can be used "to experience and enjoy works of art." These tools include "terms and analytic devices that enable us to experience [works of art] in a discriminating rather than a crude way, through directing our attention to their important features and the ways these features are ordered according to distinctively artistic reasons for order" (45). The creation of new ways to find more meaning in the literary experience reflects an emergent outcome of the critical exchange process. Armed with a profitable (and thus emergent) literary theory, the critic's creative effort spawns novel techniques that can be used in critical activities such as description, explanation, and evaluation. For example, Abrams notes that Aristotle's contribution to critical analysis includes "such elements as plot, characters, diction, thought" and the consideration of "both the relative importance and the interrelations of these elements" (44).[43] The linguistic analysis of structuralist theory, the archetypal analysis of Jungian psychoanalytical theory, and the "close reading" of New Criticism provide additional examples of useful analytical techniques that have been developed through emergent critical exchange.

Free order literary theory has the potential to generate many useful devices, terms, and techniques for the profitable analysis of literature. In fact, the work in this thesis, though just a cursory venture into free order criticism, has suggested the application of

analytical concepts such as the "emergent text," the "creative" and "dialogical exchanges," "points of empirical validity," and the text's "creative order," to name just a few. Moreover, specific analytical devices or techniques have been suggested, such as the examination of the synergy between an emergent text's content and form in the effort to understand its creative order; the examination of a character's choices as evidence of her needs and purposes of Self and as a tool to explore the author's use of characterization; or the examination of the author's choices as evidence of his communicative intent and of his interests, values, and purposes of Self. Like all useful devices, terms, and techniques, these concepts and methods can be used to enhance the critical activities of description, explanation, and evaluation.

While "description" may seem to be the least creative aspect of criticism, it is of great importance to the critical exchange process because it establishes the agreement of understanding around which dialogical exchange can evolve. Without an agreement of understanding and productive dialogical exchange, it is unlikely that the critical exchange activity around a particular text will generate creativity or novelty; in other words, it is unlikely that such critical exchange activity will be emergent and contribute to literary studies or the culture at large. In the previous discussion about the traits of the audience, I noted that readers participate in a dialogical exchange that is mediated by the text.[44] This exchange involves not only the reader's interpretation of the author's intent, I stated, but also the reader's interpretation of other readers' interpretations. Rather than complicating understanding, these other interpretations enable critics to distill the text into points of empirical validity upon which the critical exchange process can build. Specifically, when critics are able to establish points of empirical validity, they can reach

an agreement of understanding or, as Abrams describes it, "a warranted assurance" that they share a common understanding about the basics of the text. With the achievement of an agreement of understanding, the critic can use these points of empirical validity to develop a dialogue of greater depth, complexity, and abstraction.

Accordingly, the potential for critical exchange activity to be emergent is dependent upon the establishment of points of empirical validity through a description of the text. These points of empirical validity represent what Abrams calls the "facts" of a text which compose its description:

> Descriptions consist of the true or false assertions about a work (for example, assertions about the words in the text, about the characters and their actions, or about the sequence of events in the plot), which are, in principle, verifiable by reference to ... "facts," about which there can be no doubt or reasonable dispute (33).[45]

For example, the following excerpt from a synopsis of John Milton's Paradise Lost suggests important "facts" or points of empirical validity upon which critical exchange can profitably build:

> The whole subject ... [is] man's disobedience and the loss of Paradise. The primary cause of all this is Satan, who had rebelled against God with a huge number of angels and had been cast out of Heaven into Hell before Adam and Eve were created. (Flannagan, Cliffs Notes, 9)

This partial description asserts the following "facts": the primary characters of this literary work are God, Satan, Adam, and Eve; the major conflict is between Satan and God, and it predates Adam and Eve; and Milton's authorial intent was to provide a

literary account of the Judeo-Christian story of creation, especially as an explanation of the burdens and vices that afflict humanity. Additional descriptive facts might explain that the work was written as an epic poem in the religiously turbulent seventeenth century by an English Protestant who was known for his open criticism of the Anglican Church.

It is highly unlikely that the given description, or the "facts" that it asserts, would be disputed by many literary scholars (especially since both are based on Milton's own summaries and on evidence in the poem itself). Indeed, the "facts" in the description are so commonly accepted that they are included without controversy in the widely used Cliffs Notes study guide. Over the years a variety of scholars have developed their own descriptions of Paradise Lost in which they too have identified the "facts" of the text. Moreover, through critical exchange activity, these facts have been put to the test, so to speak, as critics have used them as the basis for their participation in critical exchange activity. Through the distillation of various critical efforts, recurring textual facts have been "empirically verified" and validated as common points of understanding about the text. By identifying and agreeing upon such points of empirical validity, critics provide checkpoints against which they can continuously reconcile and extend meaning during critical exchange. When critics are thus able to trust in their ability to communicate with one another, they are more likely to extend their critical exchange activity to share ideas that are more abstract, complex, and novel.

While the agreements of understanding about a text's points of empirical validity (or as Abrams says, the warranted assurance about the meaning of the text) that are distilled through textual description are what sustains credibility in critical exchange, "explanation" or "interpretation" is the activity that extends critical analysis beyond an

empirical exercise into a creative effort. With this creative effort, the critic participates in a creative exchange similar to that in which the reader participates as she extends her interpretation of authorial intent into personal meaning.[46] In other words, the reader's extension of textual understanding into personal meaning represents a creative exchange between the author and the reader and, as was previously explained, it is mediated by the text. The critic's creative effort, on the other hand, represents a creative exchange between himself and the entire literary community (including authors, readers, other critics and scholars, as well as the literary tradition), and it involves his integration of various elements of the literary experience into his critical analysis. Specifically, the critic's creative effort is stimulated by the exchange of ideas that he enjoys through his participation with teachers, scholars, students, authors, and other critics in the critical exchange process. As participants in "studied discourse," literary critics choose to develop their reservoirs of knowledge and their creative abilities relative to literature and the literary experience beyond that of the average reader. With this "literary expertise," the critic enjoys a wider and richer network of commonly understood literary concepts and traditions from which he can draw in conducting critical exchange activity. Through critical exchange, then, he is able to further expand his reservoir of knowledge and strengthen his creative ability relative to literary studies. Likewise, as a scholar, the critic organizes his literary experiences into categories that support the particular perspectives, vantage points, or theoretical frameworks that he finds most productive and useful for scholastic pursuits. These theoretical frameworks provide him with common literary concepts and traditions that he can use in his creative effort and in communicating with other scholars and critics. Finally and as discussed above, participants in the literary

experience identify and validate various points of empirical validity relative to particular texts; the critic as author can establish agreements of understanding by invoking specific points of empirical validity from particular texts as he communicates his analysis to other critics. Clearly the critic has a rich network of literary concepts and tools from which to draw in his creative efforts to develop and communicate his critical analysis. A critic's emergent creative effort will integrate all of these tools into a novel, compelling, and often provocative literary interpretation and critical analysis.

The integration of all of these tools provides the critic with a higher probability that his analyses will be solid, that his arguments will be persuasive, and that his creative efforts will be emergent. Ironically, it is because interpretive analysis is inherently subjective that the process of critical analysis, while creative, must also be reasoned. Abrams suggests, for example, that the chore of interpretive analysis is "to clarify a work by answering such questions as why a character acts as he does, what the proper meaning is of a passage or of the work as a whole, which of the elements in a work are central or primary, how the details of a work relate to each other" (Abrams 33). The answers to these kinds of questions "cannot be proved to be true, but they can be 'supported' by 'reasons'":

> An interpretation cannot be confirmed in the sense of being proved true, or uniquely correct, since counterhypotheses remain logically possible. An interpretation can be confirmed only by showing it to be "adequate," to the extent that it is clear, self-consistent, and serves to account for the data of a text without obvious omissions or distortions. (33-34)

The inherent subjectivity of textual interpretation demands that the critic provide compelling support for his explanations if critical exchange is to be a credible mechanism for the exchange of ideas in a free order culture. A critic strengthens his arguments when he supports unique, imaginative, and novel critical insights with his literary expertise, his chosen theoretical framework, and specific points of empirical validity.

When critics provide solid and novel arguments, the critical exchange process becomes emergent through its contribution to the creative and dialogical exchanges that develop around the culture's literary artifacts. As explored in the discussion about readers, the creative and dialogical exchanges interact in a manner that cultivates novelty and/or integrates change, thus spontaneously coalescing into constructive dialectical exchange.[47] Every occurrence of dialectical exchange represents a link, I explained, in the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change through which a free order social system addresses its challenges and reconciles its differences, thus resolving the tensions between cultural conservation and cultural transformation.

Some differences do not seem to be reconcilable, however. Critical evaluation, for example, is perhaps the most difficult and controversial activity in critical exchange because a critic's evaluation of a particular work of art can plausibly be based on a variety of (often subjective) criteria. Thus, as Abrams suggests,

> since the criteria of artistic merit depend on the kind of work being discussed, and also differ from age to age, from artistic school to school, and from critic to critic, disagreements about criteria (hence disagreements in evaluation) are perennial and cannot be finally resolved. All a critic can

> do, when his criteria of value are challenged, is to justify them by further reasons, which may win assent but cannot be probative. (34)

In fact, evaluation of a literary text involves the very idea of what constitutes good literature (or art), and a critic's attitude about such ideas depends largely on what he deems the purposes or functions of literature to be. At its heart, such a question is philosophical and leads the critic into the realm of literary theory. Literary theories, I previously argued, represent philosophical tools that provide the critic with a lens or vantage point from which to approach a text. As such, they provide the critic with "an indispensable heuristic device for blocking out an area of investigation ... [including] the principles of reasoning about poetry, and the grounds for developing a coherent set of categories and distinctions to be used in classifying, analyzing, and appraising particular poems" (Abrams 30).

A critical evaluation, then, is typically justified according to the rationale of the literary theory within which the analysis is performed. However, some degree of literary value is assigned to a text simply by the critic's choice to develop such an evaluation. As Barbara Hernstein Smith observes, "evaluation has always been central to the practice of literary criticism. ... Every time we choose to read or teach or write about one work rather than another, we are testifying to our sense that the one is more interesting and more valuable than the other" (qtd. in Dasenbrock, 6). Smith's point supports the free order concept of critical exchange. That is, a critic chooses to study and evaluate a text because his creative interest has been stimulated by it. Thus stimulated, he is inspired to participate in creative exchange activities that he finds valuable. By extension, then, it is logical to infer that he also finds value in the particular literary artifact that stimulates his

interest.[48] Therefore, the decision to critique a particular text reflects an attribution of some degree of value to it.[49]

While the decision to study a particular text indicates that the critic finds in it enough value to do so, there is still great variation in the type and degree of value that a critic might find in different texts. In identifying type and degree of value, free order theorists should consider the contribution a text makes to the community's dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. Literature, this thesis argues, is a cultural product that naturally and spontaneously evolves according to the needs of individual members of the community. Through the many opportunities for textual artifacts to influence choice and exchange in a free order culture, literary artifacts and literary studies can contribute to emergent cultural change and thereby enhance the community's ability to address challenges and reconcile differences.

Indeed, ancient hieroglyphics on cave walls testify to the value human beings have found and continue to find in communication through imaginative thought. As human civilization developed, matured, and became more productive, literature spontaneously evolved into an important cultural force. For example, with the development of language, the advent of writing, and the spread of literacy, communication through imaginative thought evolved to include a variety of forms (e.g., poetry, plays, short stories, novels, etc.), a variety of styles (e.g., epic, tragic, comic, romantic, etc.), and a variety of types or genres (e.g., historical, contemporary, mystery, science fiction). This variety reflects the diverse needs and interests that individuals and cultures address through the medium of literature. Likewise, individuals and cultures assess a wide range of value, in type and degree, to literary texts. For example, literature

has been and continues to be embraced for its entertainment value, for its aesthetic (or literary) value, for its philosophic value, for its social value, and for a variety of other values that individuals and cultures attribute to it.

The complexity with which literature and literary studies have spontaneously evolved in Western culture is evidence that individuals value the contributions that literature can make to their efforts to achieve equilibrium, or balance, in their existences. These contributions, I have demonstrated, include providing individuals (authors, readers, and critics) with a means through which to develop their creative abilities (especially reason and imagination) and their reservoirs of knowledge; and providing the culture with a means through which to cultivate trust and communication, and through which to disseminate knowledge, traditions, and new ideas. Clearly, then, free order literary theory recognizes that all types of literature can contribute in different ways to the human experience and, therefore, variety and novelty should be encouraged.

At the same time, the wealth of knowledge and experience that accumulates through a culture's acknowledged body of literature (or "canon") is valuable to the community and should not be abandoned simply because fashions or values change. For example, contemporary culture's concern about women's issues has resulted in a welcome search for, discovery of, and appreciation for previously unacknowledged works by female writers. The inclusion of these works in contemporary literary studies encourages an important awareness of the traditional gender roles that have defined our cultural identity, and their contemporary study reflects both the changes that have transpired regarding those roles and the value that today's culture assigns to women's creative efforts. Clearly the best of these works should become part of our culture's

literary canon; their membership, however, should add to and expand the canon rather than replace previously studied works.

Furthermore, while the same changing values or fashions that bring new works into the canon will also inspire the reevaluation of previously studied works, such reevaluations do not provide sufficient reason for banishing works from the canon. Although reevaluations may alter a culture's perspective of a literary work's value, the alteration is only a change in the nature (i.e., type) or degree of its value. Once a culture has determined that a work is valuable enough for preservation and serious study, that work will always hold, at a minimum, historical and cultural significance. In other words, even if a previously acclaimed work is considered "poor" by contemporary standards, it is still valuable as an example of historical standards of taste and cultural changes in those standards.[50]

Indeed, free order theory asserts that there is cultural value in the very *relationship* between old and new literary works. T. S. Eliot refers to this relationship as the "conformity between the old and the new," and he argues that there is literary value in the continuous reconciliation of this conformity:

> What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new ... work of art among them. ... For order to exist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is the

> conformity between the old and the new. ... The past [is] ... altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.
>
> (Critical Theory Since Plato 761-2)[51]

Eliot also notes that "the mind of [a culture] is a mind which changes, and ... this change is a development which abandons nothing en route" (Critical Theory Since Plato 762). Thus, while the reevaluation of literature based on changing values and fashions is a continuously occurring process, the present can never (and should never attempt to) obliterate the past. There is value in the past if for no other reason than that it records the cultural journey of a community.

This is true even when the values embodied, or the structure and language employed, are considered offensive by contemporary standards. For example, many people object to the contemporary teaching of Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn (1885) because of Twain's portrayal of Jim as illiterate and naive, and because of Huck's use of the word "nigger," which is especially offensive in contemporary American culture. Yet despite these racial offenses, Twain's story still has much to offer the contemporary reader and culture, including insights into the cultures of the American old South and nineteenth-century river life; Twain's outstanding uses of humor and dialect; and an account of the moral awakening of an unschooled but clever and adventurous boy. It is possible that future generations who are more distant from the racial inequities of the past will place less emphasis on contemporary objections and instead value these and other aspects of Twain's work. Moreover and importantly, the continuous dialectical process that is engendered by free order cultures ensures that the social tension that inspires reevaluations of works such as Huckleberry Finn will become attached to the work itself,

thereby imbuing the work with a historical significance distinct from its literary value. Future generations will thus view the work not only as a reflection of the original values embodied in it, but also as a catalyst for the culture's integration of new values. For example, even today Huckleberry Finn could be validly explored from a socio-historical perspective as an account of the vicarious moral awakening of an entire national culture.

Truly, it is not possible to know today what tomorrow's cultural needs might be, and what seems overvalued based on current fashion may become valuable again based on future perspectives. Therefore, in the free order spirit of maintaining the greatest number of alternatives, it is always best to preserve and pass on cultural artifacts for the evaluation of future generations rather then to destroy them because they offend our contemporary sensibilities. Yet, at the same time, free order literary theory asserts that literary value should (and indeed must) be reevaluated and determined by each generation. In fact, the freedom to judge anew is a cornerstone of free order theory. "Every generation and age must be free to act for itself ... as [were] the ages and generations which preceded it," Thomas Paine declared, for "the vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave, is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies" (qtd. in Boller 32). It thus seems difficult to reconcile the critic's responsibility to protect the literary tradition with his freedom to redefine it in the present.

Indeed, the freedom to redefine seems to threaten a kind of chaos that could undermine the integrity and cultural relevance of literary studies. Specifically, if critics allow "literary value" to become a rigid ideological tool, a weapon with which to "stack the deck" in an ongoing culture-war, then literary studies could become polarized by the ensuing negative diversity. Negative diversity, I have argued, impairs the free order

culture's exchange activity. When *critical* exchange activity is impaired by excessive negative diversity, critics who have specialized in different areas of literary studies become unable to participate in productive dialogical exchange with one another. As opportunities for dialogical exchange dwindle, so too does the inspiration for creative exchange that comes from sharing ideas. Moreover, the impairment of dialogical exchange inhibits cultural understanding and creates mistrust. Obviously such a scenario would not make a positive contribution to the free order community's dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. In fact, at its extreme, negative diversity in literary studies and criticism could undermine the cultural relevance of literature.[52]

Fortunately, the cultural relevance of literature and the integrity of literary studies are not to be found in any single generation's (or critic's) evaluation of particular works, but rather in the acknowledgement of various types of value, and in the spontaneous process through which literary works are evaluated. Because access to information is an important aspect of free thought, the freedom of future generations of critics to judge for themselves requires that they have full access to that which has been previously considered, including the arguments that support or denounce a particular literary work. While the value of a particular literary work may therefore change from one generation to the next, the value of the critical exchange activity that is inspired by that work will be enhanced by the critic's articulation of the reasoning and the criteria (including types of value) by which different works are evaluated. Although different generations of scholars may arrive at different assessments of a particular literary work, the ongoing discourse to which a particular work is central makes its own important contribution to

the dialectical process through which a free order culture assesses, evaluates, and revises its values.

Like literature, then, criticism is a cultural subsystem (its focus being another cultural subsystem), and critical exchange is a spontaneous and ongoing creative activity that has the potential to inspire novelty and integrate it into the culture. Therefore, while the previous discussion about theoretical frameworks and critical activities (such as description, interpretation/explanation, and evaluation) might seem to suggest that criticism is a structured, rule-oriented endeavor, it is not. As R. P. Blackmur noted, criticism is "not a light but a process of elucidation" (Critical Theory Since Plato 888), and while terms and devices are certainly useful tools for organizing literary exploration, they should not constrain one's creative vision. Abrams acknowledges the dynamic nature of criticism when he observes that, while many of the theoretical models on which critical activity is based are "fixed, delimited in their sphere of operation, and explicit in their rules," the actual critical exchange process is spontaneous:

> When we look at the actual goings-on in this or that critical essay, we find [that] ... the discourse is fluid, the concepts and associated modes of reasoning are complex and mixed, and the inherent demands, or "rules," of usage are implicit, variable, tenuous, and elusive. ... In the fluid movement of a sustained critical discourse[, critical activities] are indistinct, inter-involved, and, in a quasi-systematic fashion, interdependent. (Abrams 52)

Abrams' description of critical discourse reflects the properties of spontaneous order that were detailed in Section One; that is, critical exchange is dynamic, self-directed activity

spontaneously initiated and maintained by individual free agents. Like other systems that organize spontaneously, critical exchange has the potential to be emergent. A free order approach to literary theory and criticism provides one method for unlocking the emergent potentials of critical exchange, of literature, and of literary studies, and for thus inspiring the "vision-in-depth" that arms the search for humanistic truth.

This section has explored the implications of free order theory for literary studies. Using M. H. Abrams' analytic scheme, I applied a free order theoretical framework to an examination of the roles of reality, language and the text, the author, the reader, and the critic. Free order theory perceives reality to be complex, dynamic, mysterious, and uncertain; this "chaotic" nature of reality influences the individual's exercise of choice and the community's exchange activity. While a chaotic reality challenges communicative exchange, the linguistic tools of categorization and communication enable individuals in a free order culture to achieve understanding within a realm of mutability. The text, I explained, is a fixed linguistic structure through which understanding flows and meaning is created; as a conduit of understanding, it is also a point of cultural exchange. The writer creates his text through an individual creative effort in which he spontaneously orders a variety of linguistic, cultural, and literary tools to achieve an emergent creative order (which is, I explained, a synergistic relationship between form and content). Through a similar spontaneous organization of the interpretive experience, readers achieve an agreement of understanding about the writer's intent and, through creative exchange, they extend this understanding into personal meaning. When a text is especially emergent, it inspires a dialogical exchange through which readers enrich one another's literary experiences by sharing their personal

meanings. This dialogical exchange is "mediated" by the text, I explained, in that textual points of empirical validity serve as checkpoints against which communication can be validated and trust can be inspired.

Finally, I observed that critics and literary scholars participate in similar creative and dialogical exchanges through their "studied discourse" about literature. This "critical exchange," as I called it, involves theoretical frameworks and critical activities (such as description, interpretation, and evaluation) that critics use to organize and explore the literary experience. Emergent critical exchange can contribute to the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change through which a community addresses challenges and reconciles difference. Indeed, emergent critical exchange cultivates the vision-in-depth that is essential for humanistic study. Free order literary theory, I argued, can make a valuable contribution to critical exchange in a free order culture. The following critical analysis of Kate Chopin's "La Belle Zoraïde" attempts to illustrate how to make such a contribution.

SECTION THREE:

A FREE ORDER CRITICAL ANALYSIS:

KATE CHOPIN'S "LA BELLE ZORAÏDE" AND THE AMERICAN STRUGGLE TO REALIZE FREEDOM

As a participant of American culture during the second half of the nineteenth century, author Kate Chopin (1851-1904) unarguably experienced a tumultuous period in her country's history. It was a period scarred by the painful social struggles of emancipation and women's suffrage, and it thus reflects the powerful tension that is generated between the forces of cultural conservation and cultural transformation. Reflecting this historical reality, many of Chopin's stories suggest the issues of free choice and exchange that dominated the period. As a result, Chopin's work provides insights into a community's dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change, and it is therefore especially conducive to a free order approach to critical analysis.[53]

The critical exchange that is inspired by Chopin's work can explore a variety of free order themes. For example, a critic might explore free order issues at the community level, examining Chopin's stories for clues about the dynamics involved in cultural change or about the process of integrating changing values into the culture. She might instead focus her analysis at the individual level, considering the effects on Chopin's characters of constraints on free choice, or the creative efforts they employ in adapting to a changing environment. Alternatively, the free order critic might choose to analyze

issues related to creative order (i.e. form, content, and the relationship between them), examining for example the ways in which the author's use of literary devices or language reinforce free order themes. Or the critic might examine issues related to the author herself, such as her influence on the community's exchange activity or her role in the community's dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. All of these areas are promising venues for the critical analysis of Chopin's literary works.

For example, much of Chopin's work reflects the painful tension and conflict characteristic of the adaptive process of cultural transition, and it thus demonstrates one aspect of the community's dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. Chopin's stories, colorful vignettes about the lives of ordinary individuals, are typically set within the French Creole culture of nineteenth-century southern Louisiana. This culture was bound up in the traditions and conventions of institutionalized slavery and the (submissive and proper) genteel Southern woman. Certainly such a culture was deeply affected by the social changes that were occurring during the period and, indeed, many of Chopin's stories depict the struggles involved in individual and/or social adaptation. In reflecting the complex transitions occurring in her time, Chopin's themes embody the experience of a community in the throes of its own painful yet constructive evolution toward a freer, more optimal social order. Chopin's reader is thereby confronted with the uncomfortable growing pains that a culture endures as it self-organizes toward a social order in which all individuals are afforded greater freedom of choice and a greater opportunity to participate actively in Self-creation. Clearly the issues of free choice and cultural transition addressed in Chopin's work are timeless and relevant on a number of different levels.

Of course, Chopin's work can also be and has been approached from a variety of socio-political or ideological perspectives. For example, feminist criticism might view Chopin's work as a reflection of a patriarchal society's oppression against women, while class-oriented perspectives (such as new historicism and Marxism) might view it as a reflection of a tyrannical capitalist system's exploitation of a servile class. The issues raised through such approaches can and do make important contributions to the cultural exchange of ideas and the social assessment of (moral) values; however, these approaches do not exhaust the opportunities for a dialogical exchange of intellectual, moral, and social significance that Chopin's work provides. Issues of free choice and cultural change are not only timeless; these issues also transcend gender, race, and class. They are human issues that, in fact, become ever more complex and crucial as people join together in free order cultures to exercise choice, engage in exchange, and participate actively in Self-creation. The value of Chopin's work thus extends beyond its importance as a mirror reflecting a tragic chapter in American history. Undoubtedly such a mirror highlights social injustices and thereby reinforces values that the community wants to integrate into its culture. Nevertheless, a broader exploration and understanding of the dynamics by which social change occurs in a free order culture contributes even more by enhancing the community's overall ability to address challenge and reconcile difference.

Of course, while a free order approach to Chopin's work emphasizes the dynamics by which cultural change occurs, it does not trivialize the injustices that were forced upon oppressed groups (such as women and slaves) in American history. Instead, a free order analysis expands its focus beyond the victimization of oppressed groups to include as well the harm that is done to the entire culture. While the denial of free choice

to particular groups of individuals offends the moral sensibilities of a free order community, it also threatens the realization of its highest ideals. For example, as explained in Section One, individuals in a self-organizing social order realize their creative potential and pursue equilibrium by participating in productive exchange with other members of the community; therefore a community that denies free choice to some individuals also cheats itself of precious opportunities for productive exchange. Moreover, it is not possible to achieve an optimal social order until free choice and productive exchange are facilitated rather than blocked by the culture's institutions and infrastructure. Certainly, then, the reality of past injustices against specific groups must never be denied. However, neither can a free order culture afford to overlook the larger lessons that can be learned from the community's (often painful) efforts to eradicate such injustices.

In fact, as the American social experiences of emancipation and suffrage demonstrate, a free order culture's organization toward an optimal social order is an evolutionary process. That in its history a free order culture did not always or completely live up to the ideals and moral values which it espouses does not mean that the culture is immoral or that it will never achieve its ideals. On the contrary, a culture's moral development is a continuous process and every improvement, no matter how small, represents an important link in the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. When a community's dialogical exchange continuously emphasizes the negative conditions of the past at the expense of acknowledging the community's progress in improving those conditions, and when it ignores the dynamics which underlay a community's progress, an atmosphere of mistrust and negative diversity are likely to

develop. Applying a free order perspective to literature that demonstrates the tension between cultural transformation and cultural conservation (such as Chopin's work) provides a creative opportunity for contemporary culture to explore the process of social evolution, including the community's assessment of moral values and the dynamics involved in the transmission and integration of changing values. A free order approach to such literature can thus engender an atmosphere of positive diversity that can contribute to the community's moral development, and that can thereby promote emergence in the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change.

For example, Chopin's treatments of women and slaves, combined with information about the suffrage and emancipation movements, provide a glimpse into the social and moral evolution of American culture. While historical accounts frequently memorialize a social movement through the recollection of a few highly visible dramatic events, the evolution of social morality is typically a gradual (and spontaneous) process that occurs primarily at the individual and local levels. A free order community, I explained in Section One, is constantly presented with challenges from an ever-changing environment and from the novelty that is generated by emergent exchange; as a result, it must continuously adapt by evaluating, codifying, and integrating values. Codification of values often occurs only after a substantial portion of the individuals in a community (i.e., a "critical mass") become concerned about a particular issue, such as unmet needs or threatened values; this concern is often accompanied by tension and conflict. Moreover, the codification of values typically precedes the incorporation of those values into the community's institutions, and this institutionalization of values frequently precedes their widespread integration into individual choice behavior and the community's exchange

activity. Throughout this process of cultural transition (i.e. social concern about, and codification, institutionalization, and integration of, values), tension and conflict are common. It is the individual's application of his creative ability in the face of this tension and conflict -- his "soul searching" efforts to achieve a balanced Self -- that generates the creative and dialogical exchange activity which enables the community to evaluate, adopt, and integrate changes in moral values. Through her illustrations of individuals and communities in the midst of such cultural transition, and through the dialogical exchange that these illustrations incite, Chopin's works not only contribute to the reader's general understanding about suffrage and emancipation but also to his understanding about the value of exchange and individual choice in social evolution. In other words, a free order perspective on Chopin's work can contribute to the reader's understanding of the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change through which communities address challenge and reconcile difference.

Indeed, both the emancipation and suffrage movements provide examples of the kind of spontaneous evolution (i.e., evolution that is self-generated, self-ordering, and thus not centrally directed) that a social system undergoes as it strengthens its capacity to productively meet the needs of *all* the individuals in the community. The seeds of the movements for emancipation and suffrage were deeply sown over a long period of time by the Judeo-Christian and Enlightenment traditions of Western culture.[54] In the fertile ground of colonial America, they sprouted in the Declaration of Independence and, later, in the United States Constitution, as codified values proclaiming the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Yet as a review of history demonstrates, the actual

integration of these values throughout American society required years of individual and social turmoil.[55]

The period during which Chopin wrote was especially fervent with conflict related to the actualization of these ideals. For example, the abolitionist movement for emancipation gained steam in the 1850's, culminating in the Civil War (1861-1865) and the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.[56] With the passage of these amendments, the abolition of slavery and the rights of African-Americans were firmly codified in federal law by 1870. Yet there were still many difficult transitional years to come during which these values had to be incorporated into the community's institutions and, eventually, integrated (sometimes painfully) into the bulk of the population's consciousness and exchange activities. Much of Chopin's work illustrates the degree to which the institution of slavery was embedded in the lives of many Southerners, and these illustrations thus provide the reader with a realistic understanding of the difficulty involved in this kind of social evolution.

The seeds of the women's suffrage movement were similarly sown with the ideals of liberty and equality upon which the nation was founded. As the nation's education system evolved during the early 1800's, it extended the opportunity for education both geographically and across gender lines. As a result, women (and some enlightened men) became more aware of the incongruity between the ideals embodied in the U.S. Constitution and the real experience of American women. This growing awareness spontaneously evolved into the women's suffrage movement, and the period during which Chopin wrote was teeming with radical suffragettes. In fact, the year 1848 (three years before Chopin's birth) marks, for many, the beginning of the suffrage movement

with the convening of the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York; and the suffrage movement "officially" culminated in 1920, sixteen years after Chopin's death, with the passage of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote. As a woman whose life span coincided with the suffrage movement, Chopin most certainly had to have been exposed to the dialogical exchange that raged around that movement. Her work thus has the potential to provide an intriguing window into aspects of the American experience related to the adoption and integration of women's rights. As a member of a community experiencing radical cultural change, and by depicting individuals and communities in the midst of such change, Chopin provides through her work a unique perspective on emancipation, suffrage, and social change. In addition, her work also provides the free order critic with an opportunity to explore the importance of individual choice and exchange in social evolution or cultural change.

The unique social position Chopin held as a female writer and the role she thereby played in American culture is also significant to a free order critic. It was, in Chopin's day, unusual for a woman to be a published author and, indeed, it was especially unusual for a woman writer's work to involve the sexual and racial themes that Chopin explored. As a female author and through many of her female characters, Kate Chopin thus represents the "new woman" who emerged in the 1890's, who "both embodied new values and posed a critical challenge to the existing order" (Tichi 589). This new woman had become "a powerful social-literary figure by the late nineteenth century" (589). Female authors like Chopin and their "new woman" characters "affected the national literature" and thus contributed to the dialogical exchange of ideas that influenced the American community's self-ordering activity toward a fuller realization of individual

freedom. Chopin and her peers therefore provide an historical example of the important role that literature and creative literary efforts can play in the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. Likewise, the analysis of such work provides the free order critic with an opportunity to participate in a critical exchange that demonstrates how literary studies can contribute to emergent cultural change.

Cecelia Tichi provides such an analysis, for example, as she explores the social influence of the new woman writer and the new woman motif in her essay on "Women Writers and the New Woman." Tichi asserts that "from the 1880's the new woman in theory and fact changed the canon of American literature, affecting writers' lives and invigorating the national literature with new fictional design in character, form, and theme" (590). Referring specifically to Chopin, Tichi notes that the work of this particular new woman writer was often infused with assertions of women's freedom and sexual rights (591). In acknowledging the sexual consciousness of women, Chopin's work is thus an example of the ethos of the "new woman" -- an ethos that sought to demonstrate through cultural artifacts (such as literature) "how consciousness itself could be deployed for women's empowerment" (590). This particular observation adds an interesting dimension to the analysis of Chopin's story "La Belle Zoraïde," as it is a story in which one woman seeks to constrain another woman's exercise of romantic and sexual free choice. In light of the new woman ethos, Chopin's creation of a heroine whose empowerment is thwarted by another woman -- a woman who is, by social decree, supposedly more enlightened than the heroine but who clearly has not attained the heightened consciousness suggested by this ethos -- adds an ironic touch to the story and suggests that Chopin's literary skill operates on many levels. Clearly she was more than

"a good storyteller," and, as a result, her cultural influence has been and will continue to be significant.[57]

Without a doubt, numerous other kinds of free order literary analyses could be undertaken to explore how Chopin and other women writers of her time both influenced and were influenced by the period's evolving social issues. In addition, analyses that contrast the characterizations of women provided by new woman writers with those provided by the period's leading male writers would be equally fascinating. A critical review of the attitudes of male writers toward the emergence of the new woman writers, or a review of the attitudes of new woman writers toward other women writers, would also be of interest. The objective of this kind of analysis, however, should not be to demonstrate the existence of an historical gender war, but instead to examine the nuances involved in meeting the continuous challenge to incorporate change into our social and individual experiences.

Similarly, analyses of the new woman writer, the new woman motif, or female characters provide potential opportunities for the free order literary critic to explore the individual's struggle for a balanced Self in a free order culture. We can never know with certainty whether Chopin purposely crafted her stories to reflect the struggles of the nineteenth-century American woman to achieve a balanced Self, or if these important women's issues are instead unconscious manifestations of environmental influences. Clearly, though, Chopin's life as a new woman writer and her illustrations of new woman characters embody free choice themes that are relevant to the Self's struggle for equilibrium, or balance.

For example, Tichi suggests that the journey to consciousness and the struggle for equilibrium that is explored through Edna Pontellier, Chopin's central character from The Awakening, illustrate the radical new woman motif. "The idea of conscious choice in and of itself was a hallmark of the identity of the new woman," Tichi asserts, and the new woman's rebellion against convention, such as that undertaken by Edna Pontellier, "was a matter of personal decision; ... it was individualistic, operating in the spheres open to personal choice, from sexual preference to dress" (592). As has been argued throughout this thesis, choice is the mechanism through which the actively engaged individual continuously endeavors to create her Self and achieve equilibrium, or balance. However, as explained in the previous discussion about the individual as a free agent, the emergent exercise of free choice requires, first of all, that the individual have vision (that is, that the individual understands that her choices have consequences), and that she can anticipate those consequences. Only when the individual recognizes and believes that she can indeed influence her future can she begin to assess her needs and evaluate her opportunities for choice. In The Awakening, Edna Pontellier is awakened to this power of free choice, realizing that her existence as a creatively adaptable individual provides her with inalienable rights and abilities to choose freely in "spheres open to personal choice" (Tichi 592). Much of Chopin's story revolves around Pontellier's efforts to apply this newfound power toward her Self-creation; to that end she explores her own sexuality, social relations, artistic preferences, and family relationships. Ultimately, however, Edna is overwhelmed by the disappointments and responsibilities she experiences in exercising her freedom and, in a final dramatic act of free choice, she fatefully swims to exhaustion into an unconstraining sea.

Edna's dissatisfaction with the limited alternatives she perceives to be available to her illustrates the complexity of a free order culture and the high demands it places on its members. Specifically, the availability of alternatives from which the individual can choose depends in part on her ability to engage in productive exchange with other individuals in the community. When a community is in the early stages of integrating changing values into the culture, individuals who initially adopt these values (the "social pioneers") will have access to fewer exchange opportunities that support these new values. As a result, a heavier responsibility for facilitating social change falls upon these social pioneers because they must direct their creative abilities toward generating new exchange opportunities that nurture these new values. These new opportunities increase the number of alternatives from which individuals might choose in integrating these new values into their own lives. Or, using free order terminology, creative efforts by social pioneers generate novelty which, in turn, contributes to the quality and quantity of the culture's dialogical exchange opportunities. For example, through her initiation of relationships with several less conventional members of her community, Edna represents a social pioneer who bravely and creatively attempts to broaden the scope of alternatives from which she can choose in creating her Self. In the end, however, Edna is unable to find adequate opportunities for exchange to support her creative efforts to achieve a balanced Self; and, as a woman of her time whose education and training had been limited to the woman's domain, she was creatively unprepared to generate the necessary opportunities for herself.

The fate that Chopin chooses for Edna is ironic given the influence that Chopin and other new woman writers have had on social attitudes about women. While Edna

could not find adequate exchange opportunities within her community to nurture her newly realized awareness of Self, her character embodies these ideals; Chopin's story therefore provides the community with a literary experience that nurtures dialogical exchange about these ideals, and thereby contributes to the community's integration of cultural change. In fact, a review of The Awakening's history as a cultural artifact demonstrates the growing social awareness about and integration of issues raised by the story. When first published in 1899, Chopin's story was mainly greeted with shock and rejection. Contemporary culture has been more kind to Chopin, however; today The Awakening is frequently assigned in college literature courses, and there is a growing body of contemporary critical scholarship about Chopin and her work. Despite the unhappy dilemma faced by Edna, her story provides a timeless lesson about the challenges that individuals encounter when, in the face of environmental or cultural constraints, they seek to integrate new ideas into their efforts to create a balanced Self.

Chopin's story "La Belle Zoraïde" tells the similar tale of a young woman who awakens to the power of her own free choice in the face of cultural constraints. The free choice issues raised in this story are more complex, however, because the central character, Zoraïde, is not only a woman, but a slave as well. As a slave, Zoraïde is considered to be the personal property of her mistress. Yet, as was explained in the previous discussion about the individual as a free agent (in Section One), it is not possible in any true sense for an individual in a free order culture to be "owned" by another individual. This is because the concept of free agency which grounds free order cultures recognizes the individual's natural right to, and ownership of, his own thought processes and creative abilities. The idea that one individual can "own" another individual, then, is

an erroneous one and such a practice is doomed to fail in a free order culture; the story of Zoraïde's assertion of her right to create her Self illustrates just such a failure.

As Zoraïde's story illustrates, Self-creation is a dynamic creative activity that ultimately can be directed only by each individual. Important elements of this creative activity, I have explained, include the assessment, evaluation, and exercise of alternatives that the individual finds productive in pursuing equilibrium or balance. Yet, as argued previously, the ability to exercise free choice in an emergent way requires that the individual actively participate in Self-creation; that is, it requires that the individual realize that she inherently possesses, as a creatively adaptable individual, the ability to influence her future, and that she actively direct her efforts toward pursuit of equilibrium. When an individual realizes her free will (that is, recognizes the power she can enjoy through free choice) but is constrained by social conventions, traditions, or laws from exercising free choice, a high degree of internal conflict will arise. This conflict may be reflected in the individual's sense of imbalance and dissatisfaction with her condition. As the later detailed analysis demonstrates, Zoraïde clearly experiences such an imbalance.

The internal conflict generated by such an imbalance of Self that Zoraïde experiences is similarly reflected in the early experience of Frederick Douglass (1817-1895), the nineteenth-century African-American leader, author, and former slave. However, Douglass' fate is dramatically different from Zoraïde's, and his experience thus provides an interesting example of an individual's emergent Self-creation with which to contrast Zoraïde's dysfunctional Self-creation. Douglass acknowledges the imbalance of Self he felt when he claims that his unhappiness as a slave was "less physical than mental" because the dissatisfaction of realizing his free will (i.e., the power he could

enjoy through free choice) while being constrained from exercising free choice was almost unbearable. "The thought of being only a creature of the present and the past troubled me," he writes, "and I longed to have a *future* -- a future with hope in it" (qtd. in Boller 107). Indeed, Douglass' notion of free will and his awareness of the fruits of freedom provided him with the vision that drove him to recognize and seize the few opportunities he had to further his pursuit of freedom.

Douglass' personal experiences are truly a testament to the adaptability of creative individuals. He was especially successful at engaging in exchange opportunities that enhanced his creative ability, and he thereby expanded the alternatives from which he could choose in his pursuit of freedom. No doubt this success was due in part to his own intellectual and imaginative skills (i.e., his creative ability), but Douglass acknowledges that he benefited from the confluence of several fortunate occurrences in his life. In fact, Douglass' story demonstrates the potential for emergence through Self-creation, and as is typical of emergent systems, "learning" played an important role in his evolution. Douglass' ability to strengthen his creative ability and expand his reservoir of knowledge through learning provided him with the resources he needed to exercise free choice constructively and to participate in exchange productively.

For example, the major contributor to his success, he claims, was his opportunity to learn to read and write, for it was through these skills that he realized the "possibilities for self-fulfillment under conditions of freedom" (Boller 110). Douglass' first opportunity for literacy came when, still less than ten years old, he was sent to Baltimore to serve as a houseboy and the master's wife began teaching him to read. Although the master later put an end to Douglass' lessons, Douglass was impressively resourceful

throughout his life at finding additional opportunities to develop his literacy. While in Baltimore, he also learned important lessons about self-sufficiency and the value of individual effort -- lessons vital to one's ability to operate productively in a free order culture. As a city slave he experienced more autonomy than a plantation slave and was "allowed to 'hire out' his own time if he developed a skill"; in response to the opportunity, Douglass learned to caulk and began contracting for work in the shipyards (Boller 111). Undoubtedly, the exposure to ideas that he enjoyed through literary exchange, along with the awareness of market dynamics that he developed through economic exchange, increased Douglass' awareness of the opportunities afforded by freedom as well as his confidence in his ability to prosper as a free man. In 1838, then, around the age of 21, Douglass escaped to Massachusetts and a free life; eight years later his freedom was officially purchased with contributions from his friends and admirers.

Douglass' story illustrates the creative self-ordering activity that occurs in a community when substantial opportunities exist for productive exchange. His struggle to achieve a balanced Self through his exercise of free choice and his participation in exchange demonstrates the creative and dialogical exchange that fuels an emergent dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. Clearly Douglass benefited from the many individuals who chose to contribute to his literacy, who shared literary and journalistic materials with him, and who participated with him in other types of intellectual and economic exchange. Just as clearly, Douglass' impressive development of his own individual creative ability (that is, his abilities to reason, imagine, and learn) merged with his realization of free will to forge a "vision" for his future. As he exercised free choice toward the attainment of his vision, and as he recognized and pursued

exchange opportunities that broadened the alternatives from which he might choose, Douglass developed his creative ability and actively participated in continuous Self-creation. When an individual is actively engaged in Self-creation (as was Douglass), attempts by other individuals or the culture at large to impose constraints upon his exercise of free choice are doomed either to fail or to lead to perverse consequences. In Chopin's disturbing story "La Belle Zoraïde," this latter result is the fate of the lovely slave girl.

Plot Summary and Analysis of Kate Chopin's "La Belle Zoraïde"[58]

"La Belle Zoraïde" is the story of the external and internal conflicts that arise when Zoraïde, a young, light-skinned house-slave, falls in love (against the wishes of her mistress) with the dark-skinned field-slave Mézor. Zoriade, who "from a toddling thing ... had been brought up at her mistress's side," enjoys a pampered existence, especially when her life is compared to the existence of many slaves of the period (288). Yet, as she realizes when she declares her love for Mézor, Zoraïde does not enjoy the freedom to make her own choice about her future. Instead her mistress, Madame Delariviére, intends that Zoraïde should marry M'sieur Ambroise, a mulatto slave with the prestigious position of body servant to Doctor Langlé, who is also the master of Mézor. Zoraïde begs Madame Delariviére to let her have "the one whom [her] heart has chosen," but Madame Delariviére is determined to control Zoraïde's future and forbids Zoriade to speak with Mézor (290). When Zoraïde later confesses that she and Mézor have continued their relationship and that, in fact, she has "loved" him, Madame Delariviére is devastated by Zoraïde's transgression. Attempting to tighten her control over Zoraïde,

Madame Delariviére convinces Doctor Langlé to "dispos[e] of le beau Mézor" by selling him "away into Georgia, or the Carolinas, or one of those distant countries far away, where he would no longer ... hold la belle Zoraïde in his arms" (290-291). Moreover, when Zoraïde later gives birth to Mézor's child, Madame Delariviére removes the baby from Zoraïde's side, sends the infant "far up the coast" "to Madame's plantation," and tells Zoraïde that her little one is dead (291). Madame Delariviére hopes that, by removing all trace of Mézor from Zoraïde's life, she will "have her young waiting-maid again at her side free, happy, and beautiful as of old" (291). But the loss is too great for Zoraïde, and instead she adopts a bundle of rags to be her infant and, turning within herself, becomes detached from reality -- choosing to live, instead, in a psychologically distorted fantasy world. Her detachment is so complete that even when Madame Delariviére presents Zoraïde with her true child, now grown to a toddler, Zoraïde continues to reject reality (and her real child) and instead clings fiercely to her ragdoll baby and the delusional world in which she lives. In the end, she is no longer thought of as "la belle Zoraïde" (the beautiful Zoraïde) but, instead, as "Zoraïde la folle" – Zoraïde, the fool.

As this summary suggests, Kate Chopin's short story "La Belle Zoraïde" demonstrates the conflict, imbalance, or "disequilibrium" that is created in the personal lives of individuals who exist in a culture that denies free choice to some members of society. The story reflects the inevitable struggles of a constrained individual to achieve a condition of balance, or "equilibrium," in her life when her natural desire to exercise free choice toward the fulfillment of her own needs and preferences is frustrated. Moreover, in highlighting the interconnectedness of free choice and reason, the story

illustrates how a natural human quality (reason) can be corrupted by the unnatural suppression of a natural human right (free choice). In addition, Chopin organizes various elements of the text into a creative order that demonstrates the power of her own creative ability. Specifically, Chopin's text features literary techniques such as symbolism, imagery, language, and story structure that define and reinforce the themes of free choice and the individual's struggle for equilibrium. These themes are summarized below, followed by a close reading that explores the story's creative order.

The social institution of slavery in which Chopin's story is set provides productive opportunities to explore the implications of constraint on free choice. This thesis has asserted that individuals are guided by (and simultaneously strengthen) their creative abilities (i.e., their abilities to reason, imagine, and learn) and their reservoirs of knowledge (i.e., categorized experience) as they exercise free choice in their struggles to optimize their life experiences. A free order environment provides the greatest opportunity for individuals to apply their resources toward enhancing their life experiences, or toward achieving equilibrium. Even in a free order environment, however, an individual must realize her free will, or, in other words, must recognize her ability to influence her existence through free choice. When an individual realizes her free will, she can exercise free choice "emergently" by developing vision and using her resources to assess her needs, to identify options, and to select the best, or optimal, alternatives in her Self-creation. But if her exercise of free choice is constrained, the individual's efforts to optimize her existence and to achieve balance between the multiple dimensions of her Self are frustrated and, indeed, the consequences can be perverse. Slavery, of course, is an institution that constrains free choice and thereby prevents

individuals from achieving equilibrium, and Zoraïde's fate is a sure example of the perverse consequences of slavery.

Indeed, slavery -- whether as a concept or as an institution -- is antithetical to a free order culture because the assignment of the characteristics of property to human beings is a fundamental flaw in its logic. Denying free choice and self-determination to property is usually not problematic because property does not possess free will and is incapable of reason. Human beings, however, do possess free will and the ability to reason, regardless of the social order in which they operate; they therefore cannot behave as someone else's "property." Moreover, as argued in Section One, it is not possible for any individual to "own" another individual because the "psychic separation" between different individual minds ensures that each individual's thoughts, ideas, and experiences are unique to that individual. A social system under which one group of human beings treats another group as objects of ownership is thus an unnatural and illogical system. The consequences of imposing an unnatural social system onto individuals are reflected in the high levels of conflict and "disequilibrium" experienced within that system. Social systems such as slavery, then, are by nature self-defeating and inherently unstable, and Chopin's story illustrates the faulty reasoning, widespread disequilibrium, and personal destruction inherent in the imposition of such unnatural social systems.

Chopin's story also provides a critical opportunity to explore the dynamics involved in Self-creation. This thesis has argued that the Self is multifaceted and that its condition is determined by the totality of dimensions of which it is composed (including physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social, and economic). If an individual is constrained from directing her efforts toward the optimal balance of these dimensions,

she is forced to compensate for this imbalance through a process of suboptimization. In other words, in pursuing an overall condition of equilibrium, the individual will optimize those dimensions over which she has control in order to compensate for the imbalance she experiences in those dimensions that are constrained. This ability to suboptimize can be a powerful tool to help the individual adapt to changes in her environment or deal with short-term constraints on her exercise of free choice. When an ongoing feature of the environment involves constraint, however, the degree of disequilibrium in one dimension may become too great for this tool to be effective and the individual may not be able to maintain a state of overall equilibrium. In her attempt to address the neglected needs of the constrained dimension, the individual may create opportunities to fulfill those needs through other dimensions of her Self.

For example, the unemployed individual who feels that her physical needs are not being adequately met and who does not believe herself to be employable may, through the creative use of her reasoning powers, convince herself that stealing is an acceptable activity. She thus perverts her intellectual dimension, undermines her social dimension, and ultimately threatens her overall condition by acting outside the conventions of her community and risking whatever freedom she enjoys. Clearly, despite her use of reason in her efforts to improve her condition, the final effect does not appear to be "rational." The fact that such perversions occur is an irony of life and is also evidence of the social necessity that all individuals must be free to participate continuously in all facets of their Self-creation. Plainly, although the individual may be motivated by a desire to regain the equilibrium she lost, she cannot develop the creative ability she needs to cope effectively with her environment if she cannot fully integrate and develop, or "create," her Self

through her free exercise of choice. As a consequence, her efforts will result in either a suboptimal or a perverse condition. This irony is reflected in the plot of "La Belle Zoraïde."

Chopin's creative order shadows the obvious plot line featuring the external conflict between Zoraïde and Madame Delariviére with an internal conflict centering on Zoraïde's psychological state. This internal conflict reflects Zoraïde's struggle to balance her Self or, in other words, to achieve equilibrium. Chopin's skillful prose demonstrates how the power of Zoraïde's love for Mézor encourages the pampered young slave to assert her free will (by trying to exercise free choice) and how, when that will is thwarted, she manipulates her creative ability (i.e., reason and imagination) to adapt her psychological condition to meet her needs. In other words, for perhaps the first time in her life, Zoraïde wishes to choose freely in fulfilling needs and desires that she, herself, determines to be important. She wants to think for herself, to feel for herself, and to choose for herself. However, since her status as a slave constrains her from fully exercising free choice, she is not able to pursue her wishes in a healthy and constructive manner. Her ability to engage actively in creating her Self is therefore constrained, and it is therefore unlikely that she will enjoy an emergent life experience leading to equilibrium. Nevertheless, Zoraïde's inherent capacity as a free agent (despite the social constraints of slavery) enables her to use her creative ability to find creative alternatives through which she can address her intense emotional and physical desires. Madame Delariviére's efforts to control Zoraïde's life are thus thwarted by Zoraïde's efforts to balance her Self, or to achieve a condition of equilibrium, through the consummation of her love for Mézor. Indeed, Zoraïde's need to achieve equilibrium is so great that, when

constrained from freely exercising choice, her efforts to create Self take a creative, clever, and ultimately tragic turn, inventing a new reality in which she is free to love and live as she wishes. Through the external struggle between Zoraïde and Madame Delariviére, then, Chopin reflects Zoraïde's internal struggle to achieve equilibrium.

Chopin uses several creative literary techniques in telling her story, and a free order analysis demonstrates how these techniques coalesce into a creative order that highlights and reinforces free order issues. Through her story structure, Chopin demonstrates how the individual can apply her creative ability to influence the culture's dialogical exchange activity and, ultimately, to improve her own condition. In addition, Chopin's use of symbols, imagery, and language imposes an order that unifies the complexity and disorder reflected in Zoraïde's condition. For example, as she depicts Zoraïde's deterioration from equilibrium to disequilibrium, Chopin demonstrates important behavior patterns that individuals use to respond to challenges from their environments. In her efforts to exercise free choice, Zoraïde tries to persuade and negotiate, she reorders her value system, she rebels, and, ultimately, she redefines reality. Chopin similarly uses symbols, imagery, and language to associate skin tone variation with humanness, vision with awareness, and death with disequilibrium; she thereby illustrates the erroneous reasoning, the unnatural constraints, and the inevitable conflict inherent in the institution of slavery. The following close reading and detailed analysis provide evidence to support the assertion that Chopin's use of symbols, language, imagery, and story structure coalesce into an emergent creative order that effectively illustrates free order issues.

A Free Order Reading of "La Belle Zoraïde"

Chopin's structure of "La Belle Zoraïde" as a story within a story creatively parallels and demonstrates the role of literature in a free order culture. As has been argued, part of the power of literature in a free order culture is its ability to help integrate new ideas into the community through the productive exchange of ideas. However, as the previous discussion about The Awakening suggests, opportunities for exchange involving new ideas may be scarce when those ideas are initially introduced into a culture. Individuals must therefore direct their creative abilities toward generating new opportunities for productive exchange and new alternatives from which to choose. In structuring her story within another story, Chopin demonstrates how an individual can creatively cultivate novelty and thereby expand opportunities for productive exchange. In telling her story through the voice of Manna-Loulou, Chopin demonstrates the storyteller's power to introduce ideas and form discourse -- a power that Chopin herself enjoys as the author of her story.

Manna-Loulou's bedtime recitation of the story of La Belle Zoraïde symbolically parallels the author's opportunity to generate creative exchange in the community, then. Specifically, by structuring her story so that the reader hears it as Manna-Loulou tells it to Madame Delisle, Chopin establishes parallels between their respective roles as slave and slaveholder with their roles as storyteller and audience, and with Chopin's role as storyteller and the reader's role as audience. This parallel structure is an effective thematic device because it demonstrates the individual's efforts to create opportunities for productive exchange. Just as Chopin creates a story that raises issues of free choice,

Manna-Loulou establishes a nightly ritual that enables her to introduce similar ideas into her relationship with Madame Delisle.

Indeed, Madame Delisle, who waits each evening "to be fanned and put to sleep to the sound of one of Manna-Loulou's stories," freely chooses to engage in this delightful exchange with her slave; she thereby provides Manna-Loulou with a powerful opportunity to influence her thoughts and opinions (288). The care Manna-Loulou takes in conducting her evening rituals suggests that she is aware, at least subconsciously, of the opportunity afforded by her role as storyteller. She lulls Madame Delisle into receptivity by bathing and kissing her feet, brushing her hair, and gently fanning her as she lies in her "sumptuous mahogany bed." This approach blends submissive adulation with doting attention, and these rituals therefore seem to transform Manna-Loulou from an insignificant slave into an influential parental figure. In fact, the very idea of a bedtime story typically implies a parent attending to a child; a skillful author surely enjoys similar credibility as the storyteller to her readers, and this credibility is no doubt transferred to the work itself.

With the role of storyteller comes the power to choose both the story and the words with which the story will be told; and with these powers comes the opportunity to frame and communicate ideas according to one's needs. Manna-Loulou uses her reservoir of knowledge and her creative ability to introduce her mistress to new ideas through the stories she chooses and the language she uses. Manna-Loulou cleverly camouflages her power by submitting to Madame Delisle's insistence on hearing only true stories. This insistence suggests that, at some level, Madame Delisle recognizes the power that resides in authenticity. Paradoxically, then, despite Madame Delisle's

confidence that she controls Manna-Loulou's story selection, her insistence on authenticity really serves to reinforce Manna-Loulou's credibility and, thereby, the old woman's power. Moreover, while her mistress' insistence on authenticity does indeed create boundaries within which Manna-Loulou must operate in her efforts to persuade, the power it affords her as a credible storyteller expands her freedom to choose the ideas that she wants to introduce into her relationship with Madame Delisle.

Manna-Loulou appears to be aware at some level of the opportunity that her role as storyteller provides her to influence her mistress. For example, she strengthens her credibility by "not always [being] ready with her story" because of the extra time and effort it takes to fulfill Madame Delisle's request for authenticity (288). Likewise, the routine and ritualistic pre-bedtime preparation that precedes each story creates a sense of tradition that reinforces Manna-Loulou's credibility and encourages her receptivity. Relaxed in her sumptuous mahogany bed, Madame Delisle is not likely to concern herself with Manna-Loulou's ulterior motives, nor to feel threatened in any way that would lead her to reject the ideas advanced through Manna-Loulou's stories. Seeking power where she can, then, Manna-Loulou adeptly perceives that what little influence she has is derived from her role as trusted servant and storyteller; and by outwardly acquiescing to subjugation, she derives the benefits of influence. In accordance with her desire to optimize her condition, Manna-Loulou chooses to willingly and "lovingly" perform apparently demeaning actions, such as kissing her mistress's feet and fanning her mistress to sleep, because she deems it to be worth the benefit of gaining access to influence (288).

Much as Manna-Loulou lulls Madame Delisle into receptivity with her evening ritual, so too does Kate Chopin, through the novelty of her story and the exotic beauty with which she tells it, induce her readers to explore new ideas. Through an emergent creative order, Chopin raises issues related to free choice that provide the reader with a unique and unthreatening venue through which to explore the dynamics of Self-creation. By developing the story's tension around Zoraïde's passion for Mézor and her efforts to achieve a balanced Self, for example, Chopin appeals to universal human emotions and needs. Her emphasis of Zoraïde's human qualities first and the constraints imposed upon her by her slave status second enable Chopin to skillfully develop plot and character in a way that encourages readers to empathize with Zoraïde. This approach focuses the reader's attention on the human costs of constraints on free choice and thus minimizes the cultural differences that could potentially create barriers to productive dialogical exchange. Chopin's story, then, has the potential to expand the culture's discussion beyond that of the immorality of slavery (which is, of course, unarguably of great significance) into new areas related to the perverse consequences (and therefore the socially destructive nature) of constraints on free choice.

In addition to paralleling the author's power as storyteller, Chopin's use of Manna-Loulou as the narrative voice for her story also demonstrates the effort to persuade or negotiate that an individual will make in an effort to achieve equilibrium. This effort to persuade or negotiate is actually one of several patterns of response that an individual might make when her equilibrium, or balance, is challenged or disturbed. Additional patterns of behavior that are reflected in Zoraïde's responses to her growing internal conflict include reordering her values, rebelling, and finally, redefining reality.

These patterns, along with the effort to persuade and negotiate, are best identified through a sequential review of the story.

I previously noted that Chopin's choice of story structure (i.e., a story within a story) demonstrates and emphasizes the opportunity the storyteller enjoys to influence her audience. This opportunity to influence reflects the opportunity to "persuade" or "negotiate" that individuals enjoy through dialogical exchange. The opportunity to persuade or negotiate is especially important in relationships and social systems where free choice is denied to one individual or group. In an institution such as slavery, for example, where the slave is denied autonomy and free choice, she must devise creative alternatives for influencing her situation. Just as Chopin enjoys the opportunity to influence her readers, then, so does Manna-Loulou enjoy the opportunity to educate and/or persuade her mistress; she thereby gains important powers of persuasion and negotiation. Similarly, just as Chopin's power to influence resides in her freedom to choose themes and recitation methods, so does Manna-Loulou maintain that same freedom relative to the stories she tells Madame Delisle. Indeed, by using the "story within a story" format to tell a story about the denial of free choice, and by selecting a slave and her mistress as storyteller and audience, Chopin provides a subtly ironic example of an individual's creative efforts to "persuade" in situations where her freedom to choose is constrained.

Chopin also illustrates how an individual whose free choice is constrained might attempt to influence her situation through her depiction of the relationship between Zoraïde and Madame Delariviére. The description of Zoraïde as a slave of privilege suggests that, through that privileged existence, she has achieved a state of balance, or

equilibrium. In this initial state, Zoraïde appears to have accepted the benefits that her privileged existence affords her as compensation for her loss of freedoms. As she grows into a young woman, however, the approaching institution of "marriage" becomes an important reminder to Zoraïde that she is, after all, still a slave and thus will be denied the privilege of self-determination. Zoraïde's natural desire to exercise self-determination through her choice of marriage partner conflicts with Madame Delariviére's unnatural desire to control Zoraïde, and it creates a tension that throws both individuals into disequilibrium. The struggle that ensues reflects patterns of response directed toward regaining equilibrium. These include, for Zoraïde, negotiation, rebellion, and finally, a redefinition of reality. Madame Delariviére's responses are limited to desperate measures aimed at controlling Zoraïde's behavior. The disequilibrium that troubles Zoraïde results from her spontaneous reordering of values in response to her newly realized and natural instinct for free will. Madame Delariviére's disequilibrium, on the other hand, is driven by her unnatural need to restrict Zoraïde's free choice. While Madame Delariviére's response pattern prevents emergence in Zoraïde's spontaneous efforts to create her Self, then, it is nonetheless dysfunctional and therefore destined to be unsuccessful and ultimately destructive for everyone involved.

Zoraïde's initial attempts to persuade and negotiate are a response to the conflict she experiences as her newfound love for Mézor stimulates her desire for free choice and the spontaneous reorganization of her value system. Falling in love with Mézor conflicts with Madame Delariviére's expectation that Zoraïde will marry M'sieur Ambroise. Zoraïde implicitly understands that in order to avoid marrying M'sieur Ambroise she must present a suitable substitute, and that Madame Delariviére will not consider le beau

Mézor to be one. Yet she realizes more profoundly that she cannot choose *not* to love Mézor, for her "heart has chosen" him (290). The strength of her unfulfilled desire for Mézor awakens Zoraïde's desire for free will, and Mézor thus becomes symbolic of her fight for free choice. Zoraïde's unmet emotional needs create an imbalance among the dimensions of her Self, and she is therefore motivated to reorder her values. The benefits of maintaining her position as a privileged slave no longer outweigh the costs associated with her loss of self-determination, and her mistress's approval will not compensate for the misery her heart will endure in a marriage to M'sieur Ambroise. Zoraïde's reordered value system does not help her achieve equilibrium, however, because she is not free to make choices to support it. In fact, her reordered values simply aggravate her frustration because her emotional needs have become more aligned with Mézor than with Madame Delariviére. In an effort to regain equilibrium through choice, Zoraïde attempts to persuade and negotiate with Madame Delariviére.

Madame Delariviére's comments regarding marriage seem to suggest that Zoraïde may have some freedom of choice in the matter (as when she says "when you are ready to marry" and "whenever you say the word" [288]). But Zoraïde can see beyond the pretext and understands that her choice is not whether or who she might marry, but only *when*. Madame Delariviére has decided the details of the wedding, and her promise that "all will be of the best" is accompanied by a subtle reminder of her control: "I will see to that myself" (288). Zoraïde, driven by the need to regain equilibrium while being constrained in her exercise of free choice, has no other option than to employ covert methods. Intuitively, she grasps at the only element of choice she has been afforded (i.e., time) and uses this opportunity to delay her agreement to marry in the hope of providing

herself additional time to negotiate her situation. Despite her limited power, Zoraïde applies her creative ability and draws from her knowledge of Madame Delariviére's character to delay her decision by flattering Madame: "I am so happy, so contented here at your side," she tells Madame (289). In addition, she diplomatically avoids a confrontation over the identity of her future groom by focusing on the element of time and thus avoiding offering any opinion of M'sieur Ambroise. "'I don't want to marry now,'" she tells Madame; "'next year, perhaps, or the next'" (289). Zoraïde's negotiating skills thus enable her to delay a marriage date; she is reminded that her victory will be short-lived, however, when Madame Delariviére admonishes that "a woman's charms are not everlasting" (289).

Although the delaying tactic provides Zoraïde with a temporary solution to her conflict, it does not expand her freedom to choose her groom and, therefore, does not return her to a state of equilibrium. She thus accelerates her efforts to secure her choice by asserting her right to choose. She again applies her creative ability, skillfully selecting as her moment of declaration a time when she is engaged in the indulgent and intimate activity of "drawing on Madame's silken stockings" (289). Kneeling before her mistress in a nonconfrontational pose, Zoraïde recognizes that such a relaxing moment might provide the best opportunity for her approach. She adopts a courageous and matter-of-fact manner, proclaiming that "'I have chosen a husband,'" and that "it is le beau Mézor that I want and no other'" (289). Her bold proclamation implies that she has the right to choose her groom, and it appeals to Madame Delariviére's affections by suggesting that what she wants should matter to her mistress and Godmother. Still, Zoraïde understands that her action is defiant, and she hides "her face in her hands ... for she guessed ... that

her mistress would be very angry" (289). But in her desperation to win her freedom to choose and regain her equilibrium, she hopes that this tactic might persuade Madame. Zoraïde's desperation is also reflected in a veiled ultimatum when she proclaims to Madame that it is "'Mézor that I want and no other'" (289). As a slave, of course, the threat that she may refuse to marry at all if she does not get her choice of groom has little power because it is a refusal which is not hers to exercise. Nevertheless, Zoraïde is desperate to influence the dynamics of the dialogical exchange between herself and her mistress. She hopes that the suggestion of an ultimatum will communicate the intensity of her feelings and that she might thereby persuade Madame Delariviére to expand Zoraïde's boundaries of choice.

Madame Delariviére's outraged response shows Zoraïde that her attempts to persuade have been unsuccessful. However, Zoraïde's efforts have broken the barrier between submission and assertion, and she seizes the opportunity to use reason to negotiate her case. The logic of her argument is creative: Madame Delariviére's doting behavior toward Zoraïde suggests that Madame perceives some degree of familial identity with Zoraïde. In fact, Madame Delariviére's role as Godmother to her slave, and the information that "since a toddling thing she had been brought up at her mistress's side," hints that Zoraïde may have some genetic connection to Madame Delariviére (288). Moreover, her expectation that Zoraïde will have a fine wedding in the Cathedral seems more appropriate for one's granddaughter than for one's slave. "Remember," Madame Delariviére tells Zoraïde, "when you are ready to marry, it must be in a way to do honor to your bringing up" (288); such wording evokes the similar common phrase, that an individual must "do honor to her family." Yet Zoraïde's possession of any

measure of black blood, no matter how small, defines her status as that of a "slave," and therefore she is not free to choose. She is not white, she realizes, and she can never be white. "Then, since I am not white," she pleads in a "respectful" and "gentle" tone, "let me have from out of my own race the one whom my heart has chosen" (290). Zoraïde thus suggests that any customary familial obligation in white society for a woman to sacrifice her heart's desire for the family reputation should not apply to her. Demonstrating her negotiating skill, the clarity of her logic and the reserve of her manner soften the apparent defiance of her action and thereby contribute to the effectiveness of her argument.

The juxtaposition between Zoraïde's appeal to reason and Madame Delariviére's emotional response provides an ironic contrast to a nineteenth-century attitude that associated skin tone with rationality. This perspective will be explored in detail in a later analysis of skin tone imagery. To summarize here, however, part of the erroneous rationale for denying free choice to African-American slaves rested on the perception that darker-skinned individuals possessed lesser traits of humanness, including the ability to reason, than lighter-skinned individuals. Since they are limited in their capacity to reason, this perspective implies, then darker-skinned individuals must not be capable of successfully exercising free choice; obviously, then, they must need guidance from the more rational lighter-skinned individuals. Chopin's depiction of Zoraïde's unsuccessful attempt to reason with Madame rebuts that argument by illustrating a reversed assignment of human traits; that is, the darker-skinned Zoraïde appears to be more rational than the lighter-skinned Madame Delariviére, who appears to be more emotional and irrational. Although Chopin's contemporary readers may not question this contrast

of the darker Zoraïde as the rational being with the lighter Madame as the irrational being, such an idea may have been unsettling to some of her nineteenth-century readers, and to Madame Delisle as audience to Manna-Loulou. But through her skillful development of the story line, Chopin conceals the rebellious nature of this ironic juxtaposition in an emergent creative order that encourages the reader to empathize with Zoraïde. This passage, then, represents an important but subliminal argument that refutes the perception (existent in Chopin's time) that there is a relationship between one's skin color and one's possession of human traits (such as reason). This refutation obviously extends to justifications for the denial of free choice, because if there is no relationship between skin tone and rationality, then certainly there can be no justification for denying free choice based on skin tone.

Despite Zoraïde's efforts, her attempts to persuade and negotiate are unsuccessful. Madame Delariviére's emotional and iron-fisted response drives Zoraïde away from her creative and reasonable efforts to persuade into a more desperate mode of rebellion. As previously noted, free will (i.e., the awareness of the power of, and a desire to exercise, free choice), once realized, is profound and powerful. Although Madame can constrain Zoraïde's outward condition, she cannot constrain Zoraïde's free will to love "the one whom [her] heart has chosen" (290). When an individual, like Zoraïde, is driven by free will but is denied the opportunity to exercise free choice, she is unable to correct imbalances between the multiple dimensions of her Self. This conflict between her Self and the constraints imposed by her environment drives her into patterns of response aimed at regaining equilibrium; when she is unsuccessful in her attempts to persuade and negotiate, Zoraïde is forced into a pattern of rebellion.

Manna-Loulou articulates the inevitability of Zoraïde's rebellion when she tells Madame Delisle, "you know how the negroes are, ... there is no mistress ... who can hinder them from loving when they will" (290). This comment suggests that free will is instinctive, universal, and all-consuming; therefore, the individual who realizes her free will must try to optimize her condition through whatever means possible in her efforts to balance the multiple dimensions of her Self. By referring to "negroes," Chopin implies that this principle applies regardless of color, refuting again the presumption that the possession of human traits such as free will and reason are related to skin tone.

Moreover, Manna-Loulou's comments about the inevitability of Zoraïde's love for Mézor foreshadow the dysfunctional suboptimization that Zoraïde will later pursue in her efforts to achieve equilibrium. As previously explained, the individual who is oppressed in some dimensions of her condition will "suboptimize" her total equilibrium by over-emphasizing those dimensions that are open to her. For example, Zoraïde ultimately compensates for her inability to balance all facets of her Self by creatively redefining her reality, and thereby asserting free choice in those spheres of her life which, ultimately, only she can control. Indeed, no tool of oppression ("no mistress, nor master, nor king, nor priest") can prevent ("hinder") the individual from asserting her ownership of Self once she has realized free will ("when they will") (290).

Forbidden to see or speak to the loved one of her choice, Zoraïde openly rebels against the constraints on her free choice. But while disobeying Madame Delariviére enables Zoraïde to fulfill her longing to love Mézor, it does not enable her to regain equilibrium. Instead, she grows "unlike herself, -- sober and preoccupied," reflecting the disequilibrium she feels at being forced to resort to dishonesty and betrayal (290). Again,

in an attempt to balance her condition, she confesses her transgressions to Madame Delariviére, perhaps hoping that this will convince Madame of the futility of denying Zoraïde free choice in love. The intensity of her confession ("I could have died, but I could not have helped loving him" [290]) articulates the severe emotional frustration she feels because of the conflict between the will of her heart and the constraint on her free choice. Indeed, it is an eerie foreshadowing of her fate when Zoraïde suggests that it would be easier for her to die than to achieve equilibrium without loving Mézor.

Unfortunately, Madame Delariviére continues to be blind to the power of free will despite Zoraïde's efforts to enlighten her. Instead of succumbing to Zoraïde's negotiating techniques or recognizing the desperation behind Zoraïde's rebellion, Madame Delariviére pursues her own negotiations to have Mézor removed from Zoraïde's life. In doing so, Madame Delariviére articulates her own order of values: she is willing to encourage Dr. Langlé's affections, affections that she has apparently previously kept at bay (as evidenced by his long-time desire "to marry" her), and place herself in a position of debt to him in order to maintain her control over Zoraïde. The stage is thus set for escalating conflict as Madame Delariviére continues to respond with the unnatural and futile effort to control and constrain.

Mézor's exile should cause continued disequilibrium for Zoraïde; however, the knowledge that she will soon bear his child brings "comfort and hope" to her, reflecting another reordering of her values (291). She may not be allowed to marry the man she chooses to love, but she can love his child, and she naively believes that the purity of the parent-child relationship protects it from external constraints. Therefore, the focus of Zoraïde's free will (and the symbol of her fight for free choice) transfers from Mézor to

the child, and it is through this relationship that she will ultimately attain a sense of equilibrium (albeit in a redefined reality).

Considering the nature of her relationship as Godmother to Zoraïde, it is ironic that Madame Delariviére fails to comprehend the power of the parent-child relationship. Instead she once again follows her own misguided desire to control Zoraïde by demonstrating the most extreme attempt to do so -- this time by denying Zoraïde access to her own child. The cruelty of this action seems apparent to the reader and Madame Delisle; however, the tension generated by Madame Delariviére's unnatural desire to control Zoraïde and Zoraïde's natural desire to exercise free choice has escalated to a point of conflict where Madame Delariviére, again behaving irrationally, resorts to deceitful behavior. Her irrationality is reflected in her hope that in "depriving Zoraïde of her child," she might "have her young waiting-maid again at her side free, happy, and beautiful as of old" (291). But sound logic would suggest instead that the rational response to the loss of a child is a deep sorrow that forever darkens the parent's world. With the loss of her child, Zoraïde's life and her ability to integrate productively the different aspects of her Self are forever altered. She can never again be the Zoraïde of old; "in her stead was a sad-eyed woman who mourned night and day for her baby" (291). Ironically, Madame Delariviére's irrational attempts to use deceit to control Zoraïde push the young mother over the edge: Zoraïde's response to her conflicted Self evolves from her previously rational efforts to persuade and negotiate, to her more desperate efforts to rebel, and finally, to her increasingly irrational behavior as she redefines her reality.

Zoraïde's final effort to regain equilibrium through the redefinition of her reality represents the climax of Chopin's story, and through it the author presents an interesting twist on the relationship between free choice and reason. While to the observer Zoraïde's behavior seems to be unreasonable, her redefinition of reality actually reflects a type of rational behavior in view of the limited alternatives that she has available to meet her needs. Constrained from exercising the choices she desires, she employs her creative ability (especially her abilities to reason and imagine) to find a new solution to her disequilibrium. Zoraïde's first solution was to latch onto the absolute love between parent and child, thereby bringing new purpose -- her child -- into her life. However, when her baby is stolen from her, she responds creatively to her inability to control the circumstances of her life (i.e., the physical and emotional dimensions) by controlling instead her psychological dimension; she thus redefines reality by "inventing" a new baby. While this action appears irrational to the outside observer, it is generated through Zoraïde's rational pursuit of equilibrium, or balance: that is, faced with either continued misery and disequilibrium in the "real" world or happiness and equilibrium in a created, fantasy world, she chooses happiness and redefines her reality. In doing so, she exercises the ultimate form of self-determination, actively participating in her Self-creation and thereby ensuring that, at least in her own experience, she regains equilibrium.

After Zoraïde redefines her reality, her achievement of equilibrium is reflected in the "strange and vacuous happiness upon her face" (292). She finds purpose in caring for the "senseless bundle of rags," "sitting contentedly beside it," drawing the mosquito bar, never losing "sight of the doll that lay in her bed or in her arms" (292). However, while

each action she takes may bring her happiness and thus seem to be rational within her own world, Zoraïde is actually locked within the reality she has created. Having lost her ability to communicate with and trust in other individuals (especially Madame Delariviére), she is no longer able to participate in productive exchange. For example, when Madame Delariviére brings Zoraïde's real child, "the pretty, tiny little 'griffe' girl[,] to her mother," Zoraïde is understandably suspicious (292). Through her previous experiences she has learned that Madame Delariviére's efforts to deprive Zoraïde of her free will are limitless. In Zoraïde's eyes, then, Madame Delariviére personifies a corruption of trust and information -- qualities that are crucial to productive exchange. The young slave is therefore reluctant to engage in any kind of exchange activity with her mistress. Indeed, Zoraïde has become so mistrustful that the only reality she can trust is the one she has created for herself, and she cannot risk losing that reality by trusting Madame Delariviére. To trust her mistress again and be wrong would thrust Zoraïde back into disequilibrium, a condition that she naturally avoids. Nonetheless, to the outside observer, Zoraïde's rejection of her true daughter and her obsession with the doll seem irrational and demented.

From a free order perspective, the interesting suggestion in the conclusion to this story is that individuals who are denied free choice will, in fact, initiate patterns of response and behavior that enable them to attain some degree of equilibrium, however perverted that equilibrium may appear to others. At the same time, individuals who wish to deny free choice to others will never be able to attain equilibrium. In her efforts to regain equilibrium, the constrained individual will employ her creative ability to respond to her situation in whatever manner she can, including realignment of her values, the use

of persuasion and negotiation, rebellion, and even, ultimately, the redefinition of reality. So, for example, the constraints imposed on her free choice force Zoraïde to suboptimize her overall condition by optimizing those dimensions over which she has control; she thus achieves equilibrium but does not optimize her overall condition. In the end, Zoraïde redefines her reality in order to address her unmet emotional needs and, as a result, sacrifices her ability to engage in productive exchange with the outside world. The constraining individual, on the other hand, will never be able to achieve equilibrium, much less to optimize her condition. Indeed, optimization of the Self can only be pursued internally, through spontaneous responses to external stimuli, through the individual's development of her creative ability and her reservoir of knowledge, and, ultimately, through her Self-creation. Moreover, as previously explained, the insularity and separateness of individual minds ensures the individual's ownership of Self. Attempts to optimize one's own condition by controlling and oppressing others are therefore unnatural and not pragmatically feasible. When an individual or community imposes such unnatural constraints upon the natural human properties of free will and reason, the consequence can only be suboptimization or disequilibrium. Zoraïde's corrupted reality and Madame Delarivière's loss of any economic, emotional, or physical benefit that she previously enjoyed through her relationship with Zoraïde demonstrate this effect.

In addition to demonstrating the patterns of response and behavior that individuals adopt in their pursuit of equilibrium, Chopin's story also uses language and imagery to reflect perceived relationships between skin tone, humanness, and free choice. As noted earlier, the institution of American slavery was justified in part by the erroneous rationale

that there is a correspondence between skin tone and humanness and, therefore, a correspondence between skin tone and human traits such as reason. Chopin's references to skin color in "La Belle Zoraïde" thus serve as a subtle reminder of such issues as the institution of slavery, the differences in status between master and slave, and the resulting denial of free choice to slaves. Moreover, because her story demonstrates Zoraïde's human struggle for happiness and equilibrium, it demonstrates that all individuals are equally human and that, therefore, the denial of free choice to some individuals because of their skin color is not justifiable.

The precise language Chopin uses to describe variations in skin tone suggest that she intends each reference to imply a greater meaning; she does not mean to convey only a simple visual image of color. For example, Chopin's descriptions of the slave characters in her story are differentiated according to skin tone: she describes the "ebony" "negro" Mézor, the "café-au-lait" Zoraïde, the "mulatto" M'sieur Ambroise, the little "griffe" girl, and the "black" servant (288-292). These precise references to the variations in skin color suggest a continuum or gradation of skin color, from light to dark, with corresponding positions of privilege associated with each position on the continuum. As a light-skinned slave who is the color of "café au lait," Zoraïde benefits from a number of privileges not available to other slaves (288). Because of her light skin, she evades the back-breaking labor of the field slave and lives instead as a house slave; she is educated in social graces and she " ... never do[es] rougher work than sewing" (288). Chopin further demonstrates this concept of a color-privilege gradation by noting that Zoraïde is given "her own little black servant to wait upon her" (288). The reader internalizes a mental picture of Madame Delariviére at the white end of the continuum,

the little black servant at the dark end, and Zoraïde somewhere in between the two. The color continuum is thus reinforced not only through the relationship between Zoraïde and her mistress, but also through the relationship between Zoraïde and her black servant. Indeed, Chopin emphasizes the color-privilege gradation that is implicit in the institution of slavery by demonstrating that Zoraïde not only enjoys greater privileges in because of her lighter skin, but also, as mistress to the darker individual, that she denies rights to another slave.

Chopin's story demonstrates that the institution of slavery, like this continuum of skin tones, assumes a corresponding continuum of "humanness" according to which the lighter and darker extremes represent, respectively, the greatest and least degrees of humanness. Because free will and reason are human properties, this "continuum of humanness" suggests that individuals at the darker end of the spectrum will exhibit these human properties to a lesser degree those individuals with lighter skin. The continuum of humanness further implies that a "dilution" of human nature accompanies the "dilution" of whiteness that occurs when darkness is introduced into the individual's gene pool. Therefore, despite Zoraïde's somewhat favored position on the continuum, her status as a "lesser human" is permanently determined as a result of the "darker" blood that flows through her veins. Moreover, this idea of dilution suggests that a potential endpoint exists in the dilution of whiteness: in other words, a saturation point of darkness exists, where human qualities disappear and the individual therefore more closely resembles an animal than a human being.

Chopin highlights the erroneous reasoning behind this continuum by using language and imagery that associates darker individuals as having more primitive roles

than fairer individuals. For example, Chopin contrasts the black Mézor, working outdoors like a field mule, with the café-au-lait Zoraïde, living indoors like a pampered "pet." Similarly, she juxtaposes the darker Mézor's primitive outdoor existence against the lighter M'sieur Ambroise's more civilized indoor position. In addition, Chopin uses language that evokes primitive imagery in the descriptions of the black Mézor, thereby connecting a primitive nature with dark skin. For example, the reference to Mézor's "body, bare to the waist, like a column of ebony" that "glistened like oil" objectifies his masculinity and thus suggests a primitive passion to his sexuality (289). Moreover, these and similar references -- such as the reference to him "looking proud as a king," the description of "the fierce gleam in his eyes," and the depiction of him "hoeing sugar-cane, barefooted and half naked, in his master's field outside the city" -- conjure up animal images such as those associated with a "glistening" reptile, a "proud" lion "king," a "fierce" predator, or a farm animal (289). The imagery created by these descriptions imbues Mézor's character with a certain primitive nature that contrasts with the more civilized traits attributed to the fair-skinned Zoraïde, who possesses "elegant manners" and a "svelte and graceful figure," and who is "charming and ... dainty" (288). The implication that there is a scale of human value that corresponds with this color-humanness continuum is confirmed when, in an effort to separate the two lovers, it is the dark-skinned Mézor rather than the fair-skinned Zoraïde who is "dispos[ed of]" like an old farm animal (290).

As noted previously, the concept of a dilution of human qualities along the color-humanness continuum suggests a corresponding assumption about the dilution of reason. Specifically, an individual possessing a lesser degree of humanness would, logically,

translate into an individual less capable of reason. In other words, since, according to the color-humanness continuum, darker-skinned individuals possess a lesser degree of humanness than lighter-skinned individuals, then, according to this prejudicial logic, it must follow that darker-skinned individuals are also less capable of exercising reason and cannot be trusted to behave rationally. This argument implies that individuals whose color places them at the "more human" end of the continuum must assume the responsibility of "thinking" and "deciding" for these lesser humans, just as they are required to do for animals and/or property. For example, Madame Delariviére assumes that since she is whiter and therefore possesses greater reasoning ability than Zoraïde, she has the right and the responsibility to determine Zoraïde's future. Therefore, each reference that Chopin makes to skin tone reflects not only a character's position on the color-humanness continuum, but also her assumed capacity to reason and the socially assigned limitations of her free choice.

The reasoning behind the color-humanness continuum is faulty, of course, because the concept of a continuum or gradation of humanness is false. Individuals are either human or they are not. The human qualities of free will and reason exist in all human beings, regardless of color. Certainly it is true that some individuals enjoy a greater ability to actuate their free will through more productive applications of reason, and it is also true that some individuals do not even recognize their free will and thus behave as though they have none. Nevertheless, free order theory recognizes that all individuals possess the capacities for free will and reason.[59] Tragically for both the individual and the culture, the denial of free choice frustrates the individual's free will and, as a result, corrupts her ability to employ and develop her creative ability (which

includes her abilities to reason and imagine), thus denying the individual the opportunity to participate actively in her Self-creation. It is around this conflict that Chopin builds her story, and her association of skin tone with perceived levels of humanness helps unify the story by reflecting a meaningful pattern of constraint on free choice. Chopin's association of skin tone and humanness thus provides an effective literary device that contributes to an emergent creative order.

Just as she uses skin tone imagery to emphasize the theme of free choice, Chopin similarly uses imagery related to vision to symbolize the complexity of Zoraïde's Self and her awareness of the growing imbalance between the multiple dimensions of her Self. Because the sense of sight is one of the primary means through which individuals learn about their environment, the use of sight or vision-related imagery to reflect a character's growing awareness may seem obvious and perhaps not particularly creative. When such symbolism is related to free order issues like free choice, however, form and content combine synergistically into an emergent creative order through which such issues become especially meaningful. Kate Chopin's use of vision-related imagery is thus a creative literary device for expressing the free order themes in her story.

Free order theory asserts that while the individual is continuously challenged by her environment, she is also continuously challenged by an internal competition for attention and resources between the various dimensions of her Self. The conflict and tension that result from this competition lead to an imbalance, or disequilibrium, in the individual's condition. In fact, much of an individual's creative energies are directed toward allocating her personal resources (i.e., her "toolbox for living") among the competing dimensions of her Self in a manner that optimally eases this tension and

restores equilibrium. In Chopin's story, several passages involving imagery related to the eyes and vision suggest Zoraïde's growing awareness of the increasing intensity in competition between the different dimensions of her Self. Moreover, these symbols sometimes seem to reflect Zoraïde's movement between the states of equilibrium and disequilibrium, thus symbolically illustrating her creative efforts to address the competing demands within her Self. This synergistic combination of content and form contributes to the story's emergent creative order because a literary device (vision-related imagery) is used to unify and reinforce a free order theme (the individual's drive for equilibrium).

The story's opening scene establishes the pattern of symbolism that relates eyes and vision to awareness. Manna-Loulou steps "out upon the gallery to open the shutters wide" as if she were opening a curtain onto the set of a stage, thus providing a dramatic flourish to her repertoire of evening rituals that precede and define the bedtime story tradition (287). As previously noted, Manna-Loulou's potential influence over her mistress is enhanced by her credibility as a story-teller, and the image of her opening the shutters reinforces that credibility by suggesting that her story has the potential to broaden the perspectives of her listeners. Therefore, just as Manna-Loulou's physical actions open the inside world to a view of the outside world, so too can her story show Madame Delisle and the readers some profound truths about the nature of the human condition.

This initial image of Manna-Loulou opening the shutters wide associates vision-related imagery with the theme of awareness in several other ways. Obviously, for example, the image of shutters opening wide suggests additional vision-related images

such as eyes opening wide, darkness turning to light, blindness changing to vision, or even the freezing of an image through the lens of a camera shutter. The reader could associate any or all of these images with the concept of growing awareness. Similarly, the transformation of the window from one with closed shutters to one with open shutters foreshadows Zoraïde's similar transformation from ignorance to awareness of the vast depth and complexity of her Self. Likewise, the "hot and still" summer night during which "not a ripple of air" sweeps over the marais also suggests the possibility of change since it implies that, beneath Zoraïde's elegant manners and pampered existence, tension and mystery may be brewing (287). Finally, the image of the lugger moving down the bayou symbolically suggests the corresponding interior journey that will, in fact, occur as Zoraïde's growing awareness leads her "down the bayou[s]" of her internal world in her pursuit of equilibrium (287).

Chopin also develops themes of awareness using the eyes themselves as symbols. For example, Manna-Loulou describes Zoraïde's eyes as "so dusky, so beautiful, that any man who gazed too long into their depths was sure to lose his head, and even his heart," thereby reinforcing the complexity of Zoraïde's condition and foreshadowing the dominance with which her emotional needs will ultimately control her Self-creation. Specifically, the words "depths" and "dusky" suggest darkness, mystery, and complexity, thus implying that there are interior dimensions of Zoraïde's Self which may later be exposed and illuminated (288). In addition, the eyes are often considered to be the window into one's soul and, therefore, the description of Zoraïde's eyes as "beautiful" assigns a positive and noble character to her interiority which arouses in Madame Delisle and the reader a sympathetic reception to the emotional conflict she will experience later

(288). Finally, the claim that "any man who gazed too long" into Zoraïde's eyes "was sure to lose his head, and even his heart" articulates the competitive conflict between the emotional and intellectual, or rational, dimensions of the Self; as such, it implies the central tension around which Zoraïde's disequilibrium will build (288).

Chopin strengthens the symbolic connection between vision-related imagery and awareness by associating Zoraïde's growing desire for Mézor with her increasing need to exercise free choice and participate actively in her Self-creation. Indeed, Zoraïde first becomes aware of the tension that is mounting within her interior Self when she has a rousing external experience while watching "le beau Mézor dance the Bamboula in Congo Square, ... swaying and quivering through the figures of the dance" (289). By describing Zoraïde's visual experience in detail, Chopin uses Zoraïde's awakening desire for Mézor to illustrate her simultaneous awakening to her own free will and her sudden awareness of the consequences of constraints on her free choice. For example, Mézor's "swaying" evokes an image of Zoraïde being aroused by her visual experience, much as the branches of a tree are aroused by the intensification of the wind just prior to a storm. Likewise, Mézor's "quivering" suggests that the momentum of the dance is building into a life-altering experience for Zoraïde, much as an earthquake permanently alters the ground that it shakes. Indeed, Zoraïde's life is altered as her new recognition of her free will leads her to reevaluate the trade-off between the costs and benefits of her position and to conclude that the privileges of her position can no longer compensate for the denial of free choice.

While the description of Zoraïde's visual interpretation of Mézor's dance reflects her awareness of her free will, then, it also suggests the nature of the tension that she will

endure because of the conflict between her environment (i.e., the constraints on her free choice) and her internal Self. For example, the primitive and sensual imagery that Chopin uses to describe Zoraïde's impressions of Mézor dancing the Bamboula reflects the romantic (or emotional) and sexual (or physical) fires that are kindled in Zoraïde when she encounters this visual experience. The phrases "Bamboula in Congo Square," "proud as a king," and "fierce gleam of his eye" coalesce into primitive images such as a lion king in the African jungle, or perhaps an African warrior king (289). Similarly, the description of Mézor's "body, bare to the waist," "like a column of ebony" that "glistened like oil" evokes intense sensual imagery, including, some might argue, a suggestive sexual symbol (289). While it is clear from this imagery that a primitive, physical, or sensual attraction to Mézor initially fuels the conflict between Zoraïde and her environment, emotive words such as "proud" and "fierce" also reflect the emotional needs that drive Zoraïde's behavior.

When, upon seeing Mézor, Zoraïde's "heart grew sick in her bosom with love for [him]," Chopin foreshadows the coming conflict between Zoraïde's Self (especially her emotional and physical dimensions) and her environment by suggesting that Zoraïde instinctively understands the obstacles she faces in pursing a union with Mézor (289). Previously, in the absence of any strong assertion of internal needs, Zoraïde had been satisfied with the benefits of serving as a privileged slave and, therefore, she had not concerned herself with constraints on her exercise of free choice. Her awakening desire for Mézor, however, in conjunction with the marital expectations voiced by Madame Delariviére and the hopelessness Zoraïde feels because of constraints on her free choice, produce extreme emotional and physical disequilibrium in her condition. The sickness

she feels in her heart reflects the disequilibrium created by her new awareness of the limits of her freedom, and it foreshadows the internal tension that she will experience as her efforts to regain equilibrium force her into conflict with her environment.

In addition to using primitive visual imagery to imply the sensual and romantic needs asserted by Zoraïde's physical and emotional dimensions, Chopin uses more sublime language to suggest the similar assertion of Zoraïde's intellectual and spiritual dimensions. While Zoraïde's initial impressions of Mézor, when she feels a strong physical appeal, resonate with primitive and sensual language, the impressions that follow are described in more noble and profound language, reflecting her growing emotional desire and intellectual awareness of her situation. For example, Chopin's description of the Bamboula evolves from its initial description of a primitive dance routine in Congo Square to a more sublime description of "inspiring strains" of music (289). Similarly, Zoraïde's initial attraction to the sensuality of Mézor's body, bare and glistening like a "column of ebony," gives way to her admiration of the human dignity reflected in "the stately movements of his splendid body" (289). When Mézor later comes "near her to speak with her," Zoraïde notes that "all the fierceness" is "gone out of his eyes, and she" sees "only kindness in them" (289). In Mézor's eyes, then, Zoraïde recognizes the dignity of her race and the natural rights she should possess as a human being, a recognition that touches her intellectual and spiritual dimensions.

Likewise, the descriptions of Mézor as "a sight to hold one rooted to the ground" and "as straight as a cypress-tree" suggest that Zoraïde sees reflected in his image the strength to assert her rights and to stand her ground (289). Just as the roots of a plant cling to its foundation, so too can Zoraïde cling to the human foundation of dignity and

natural rights; and just as the straight cypress tree symbolizes resistance and tenacity, so too can Zoraïde demonstrate resistance and tenacity as she pursues her union with Mézor. Furthermore, this root and tree imagery can also be interpreted as reflecting the universal yearning for stability and equilibrium that all human beings experience. This interpretation suggests that in her impressions of Mézor, Zoraïde discovers her desire to establish domestic roots and to grow her own family tree. These internal needs and desires, however, will inevitably conflict with the constraints imposed on her by her environment. Using vision-related imagery, then, Chopin demonstrates Zoraïde's growing awareness of the approaching, inescapable conflict that will occur between her desire to choose Mézor for her husband and the constraints imposed on her by the unnatural institution of slavery.

The tension caused by Zoraïde's new awareness of her unmet needs (i.e., physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual) leads her to seek balance by redefining her Self in a way that accentuates the value of her race. Her revision of values according to this newly internalized awareness of Self is reflected by the imagery contained in her derogatory comments about M'sieur Ambroise's appearance. Zoraïde refers specifically to Ambroise's eyes, and thus Chopin again uses vision-related imagery to develop her theme. In fact, the very concept of "appearance" employs the symbolic use of vision, since the appearance of an individual is the outward image that others see of him. Moreover, the impressions one has of another often can reflect one's own values and prejudices; or instead, one's impressions of others can lead one to reevaluate one's values and prejudices, as Zoraïde does after she sees Mézor dance the Bamboula. Her impressions of Ambroise, however, demonstrate how her growing awareness of the

constraints imposed on her has changed her understanding of her relationship with Madame Delariviére and increased her identity of Self as a slave. In "the little mulatto," "with his shining whiskers like a white man's, and his small eyes, that were cruel and false as a snake's," Zoraïde sees an unflattering image that she associates with her "white" oppressor (289). Zoraïde's perception of Ambroise is ironic, though, because she too is of mixed race and could also be defined by her whiteness. Instead, her new awareness of free will, her reordering of values, and her resulting disequilibrium all lead her to redefine her Self according to her blackness and the constraints imposed by her color.

Zoraïde's physical description of M'sieur Ambroise also reflects her growing mistrust of the white community, especially Madame Delariviére. The description of Ambroise's "whiskers like a white man's" and his small, cruel eyes evoke the image of a weasel or a rat, animals that are often associated with deceit. Likewise, Zoraïde's impression of his eyes as "cruel and false as a snake's" reflects her suspicion of him and deepens our sense of her mistrust by building on the Judeo-Christian image of Satan in the Garden of Eden. These allusions to falsity and mistrust highlight the importance of trust in free order social systems. In order to develop one's creative ability (especially reason and imagination) so that s/he might optimally exercise free choice, an individual must have the opportunity to participate in productive exchange. However, in order for individuals to engage in productive exchange, they must feel confident in their ability to trust one another. Therefore, when Madame Delariviére tells Zoraïde that she should marry M'sieur Ambroise, for "it is a union that will please me in every way," she exposes her true objective which, is her own self-interest rather than Zoraïde's happiness. In

doing so, she also reveals the limits of Zoraïde's alternatives and, thereby, the true meaning of Zoraïde's status as a slave. Zoraïde's trust in the good intentions of her mistress is thus shattered by the realization that she is first of all a slave and only secondarily a loved one to her Godmother. The mistrustfulness and cruelty that Zoraïde sees in M'sieur Ambroise's eyes, then, suggests in part the revised light in which she views her mistress, and it foreshadows the deceit with which Madame Delariviére will later act against Zoraïde.

Indeed, when Madame Delariviére lies to Zoraïde about her baby's death, she destroys whatever trust Zoraïde may have still felt for her mistress, for through her hazy memory, the young mother remembers "hold[ing] her firstborn to her heart, and press[ing] her lips upon the baby flesh" (291). Thus Zoriade intuitively suspects Madame Delariviére's explanation of the baby's absence. Manna-Loulou's rendition of the story reinforces the impression that Zoraïde intuitively knows that her baby is not dead when she says that the baby "had at once been removed from it's mother's side," implying that the baby had, at least briefly, laid next to its mother (291). When Zoraïde awakens and "instinctively" feels "with her trembling hands upon either side of her," Manna-Loulou suggests that, at some level of consciousness, Zoraïde had been aware of the baby's presence (291). Such an incongruity between her internal awareness and her external reality would likely destroy her sense of trust in Madame Delariviére. This conclusion is supported by Zoriade's stubborn rejection of Madame Delariviére's later efforts to reunite the mother and child. Again using vision-related imagery, Chopin emphasizes Zoraïde's final state of mistrust by describing Zoriade's demeanor as one of "sullen suspicion" when she "look(s) upon her mistress and the child" (292).

Chopin also uses imagery related to vision, especially the eyes, symbolically to reflect Zoraïde's disequilibrium, her withdrawal, and, ultimately, her apparent insanity. In doing so, Chopin illustrates the connection between free will and reason, and the corruption of the reasoning process that occurs when free choice is unnaturally suppressed. When Madame Delariviére tells Zoraïde that the baby is dead, Zoraïde responds by "turn[ing] her face to the wall" (291). This turning away of her eyes symbolizes her rejection of the external world which has caused her so much pain, and it exemplifies her withdrawal into an internal world. This moment marks the beginning of Zoraïde's psychological disintegration, and it is followed by the growing disequilibrium and despair that are implied by her transformation into "a sad-eyed woman who mourned night and day for her baby" (291). With her alternatives for addressing her emotional needs thwarted by constraints on her free choice, she musters what little personal power she has in her effort to regain her balance, or equilibrium. She thus engages her creative ability, especially her imagination, to redefine her reality into one that, while it appears irrational to the outside world, seems perfectly reasonable to her Self. This next stage of psychological disintegration is signaled by her adoption of a bundle of rags as her infant, and the "look of strange and vacuous happiness" she wears "upon her face" -- a happiness conceived in her imaginary motherhood (292). Zoraïde becomes obsessed with the doll ("night nor day did she lose sight of the doll that lay in her bed or in her arms"), almost as if it is the doll and her "sight of the doll" that is critical to her feeling of balance (292). While this obsession seems irrational to the rest of the world, it seems appropriate and rational within the boundaries of her fantasy world; yet while her imaginary motherhood seemingly brings her to a state of equilibrium, it does not optimize

her condition. Despite the creative efforts she employs to achieve equilibrium, her inner Self is forever threatened by the emotional disintegration and fragmentation that would occur if she were to "lose sight of the doll" (292).

At the end of the story, Zoraïde symbolically rests "upon a stone bench in the courtyard, listening to the soft splashing of the fountain, and watching the fitful shadows of the palm leaves" (292). This image of Zoraïde's external condition symbolizes her internal attempt to achieve equilibrium by mentally containing herself in a fantasy world that is but a shadow of the real world. For example, the stone bench represents the stability she has created for herself; the soft splashing of the fountain represents both the serenity she enjoys in her altered state and her continuing flow of life (for "she lived to be an old woman" [292]); the courtyard symbolizes the boundaries of her redefined reality; the fitful palm leaves represent the underlying tension of and disequilibrium in her condition; and the shadows represent the created illusion through which she has, in her madness, regained equilibrium.

Chopin's use of imagery, language, and symbols relating vision to awareness, disequilibrium, and equilibrium thus provides the story with an element of complexity within a unifying framework. As noted, this kind of phrasing is especially appropriate because the eyes are one of the primary organs through which individuals gather information, and the concept of vision thus implies awareness and perception. However, as also noted, such phrasing is especially interesting to a free order analysis because of the importance free order theory places on free will, the exercise of free choice, reason, and trust. Thus, Chopin's application of these symbols to reflect themes such as the realization of free will, the awareness of constraints on choice, the destruction of trust,

and the redefinition of reality is appropriate and skillful, and it contributes to her story's emergent creative order.

Similar unified symbolism is also evident in Chopin's story in language and imagery related to shadows and death. Specifically, Chopin uses imagery, language, and symbolism to reflect Zoraïde's turn inward and the corresponding death of her externally rational identity. For example, when Zoraïde tells Madame Delariviére that she "could have died, but ... could not have helped loving [Mézor]," she conveys the urgent emotional need and profound tension she is feeling (290). Her comment not only implies a growing disequilibrium, but it also foreshadows the consequences of Madame Delariviére's constraint on Zoraïde's exercise of free choice; that is, it foreshadows Zoraïde's ultimate inability to return to the state of equilibrium via natural means.

Likewise, Zoraïde's encounter with "the shadow of death" that accompanies "the anguish of maternity" when she gives birth provides a symbolic connection with her later psychological condition (291). The symbolism implied by the binary opposition of light to shadow can be extended to related ideas such as life to death, awareness to ignorance, reason to irrationality, and balance to imbalance (or equilibrium to disequilibrium). Chopin uses the shadow imagery to convey all of these ideas. For example, although Zoraïde escapes her own physical death, the birth of her child ironically initiates her redefinition of reality that takes her into a fantasy world and toward the eventual death of her externally rational self. In her redefined reality, Zoraïde exists in a shadow of the real world, and this existence is symbolized by the "fitful shadows of the palm leaves" that she watches in the courtyard (292). Ironically, despite the happiness Zoraïde seems to experience as a result of her fantasy motherhood, the "fitful" nature of the palm shadows

suggests that the mental instability that results from her unnatural redefinition of reality hinders her Self from achieving a truly optimal condition.

The symbolism unified by the shadow-light opposition can be extended to include language and imagery involving the truth-lie opposition. For example, the phrase "shadow of death" that Zoraïde encounters as she bears her child foreshadows the lie she will be told about her baby's death (291). Zoraïde's later repetitious recitation of the phrase "Li mouri" (she is dead) thus becomes a symbol of the shadow of truth (or the lie) that propelled her into a shadow of reality and, ultimately, the death of her rational Self (291). Indeed, the phrase "li mouri" can be interpreted as referring to the death of the baby, the death of Zoraïde's rational Self, or the death of truth.

The ultimate irony of Chopin's symbolic treatment of death is that, through the death of her rational self, Zoraïde is able to persevere and live a long and happy life. Although her life seems pitiful to observers, her redefinition of reality enables her to achieve a state of equilibrium in her Self. Moreover, within the confines of her fantasy world, her actions appear to be rational. Yet she is no longer an individual with whom other individuals can productively engage in exchange, and thus her condition, while affording her some measure of happiness, is not optimal for herself nor is it constructive for the community. Moreover, Madame Delariviére's purpose in denying Zoraïde her choice of husband is to increase the "value" Zoraïde holds as her companion and as a valued house-slave. Instead, she actually destroys Zoraïde's value to the community as well as her own investment in the slave whom she had brought up at her side. Chopin's prose describes the destruction that Madame Delariviére's actions have wrought:

> La belle Zoraïde was no more. In her stead was a sad-eyed woman who mourned night and day for her baby. 'Li mouri, li mouri,' she would sigh over and over again to those about her, and to herself when others grew weary of her complaint. ... And now this is the end of Zoraïde's story. She was never known again as la belle Zoraïde, but ever after as Zoraïde la folle, whom no one ever wanted to marry -- not even M'sieur Ambroise. She lived to be an old woman, whom some people pitied and others laughed at -- always clasping at her bundle of rags. (292-293)

Using imagery related to shadows and death, then, Chopin's symbolic presentation of Zoraïde's redefinition of reality (or the death of her rational Self) emphasizes the corruption of reason that inevitably results when the individual's instinctive drive to balance her Self is unnaturally obstructed by constraints on her free choice.

In summary, Kate Chopin uses a number of literary devices to emphasize her themes in "La Belle Zoraïde," thereby creating an emergent creative order that synergistically blends content with form. As was explored in detail in this section, Chopin demonstrates the storytelling power that the author enjoys in a free order culture through her story structure. In addition, Chopin's story structure and the variety of imagery that she employs emphasize the patterns of response, or behavior, that individuals who are denied free choice will apply in their efforts to achieve equilibrium. The responses include the redefinition of values, persuasion and negotiation, rebellion, and ultimately, the redefinition of reality. Chopin also uses imagery related to vision to develop themes involving free will, equilibrium, and disequilibrium; and she uses imagery related to shadows and death to develop themes involving free choice,

rationality, and irrationality. By using all of these literary devices, Chopin synergistically blends content with form in a manner that creates an emergent creative order and that enhances the effectiveness of her story.

SECTION FOUR:

CONCLUSION: A FREE ORDER PERSPECTIVE OF CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM

The objective of this thesis has been to develop and demonstrate an approach to literary theory and criticism that both benefits from and contributes to the unique creative potential of a free order culture. Such an approach provides a theoretical framework through which a self-determining community can explore the ambiguities of its experience and thereby contribute positively to the community's efforts to achieve the best possible form of freely chosen order. As previously explained in Section Two, an implicit assertion of free order literary theory is that there is a symbiotic relationship between literary studies and the emergent potential of a free order culture. In other words, the role of literary studies in a free order social system is amplified because of a mutually beneficial relationship between the social order's need to maintain conditions that engender free choice and productive exchange, and the opportunities for creative and dialogical exchange activity that are inherent in the literary experience. Through these opportunities, diverse members of the community engage in activities that develop their creative capabilities and their reservoirs of knowledge, such as writing, reading, interpretation, and analysis. Moreover, as a participant in informed discourse about literature, the critic additionally enjoys a unique opportunity to engage in critical exchange. When opportunities to engage in creative, dialogical, and critical exchange are

plentiful and wide-ranging, they coalesce into a dialectical process through which the community can address challenge and reconcile difference. When emergent, this "dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change" facilitates constructive (rather than destructive) cultural change and thereby increases the likelihood that the society will evolve in a manner that productively meets the needs of its individual members. Clearly, then, free order theory considers the sustenance of a rich and varied literary discourse to be not simply a desirable quality of civilized society, but a necessary element for the optimal functioning of a free order culture.

Accordingly, the long tradition of literary studies in Western culture has generated a rich variety of theoretical frameworks through which critical exchange occurs. For example, the contemporary critic may choose to adopt a psychoanalytic approach based on Freud's theories, an archetypal approach based on Jung's theories, or a thematic approach based on traditional literary theories. If the critic wishes to emphasize the influences of language theory, he may adopt a structuralist approach or, alternatively, one of the popular post-structuralist approaches such as deconstruction or reader-response theory. Or if the critic is interested in the sociopolitical dimension of literature, he may choose a feminist, post-colonialist, or Marxist approach. When one adds the potential for hybrid theories that borrow from these and other theories, the possible approaches to the study of literature seem endless. Clearly the contemporary study of literary theory and criticism in Western cultures (like the U.S.) provides the variety necessary for the sustenance of a rich and varied discourse.

Much of the diversity in contemporary literary studies developed over the latter part of the twentieth century. No doubt the flood of new ideas that swept the field of

literary theory and criticism during this period reflects the inevitable intellectual expansion of a free society beyond its traditional Western European inheritance.[60] In fact, the breadth of philosophical approaches upon which contemporary theory rests corresponds to the evolution of a pluralistic Western culture and a complementary expansion of academic fields. American culture, especially, embraced the values of diversity and change, and contemporary critical theory reflects the embrace of those same values in the field of literary criticism. The proliferation of literary theories thus represents a response by literary studies to the evolving values and needs of Western culture. Moreover, it can be argued that this responsiveness provides an example of the creative potential of free order social systems. In other words, the diversity reflected in contemporary literary studies is fueled by the synergism of intellectual freedom and creativity that is engendered by a free economic and sociopolitical environment (i.e., a free order social system) such as that which is enjoyed in Western culture.

It would seem, then, that the critical exchange activity that surrounds the diversity of literary theories would contribute positively to the free order culture's dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. Yet, as previously explained, diversity can be either positive or negative. While positive diversity has the potential to stimulate novelty and integrate cultural change, negative diversity undermines the free order culture's abilities to do so. When a free order culture or its components, such as literary studies and literary critics, become polarized by negative diversity, individuals in the community lose their abilities to communicate with and trust in one another. Without the abilities to communicate and trust, the free order culture is unable to respond creatively to its environment or to reconcile differences within its community. Moreover, when some

critics are especially vehement in their dismissal of other critic's ideas, the loss in trust and communicative ability among these "participants in informed discourse" undermines the critics' potential to generate and share novelty. In addition, because critical exchange directs the interface between literary studies and the culture at large, the cultural relevance of literary studies can be undermined when critical exchange is polarized and unproductive; literary studies are then less able to cultivate a cultural environment in which creativity flourishes and understanding flows.

The fact, then, that the field of literary criticism has become increasingly more complex and segmented so that the critic is often forced to choose a particular area of the field in which to concentrate his efforts presents critics with a particular challenge. In pursuing their own creative efforts, critics are encouraged to specialize their work and limit their perspective to a particular theoretical framework. At the extreme, though, the pluralistic environment that develops can lead to the reductive analysis and dogmatism that erodes trust and undermines communication; in short, it can lead to negative diversity. Indeed, taken to their extremes, some of the work in contemporary literary criticism seems to be designed to prove a particular theory rather than to analyze a literary text.

For example, many theories tend toward a reductive approach that cannot fully explore the richness of a text and that does not reflect the free order cultural experience. I have argued that the dignity of the individual is a central value in free order theory, yet several postmodern theories presume the demise of the individual and the dilution of the sense of Self: ideological theories such as Marxism, pos-colonialism, and feminism express a deterministic perspective that chains the individual's consciousness to an

economic, ethnic, or gender identity; reader-response theory rests on a concept of "interpretive communities" in which the individual's ability to interpret is dependent on his membership in a group; and linguistic theories subordinate all human existence to language so that "all that is left of 'man' is a 'trace' in the linguistic act" (Adams 10). All of these theories share the view that the individual is formed by something other than his Self, and that the individual is therefore unable to substantially influence his condition. The inability of some contemporary theories to fully address the special needs of our free order culture is further illustrated by a skeptical attitude about the efficacy of language as a medium for communication. For example, ideological theories suspect all communications, including literary texts, of containing subversive subtexts, while postmodern linguistic theories assert that language is an endless chain of referents in which there is no central or ultimate referent and in which meaning is, therefore, elusive.

Of course, it clearly would not be credible to argue that class, ethnic, or gender identities do not exert some degree of influence on the individual's sense of Self, or that the nuances of language are not deep and significant; however, it is equally clear, as evidenced by everyday experience in American life, that the individual is alive and assertive and that he commonly employs language in a meaningful resolution of his needs and wants. Indeed, "the individual" and "communication" are cornerstone concepts of free order theory, and depreciating the influence of these and other free order values (such as free choice, exchange, property, and trust) risks diminishing the cultural applicability and value of literary studies. As these examples illustrate, then, while it can be a useful exercise to study complexity through reductive analysis, it does not appear

that reductive approaches alone can reap the full potential for meaning in a culture that enjoys a high degree of self-determination and free choice

In addition to promoting reductive analysis that diminishes the value of the individual and language, some contemporary literary theories seem to take a dogmatic approach that emphasizes issues that are tangential to rather than specific to the literary text itself. As a result, some popular literary theories hardly address issues central to traditional literary studies at all; instead, they use the literary text more as a proof for the philosophy or ideology underpinning the theory. Indeed, postmodern obsessions with relativity and the elusive nature of reality have encouraged literary critics to neglect traditional literary studies and to emphasize instead cultural, philosophical, methodological, and interdisciplinary studies. As Hazard Adams notes in the introduction to Critical Theory Since 1965, while "much more than what had previously been thought of as relevant is involved today in questions about literature, ... in some influential theories the term 'literature' ... has itself been put in question" (1). This far-reaching nature of contemporary literary studies is evidenced by the postmodern practice of extending the concept of "text" beyond the literary artifact to include all cultural phenomena, including such ordinary cultural experiences as, for example, a dinner conversation. While such an extension no doubt enhances discourse about culture, it threatens to marginalize literature by viewing all "texts" in the same manner and thus neglecting the reservoir of rich and varied meanings and methods unique to literary texts. The result of such approaches, it seems, is a disconnection between literary studies and the culture at large, and a corresponding displacement of the cultural role of literature and literary studies. Moreover, critical approaches that are excessively dogmatic, when taken

to their extremes, will obscure communication and erode trust, thereby polarizing the literary community, impeding critical exchange, and losing relevance to literature itself.

Obviously, then, the challenge for any literary critic is to approach a text with a theoretical framework that is faithful to the text while avoiding, as much as possible, the pitfalls of dogmatism and reductive analysis. It is an inescapable fact that all criticism is rooted in a perspective -- what some might call its ideology -- and that, while this perspective illuminates some aspects of a text, it will obscure others.[61] However, the fact that every theoretical framework is rooted in a particular perspective does not mean that all critics cannot share a "respect for difference and ... belief in the idea of a common humanity" (Goodheart 175). Free order literary theory provides the critic with this opportunity to respect difference while building on "a common humanity." Indeed, the very concepts of free choice and exchange which ground critical exchange demand that such an approach exercise the highest tolerance possible, within the limits of self-preservation, in exploring new ideas. Moreover, a free order perspective also "possess[s] a capacity ... for discriminating value, for resisting and testing as well as accommodating the new" (Goodheart 197); this capacity arms free order theory with a special ability to nurture and embrace novelty while maintaining the value of past experience.

Some critics might argue that because free order theory is based on traditional, humanist values, it is parochial or oppressively Eurocentric. Ironically, much of the rejection of traditional Western values is a consequence of the enlightened perspective we have developed through these very values. Contemporary Western culture (especially American culture) winces at the immorality of past social injustices, but in our zeal to recompense, some individuals condemn the very ideas that drove this culture's evolution

to a higher moral ground. To reject an analytical framework simply because it involves traditional Western ideas based on a contemporary evaluation of Western culture's moral history seems rash, intolerant, and indeed unjust. As Ellen Dissanayake comments, "repudiating the whole of Western civilization is a harsh response to admitted social inequities, so that ... remedies that recommend flushing away the baby with the bathwater can even seem more misguided than the malady" (qtd. in Calne 206). Indeed, the repudiation of traditional values seems, at a minimum, to neglect important aspects of the Western cultural experience and, in the extreme, to distort reality by banishing important stepping stones from the very ground upon which Western culture travailed to get to its present-day condition.

The respect for traditional Western values that is demonstrated in free order theory does not suggest, however, that new or revolutionary ideas should be discounted. On the contrary, this thesis has argued that a free order social system, both in theory and in practice, provides the optimal opportunity for incorporating new ideas into the culture. So long as the fundamental values of free agency and productive exchange are respected and maintained, and so long as communication and trust are fostered in the community, the free order culture will adapt and evolve in a manner optimal to meet its needs regardless of the content of new ideas or the revolutionary zeal with which they are presented. Should these fundamental values be destroyed or undermined, however, a society can no longer be considered a free order social system. Thus the willingness and ability to entertain and evaluate new ideas is a required and natural attribute of a free order culture because it serves as an inherent survival mechanism for the free order system.

Likewise, this thesis does not suggest that free order theory is the only valid or acceptable approach to criticism, but rather that it is a culturally relevant approach, that it is supported by empirical evidence, that it is intellectually both responsible and respectable, and that it should not be discounted. It is a perspective that evolves naturally, according to the needs of the culture, by respecting the unique dignity and creativity of each individual. It thus has the potential to contribute instrumentally to the free order culture's efforts to meet challenges and reconcile difference. Moreover, its respect for the free exchange of ideas and its emphasis on "intellectual charity" mandates that this perspective address ideas from related and/or competing theories that have arisen out of the tensions between society and the individual. It is therefore not the objective of free order theory to destroy other valid theoretical frameworks; instead, free order theory challenges all critical efforts to facilitate creative, dialogical, and critical exchange that is worthy of the individual's consideration, and that respects the individual's right, and enhances his ability, to make his own choices.

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A: FREE ORDER THEORY AND CHAOS

APPENDIX B: TEXT OF KATE CHOPIN'S "LA BELLE ZORAÏDE"

APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

APPENDIX A:

FREE ORDER THEORY AND CHAOS

The traditional Western view of environmental uncertainty and disorder is that it represents a chaotic condition, which has typically been viewed to be a negative "state" of being. However, as explained in Section Two (i.e., free order assumptions about the nature of reality), free order theory views the uncertainty and disorder (or "chaos") inherent in reality in a more positive light.[62] That is, free order theory perceives chaos to be a "continuous process" of being that drives individuals to develop and apply their personal resources (i.e., creative capabilities and reservoirs of knowledge) in their interactions with their environments and in their efforts to create Self. This free order perspective on reality is postmodern in its acceptance of, rather than rejection of, uncertainty and disorder. In this respect, free order theory reflects the growing interest of postmodern Western culture in understanding the inconsistencies (or disorder) in human experience, as well as the consistencies.

In fact, during the latter half of the twentieth century, an entirely new field of academic inquiry developed around the concept of disorder, called "Chaos Theory." Today spontaneous order and emergence, two important concepts in free order theory, are often subsumed under this broader category of theory.[63] Because the concepts of spontaneous order and emergence have enjoyed wide attention among scholars exploring chaos theory, and because of the important role that these concepts play in free order

theory, scholarly efforts in this new field of Chaos Theory, or Chaotics, can contribute to understanding these free order concepts.

Chaos theory is a rich, multi-disciplinary field that addresses spontaneous order (i.e., self-directed organization), emergence, and a wide variety of other ideas related to disorder in dynamic systems. Indeed, from the natural sciences to the social sciences and even the liberal arts, ideas related to chaos are today being enthusiastically explored. For example, meteorologists develop models to help understand the transformation of weather systems from disorder (chaos) to order; biologists study how spontaneous order occurs during the creation, adaptation, and evolution of life systems; astronomers consider chaos in their efforts to learn about the universe; civil engineers study traffic and pedestrian patterns to identify the dynamics of spontaneous order; social scientists study (and theorize about) the socio-economic implications of spontaneous order; and literary scholars explore the implications of chaos for literary theory and critical analysis.[64]

In essence, chaos theory explores the phenomena of change. For example, it explores the interactive effects of "local" activities that often lead to unpredictable effects on a "global" system. One such theorized effect is the "large scale effect," where a small input in one part of the system has an unexpectedly significant influence on a distant part of the system. This idea is popularly known as "the butterfly effect" because, theoretically, the slight variation in wind speed, temperature, or barometric pressure that occurs when a butterfly flaps its wings in a rainforest in South Africa can create a trail of meteorological effects that escalate into a typhoon in India (for example). The butterfly effect is prominent in contemporary American culture; for example, it serves as the theme for Michael Crichton's blockbuster book (and movie) Jurassic Park, in which havoc is

wrought when a scientist uses modern technology to replicate dinosaurs from fossilized DNA. Another aspect of change that chaos theory explores involves the development of "random patterns" in dynamic, disordered systems. That is, although the components of a dynamic, indeterminate (i.e., chaotic) system never precisely repeat the same pattern, these components often create a "random pattern of behavior" by operating within the boundaries of, or around central points in, the system. While the precise behavior of the components cannot be predicted, then, the general pattern of the system can be.

While both of these examples, "the butterfly effect" and "random patterns," seem relevant to the study of individuals and social systems, they are presented here to illustrate that, like the free order view of reality, the study of chaos is clearly a study of "process rather than state, of becoming rather than being" (Gleick 5). As such, its currency in contemporary studies reflects the postmodern cultural shift to the view that reality is dynamic and complex rather than stable and orderly. Literary scholar N. Katherine Hayles notes this affinity between chaos theory and postmodern literary theories, for example, suggesting that chaos theory is "akin to poststructuralism, where the structuralist penchant for replicating symmetries is modified by the postmodern turn toward fragmentation, rupture, and discontinuity" (11).[65] Hayles argues that Western culture's contemporary enthusiasm for uncertainty and disorder is linked to the influence of post-structuralist theories that challenge the sovereignty of binary logic in Western thought. Hayles explains that the traditional Western view that chaos (or disorder) represents a negative condition is due, in part, "to the predominance of binary logic in the West," which implied that "if order is good, then chaos, [as its opposite,] must be bad" (3).[66] With the cultural shift to postmodern attitudes, however, binary logic has been, in

effect, "deconstructed," and as a result, people now feel more comfortable with non-binary perceptions of reality. No longer intimidated by the idea of disorder, postmodern imaginations are inspired by the "possibilities that were suppressed when chaos was considered merely as order's opposite" (3). Thus, for example, popular literary theories since the mid-twentieth century (such as deconstruction or reader response theory) reject traditional constraints imposed by order and instead encourage theorists to revel in disorder, uncertainty, or relativity. Similarly, contemporary authors more freely represent disorder or randomness in a more positive light than did traditional authors.[67] Indeed, the current enthusiasm about chaos theory demonstrates not only a willingness to accept the vagaries of disorder and uncertainty, but to further override Western culture's traditional fear of disorder and to embrace it as a new way of viewing and creatively interacting with our world.

Whether or not Hayles' explanation for the contemporary receptivity of disorder is valid, it is clear that traditional attitudes have given way to a postmodern one that views chaos (or disorder) as involving a mysterious and powerful force that has the potential to create novelty in the environment. This powerful force is spontaneous order, and when the potential for novelty is realized through spontaneous order, the system is emergent. As evidenced by the discussion in Section One, the precise mechanics of spontaneous order and emergence are complex, mysterious, and unique to the properties of the system in which they operate. In a free order social system, for example, the organizing forces involve individual free choice and productive exchange between individuals, whereas the forces that motivate spontaneous organization in a weather system, for example, involve physical properties such as temperature and pressure.

Regardless of the driving forces, systems that demonstrate spontaneous order are dynamic, complex, and mysterious, and they share an inherent capacity to adapt or create -- in other words, to be emergent.

APPENDIX B:

TEXT OF KATE CHOPIN'S

"LA BELLE ZORAÏDE"

Source:

Chopin, Kate. "La Belle Zoraïde." Close Readings: Analyses of Short Fiction from Multiple Perspectives by students of Auburn University Montgomery, Ed. Robert C. Evans. Montgomery: Court Street P, 2001. Appendix 3, 287-293.

Appendix B:

"La Belle Zoraïde"

by Kate Chopin

The summer night was hot and still; not a ripple of air swept over the *marais* [marsh]. Yonder, across Bayou St. John, lights twinkled here and there in the darkness, and in the dark sky above a few stars were blinking. A lugger that had come out of the lake was moving with slow, lazy motion down the bayou. A man in the boat was singing a song.

The notes of the song came faintly to the ears of old Manna-Loulou, herself as black as the night, who had gone out upon the gallery to open the shutters wide.

Something in the refrain reminded the woman of an old, half-forgotten Creole romance, and she began to sing it low to herself while she threw the shutters open:

"Lisett' to kité la plaine.
Ma perdi bunhair á moué;
Ziés à moué semblé fontaine,
Dépi no pa miré toué."

[Lizette, [since] you have left the plain
I have lost my happiness;

My eyes are like a fountain,
Since I cannot look at you.]

And then this old song, a lover's lament for the loss of his mistress, floating into her memory, brought with it the story she would tell to Madame, who lay in her sumptuous mahogany bed, waiting to be fanned and put to sleep to the sound of one of Manna-Loulou's stories. The old negress had already bathed her mistress's pretty white feet and kissed them lovingly, one, then the other. She had brushed her mistress's beautiful hair, that was as soft and shining as satin, and was the color of Madame's wedding-ring. Now, when she reëntered the room, she moved softly toward the bed, and seating herself there began gently to fan Madame Delisle.

Manna-Loulou was not always ready with her story, for Madame would hear none but those that were true. But tonight the story was all there in Manna-Loulou's head — the story of la belle Zoraïde — and she told it to her mistress in the soft Creole patois whose music and charm no English words can convey.

"La belle Zoraïde had eyes that were so dusky, so beautiful, that any man who gazed too long into their depths was sure to lose his head, and even his heart sometimes. Her soft, smooth skin was the color of *café-au-lait*. As for her elegant manners, her svelte and graceful figure, they were the envy of half the ladies who visited her mistress, Madame Delariviére.

"No wonder Zoraïde was as charming and as dainty as the finest lady of la rue Royale: from a toddling thing she had been brought up at her mistress's side; her fingers had never done rougher work than sewing a fine muslin seam; and she even had her own little black servant to wait upon her. Madame, who was her godmother as well as her mistress, would often say to her: —

"'Remember, Zoraïde, when you are ready to marry, it must be in a way to do honor to your bringing up.

'It will be at the Cathedral. Your wedding gown, your *corbeille* [hope chest], all will be of the best; I shall see to that myself. You know, M'sieur Ambroise is ready whenever you say the word, and his master is willing

to do as much for him as I shall do for you. It is a union that will please me in every way.'

"Monsieur Ambroise was then the body servant of Doctor Langlé. La belle Zoraïde detested the little mulatto, with his shining whiskers like a white man's, and his small eyes, that were cruel and false as a snake's. She would cast down her own mischievous eyes, and say:

"'Ah, nénaine [Godmother], I am so happy, so contented here at your side just as I am. I don't want to marry now; next year, perhaps, or the next.' And Madame would smile indulgently and remind Zoraïde that a woman's charms are not everlasting.

"But the truth of the matter was, Zoraïde had seen la beau Mézor dance the Bamboula in Congo Square. That was a sight to hold one rooted to the ground. Mézor was as straight as a cypress tree and as proud looking as a king. His body, bare to the waist, was like a column of ebony and it glistened like oil.

"Poor Zoraïde's heart grew sick in her bosom with love for le beau Mézor from the moment that she saw the fierce gleam of his eye, lighted by the inspiring strains of the Bamboula, and beheld the stately movements of his splendid body swaying and quivering through the figures of the dance.

"But when she knew him later, and he came near to her to speak with her, all the fierceness was gone out of his eyes, and she saw only kindness in them and heard only gentleness in his voice, for love had taken possession of him also, and Zoraïde was more distracted than ever. When Mézor was not dancing Bamboula in Congo Square, he was hoeing sugar cane, barefooted and half-naked, in his master's field outside of the city. Doctor Langle was his master as well as M'sieur Ambroise's.

"One day, when Zoraïde kneeled before her mistress, drawing on Madame's silken stockings, that were of the finest, she said:

"'Nénaine, you have spoken to me often of marrying. Now, at last, I have chosen a husband, but it is not M'sieur Ambroise, it is le beau Mézor that I want and no other.' And Zoraïde hid her face in her hands when she said that, for she guessed, rightly enough, that her mistress would be very angry.

"And indeed, Madame Delariviére was at first speechless with rage. When she finally spoke it was only to gasp out, exasperated:

"'That Negro! that Negro! Bon Dieu Seigneur [Good Lord God], but this is too much!'

"'Am I white, nénaine?' pleaded Zoraïde.

"'You white! *Malheureuse!* [Miserable one!] You deserve to have the lash laid upon you like any other slave; you have proven yourself no better than the worst.'

"'I am not white,' persisted Zoraïde, respectfully and gently. Doctor Langle gives me his slave to marry, but he would not give me his son. Then, since I am not white, let me have from out of my own race the one whom my heart has chosen.'

"However, you may well believe that Madame would not hear to that. Zoraïde was forbidden to speak to Mézor, and Mézor was cautioned against seeing Zoraïde again. But you know how the Negroes are, Ma'zélle Titite," added Manna-Loulou, smiling a little sadly. "There is no mistress, no master, no king nor priest who can hinder them from loving when they will. And these two found ways and means.

"When months had passed by, Zoraïde, who had grown unlike herself — sober and preoccupied — said again to her mistress: —

"'Nénaine, you would not let me have Mézor for my husband; but I have disobeyed you, I have sinned. Kill me if you wish, Nénaine; forgive me if you will; but when I heard le beau Mézor say to me, "Zoraïde, mo l'aime toi [I love you]," I could have died, but I could not have helped loving him.'

"This time Madame Delariviére was so actually pained, so wounded at hearing Zoraïde's confession, that there was no place left in her heart for anger. She could only utter confused reproaches. But she was a woman of action rather than of words, and she acted promptly. Her first step was to induce Doctor Langle to sell Mézor. "Doctor Langle, who was a widower, had long wanted to marry Madame Delariviére, and he would willingly have walked on all fours at noon through the Place d'Armes if she wanted him to. Naturally he lost no time in disposing of

le beau Mézor, who was sold away into Georgia, or the Carolinas, or one of those distant countries far away, where he could no longer hear his Creole tongue spoken, nor dance Calinda, nor hold la belle Zoraïde in his arms.

"The poor thing was heartbroken when Mézor was sent away from her, but she took comfort and hope in the thought of her baby that she would soon be able to clasp to her breast.

"La belle Zoraïde's sorrows had now begun in earnest. Not only sorrows but sufferings, and with the anguish of maternity came the shadow of death. But there is no agony that a mother will not forget when she holds her first-born to her heart, and presses her lips upon the baby flesh that is her own, yet far more precious than her own.

"So, instinctively, when Zoraïde came out of the awful shadow she gazed questioningly about her and felt with her trembling hands upon either side of her. 'Oú li, mo piti a moin? where is my little one?' she asked imploringly. Madame who was there and the nurse who was there both told her in turn, 'To piti á toi, li mouri' ('Your little one is dead'), which was a wicked falsehood that must have caused the angels in heaven to weep. For the baby was living and well and strong. It had been at once removed from its mother's side, to be sent away to Madame's plantation, far up the coast. Zoraïde could only moan in reply, 'Li mouri, li mouri,' and she turned her face to the wall.

"Madame had hoped, in thus depriving Zoraïde of her child, to have her young waiting-maid again at her side free, happy, and beautiful as of old. But there was a more powerful will than Madame's at work — the will of the good God, who had already designed that Zoraïde should grieve with a sorrow that was never more to be lifted in this world. "La belle Zoraïde was no more. In her stead was a sad-eyed woman who mourned night and day for her baby. 'Li mouri, li mouri,' she would sigh over and over again to those about her, and to herself when others grew weary of her complaint.

"Yet, in spite of all, M'sieur Ambroise was still in the notion to marry her. A sad wife or a merry one was all the same to him so long as that wife was Zoraïde. And she seemed to consent, or rather to submit, to the

approaching marriage as though nothing mattered any longer in this world.

"One day, a black servant entered a little noisily the room in which Zoraïde sat sewing. With a look of strange and vacuous happiness upon her face, Zoraïde arose hastily. 'Hush, hush,' she whispered, lifting a warning finger, 'my little one is asleep; you must not awaken her.'

"Upon the bed was a senseless bundle of rags shaped like an infant in swaddling clothes. Over this dummy the woman had drawn the mosquito bar, and she was sitting contentedly beside it. In short, from that day Zoraïde was demented. Night nor day did she lose sight of the doll that lay in her bed or in her arms.

"And now was Madame stung with sorrow and remorse at seeing this terrible affliction that had befallen her dear Zoraïde. Consulting with Doctor Langle, they decided to bring back to the mother the real baby of flesh and blood that was now toddling about, and kicking its heels in the dust yonder upon the plantation.

"It was Madame herself who led the pretty, tiny little 'griffe' girl to her mother. Zoraïde was sitting on a stone bench in the courtyard, listening to the soft splashing of the fountain, and watching the fitful shadows of the palm leaves upon the broad, white flagging.

"'Here,' said Madame, approaching, 'here, my poor dear Zoraïde, is your own little child. Keep her; she is yours. No one will ever take her from you again.'

"Zoraïde looked with sullen suspicion upon her mistress and the child before her. Reaching out a hand she thrust the little one mistrustfully away from her. With the other hand she clasped the rag bundle fiercely to her breast; for she suspected a plot to deprive her of it.

"Nor could she ever be induced to let her own child approach her; and finally the little one was sent back to the plantation, where she was never to know the love of mother or father.

"And now this is the end of Zoraïde's story. She was never known again as la belle Zoraïde, but ever after as Zoraïde la folle, whom no one ever wanted to marry — not even M'sieur Ambroise. She lived to be an old woman, whom some people pitied and others laughed at — always

clasping at her bundle of rags — her 'piti.'

"Are you asleep, Ma'zélle Titite?"

"No, I am not asleep; I was thinking. Ah, the poor little one, Man Loulou, the poor little one! better had she died!"

But this is the way Madame Delisle and Manna-Loulou really talked to each other:

"Vou pré droumi, Ma'zélle Titite?"

"Non, pa pré droumi; mo yapré zongler. Ah, la pauv' piti, Man Loulou. La pauv' piti! Mieux li mouri!"

APPENDIX C:

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Agreement of Understanding: A nonverbal agreement between two or more individuals that their interpretations of one another's utterances are close enough to intended meanings to facilitate communicative exchange. Agreements of understanding occur spontaneously and are driven by the individual's need to pursue her self-interests through communication with other individuals.

Categorized Experience: The intellectual resource that results when an individual uses her creative ability to assimilate her immediate experience into her reservoir of total experience. Through this assimilation, the individual brings order to her chaotic reality by comparing, contrasting, and organizing her experience into linguistic categories.

Creative Ability: The capacity of an individual to respond to environmental challenges and internal conflict through her abilities to imagine, reason, and learn.

Creative Exchange: A linguistic or nonlinguistic transaction or interaction through which individuals apply and enhance their creative abilities and/or their reservoirs of knowledge, and in which Self-creation occurs. When a reader enjoys a "creative exchange" through a text, she extends her interpretation of the author's intended meaning into a personal meaning.

Creative Process: A process wherein the individual employs her creative ability and her reservoir of knowledge to organize her experiences and generate novelty.

Creative Order: In a text, the unique combination of form and content; when there is a productive, synergistic relationship between form and content, the text is emergent and it generates creative and dialogical exchange through the literary experience.

Dialectical Exchange: The synergistic effect of creative and dialogical exchange, in which novelty is generated or integrated into the culture.

Dialectical Process of Spontaneous Cultural Change: A continuous process in which autonomously directed exchange activities (including creative, dialogical, and dialectical exchange) address and resolve the tension and conflict that is created by the challenges imposed by a chaotic reality and the free order community's generation of novelty. This process can lead, over time, to either constructive or destructive cultural change. Constructive cultural change enables the community to resolve tensions between the forces of cultural conservation and cultural transformation, to integrate change, and to strengthen its ability to resolve future tensions and conflicts. Destructive cultural change erodes the ability for individuals to trust in and communicate with one another, diminishes the opportunities for productive exchange, exacerbates tensions and conflict between the forces of cultural conservation and cultural transformation, and weakens the free order community's ability to resolve future tensions and conflicts.

Dialogical Exchange: A transaction in which two or more individuals exchange ideas through ongoing "agreements of understanding" about one another's intended meanings.

Dimensions of Self: The multiple needs that motivate the individual's self-interest, and the resources that direct the individual's Self-creation. Primary dimensions include physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of one's Self; secondary dimensions

support the individual's primary dimensions and include social and economic aspects of one's condition.

Diversity: An effect of a pluralistic culture, in which the proliferation of special interest groups in the population stimulates cultural differences. Diversity can exert either positive or negative effects on the community. Positive diversity is enhanced by the abilities of diverse individuals to trust in and communicate with one another; it stimulates productive communication, cultural understanding, productive exchange, and constructive cultural change. Negative diversity occurs when individuals identify so closely with their points of difference that they become isolated from other segments of the community and unable to participate in productive exchange with them. Negative diversity stifles communication, obscures cultural understanding, fosters mistrust, undermines the potential for productive exchange, and stimulates destructive (rather than constructive) cultural change.

Emergence: The creative and/or productive power of spontaneous order. An emergent outcome that occurs when the spontaneous interaction of components (or agents) in a dynamic process or system generate complexity, novelty, and/or efficiency in excess of their individual capacities. The outcome is synergistic rather than simply additive.

Equilibrium: A point at which cost of maintaining one's condition equals the benefits derived from it. In Self-creation, the individual seeks a balance, or "equilibrium," between the competing interests of her multiple dimensions of Self (i.e., physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social, and economic). Because of the chaotic nature of reality, however, equilibrium is never permanent and, therefore, the individual seeks to optimize her overall condition by attaining the optimum possible balance.

Exchange: A transaction between two or more individuals in which they are motivated by self-interest to voluntarily cooperate with one another for mutual benefit. When exchange is emergent, it is especially productive in generating and integrating novelty into the community. Productive exchange contributes to the free order community's potential to enjoy constructive (rather than destructive) cultural change.

Free Agent: An individual who enjoys free choice and self-determination.

Free Choice: The ability of an individual to exercise choice without externally imposed constraints on alternatives, deliberation, or outcome. To effectively exercise free choice, the individual must employ her creative ability and her reservoir of knowledge.

Literary Experience: The totality of effects that the individual experiences through her involvement with a literary artifact, including, for example, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, creative, and/or social stimulation.

Pluralism: A state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, professional, or other special interest groups maintain their traditional culture or special interest within the larger social order.

Reservoir of Knowledge: The individual's accumulation of categorized experience. The reservoir of knowledge is enriched through the individual's processing of new experiences, and through the individual's creative restructuring of existing knowledge (i.e., previously categorized experience).

Self: The central point through which the individual assesses and prioritizes her needs, identifies her self-interest, and responds to her environment.

Self-Creation: A continuous and spontaneous process in which the individual pursues equilibrium through free choice and exchange, and in which the individual's creative ability is strengthened and her reservoir of knowledge is enhanced.

Spontaneous Cultural Change: The generation and integration of novelty that occurs in a culture through the voluntary and local interactions of individuals in the community. Spontaneous cultural change is directed by the community's exchange activity. Spontaneous cultural change can be constructive or destructive; productive exchange contributes to constructive cultural change.

Spontaneous Order: Organization that is internally rather than externally directed. Spontaneously ordered systems (also known as "self-ordering systems") are dynamic, composed of autonomous components, constrained by few rules, and driven by the local activity of their individual components. Spontaneous order is a fluid and responsive process of being, but it is not impulsive.

Suboptimization: A process or state in which the individual, who is constantly challenged by the novelty that is generated by her environment and is therefore unable to achieve complete equilibrium (or balance) among the multiple, maintains instead the best possible balance by meeting those needs for which her ability to exercise free choice is least constrained.

ENDNOTES

[1] The term "free order" has been chosen not only because it reflects the concepts of freedom and social order, but also because it reflects the importance of "spontaneous order" as the "process" by which freedom is realized. "Spontaneous order" refers to organization that is internally rather than externally directed, and it does not necessarily imply impulsiveness. This concept is reviewed in depth in Section One.

[2] This pre-emption of socio-political theoretical objections in the analysis of a particular text should not be misconstrued as exclusion of such objections. As the discussion in Section Two illustrates, free order literary theory welcomes all valid theoretical perspectives to the community's "dialogical exchange."

[3] While the "dialectical process" of spontaneous cultural change that is proposed by free order theory resembles the concept, often associated with Hegel, of historical development through stages of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, there are important distinctions. For example, free order theory is not deterministic and does not insist that cultural evolution is deterministically progressive. Moreover, it views the dialectical process as complex (for example, multiple antitheses may simultaneously compete against a particular thesis) and nonlinear (for example, a synthesis may be generated by a combination of disjointed thesis-antithesis tensions). Finally, free order theory asserts that the dialectical process involves an interactive relationship between mind and matter (that is, the individual's creative mind both responds to and influences the material world), and thus it rejects the strict idealism of Hegelian philosophy.

On the other hand, neither does free order theory concur with the strict materialism and determinism advocated by the Marxist concepts of historical and dialectical materialism. For example, "historical materialism" is the Marxist theory of history and society (derived in part from the Hegelian concept of dialectic) that holds that ideas and social institutions develop only as the superstructure of a material economic base. Where historical materialism asserts a material basis of reality and the priority of matter over mind, however, free order theory alternatively argues that "mind" is the non-material creative catalyst that provides the individual with the potential to influence material reality. Similarly, "dialectical materialism" is the Marxist idea that this material basis of reality, which constantly changes through a dialectical process, is the determining factor in individual consciousness. (Webster's 314). Where Marxist dialectical materialism is deterministic, however, free order theory suggests that free will (through the exercise of free choice) stimulates the spontaneous activity which fuels the dialectical process. See Collinson (96-99) for a summary of the Hegelian dialectic, and see "Historical Materialism" in Fritz Stern's The Varieties of History (145-169) for a review of Marx and Engel's dialectical materialism.

[4] The technical nature of this description reflects the natural science orientation of its author, Ethan Decker, who was a member of the Department of Biology at the University of New Mexico when he wrote this statement. Despite its biological orientation, Decker's statement about the many dimensions of spontaneous order is useful to this discussion of the concept.

[5] The Wealth of Nations runs over 900 pages and is brimming with both empirical observation, theoretical detail, and citations from over a hundred authors, including

Locke, Quesnay, and Hume. It is a useful irony that Smith, a philosopher by training, did not conceive of his theory of economics through a strictly "rational" means (i.e. through logic alone). In fact, the process by which Smith created his huge tome provides a good example of the creativity that is spontaneously inspired in the free order environment. Smith's method was to gather together a variety of empirical observations from the world in which he lived, combine those observations with fragments of ideas from other philosophers, and create a panoramic explication of life in eighteenth-century England. Smith therefore demonstrates the creative capacity of free order systems both through his example of the creative process as well as through the substance of his work. For an enjoyable summary of Smith's career and work, see "The Wonderful World of Adam Smith" by Robert L. Heilbroner in The Worldly Philosophers.

[6] It is unarguable that Adam Smith's work is the basis for all classical economics; however, the tradition centering on spontaneous order that is especially pertinent to free order theory was developed by economists such as F.A. Hayek, Ludwig Von Mises, Henry Hazlitt, and Milton Friedman.

[7] In fact, contrary to anti-capitalist rhetoric, a free order economy (like any free order system) is only optimally functional when all members of the community enjoy the opportunity to benefit from free choice and exchange.

[8] For an extended discussion of Chaos Theory and its relationship to the concept of spontaneous order, see Appendix A.

[9] Like spontaneous order, emergence theory is enjoying popular currency in part due to its relationship to chaos theory. For an introduction to emergence theory, see Holland's Emergence: From Chaos to Order.

[10] Emergent systems might best be thought of as the "subset" of spontaneously ordered systems that demonstrate a particularly productive outcome. For example, it may be possible for some spontaneously ordered systems to organize in a non-productive manner. However, the order that results from the self-organizing activities of emergent systems will always be productive in the sense that "the total effect is greater than the sum of the effects taken independently" (Webster's 1183, "synergism").

[11] Holland lists the source of this metaphor as "Douglas Hofstadter's 1979 metaphor of the ant colony" (5).

[12] Friedrich Hayek (1899-1992) is considered to be a member of the "Austrian school of classical economics" along with economist Ludwig Von Mises, and is largely known for his work developing the socio-economic notion of spontaneous order. Hayek combined Adam Smith's conceptual framework of "the invisible hand" (i.e., spontaneous order) with the Scottish natural law tradition that deems social activity to be a consequence of localized human action rather than centralized human design. For an in-depth understanding of Hayek's treatment of "spontaneous order," see Hayek, Individualism and Economic Order, Chapters I-IV; also see The Road to Serfdom, where Hayek contrasts spontaneously ordered and centrally planned social systems.

[13] Section Two provides an in-depth discussion of the free order perspective of reality, and Appendix A provides a related summary of contemporary scholarship in the area of Chaos Theory.

[14] John Dewey refers to this capability as "reflective intelligence" (Boller 226).

[15] An important tenet of free order theory is that no individual or group should hold an advantage over others through privileged treatment. However, the complexity,

dynamism, and mystery inherent in the environment leaves much to "chance" and it is impossible to ensure that all individuals begin life with an "equal" mix of resources, or even that all individuals will enjoy exactly "equal" opportunities in their lives. The key to eliminating privilege, then, lies in the equal and impartial enforcement of the community's self-determined rules, and in access to exchange activity being based on exchange value rather than personal influence; any other approach artificially privileges some individual or group over another. The impersonal valuation that occurs through a free order community's productive exchange activity thus provides the best possibility for a free social system to balance a high degree of individual equity with an optimal social order. As Hayek notes, "there is all the difference in the world between treating people equally and attempting to make them equal" (Individualism 16).

[16] For an interesting discussion about the interactive effects created in the community by individuals as planners, see Von Mises (29-30).

[17] "Pluralism" is defined here as a state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, professional, or other special interest groups "maintain an autonomous participation in and development of their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization" (Webster's 885).

[18] For example, only 1.1% of homes in the United States were without complete plumbing facilities in 1990 as compared with 45.3% in 1940. Similar statistics demonstrating improved living standards can be found in Statistical Abstract of United States: 2000, U. S. Census Bureau, Government Publications.

[19] Moreover, it can be argued that both the positive power and the negative threat of pluralism are intensified in the evolving diversity of a free order culture like the United

States in which immigration continuously introduces new cultural effects into the community.

[20] The specifics of these developments will not be explored here as they are not crucial to this discussion of the negative diversity that can result from extreme segmentation. The full discussion can be found in Ellis's book, cited in the bibliography.

[21] Ellis speaks specifically about the works of Whorf (anthropology), Wittgenstein (philosophy), and Saussure and Chomsky (linguistics).

[22] Some may object that many mass market cultural products are objects of enjoyment rather than thought; yet even a painting appreciated for aesthetic value alone, for example, involves ideas such as the relativity of value and the role of aesthetics in human existence.

[23] It can be further argued that changes in contemporary Western society, fueled by modern technology and the dissolution of traditional authorities such as religion and family, create a demand for alternative cultural mechanisms, such as literature, through which society can address its conflicts and explore its choices. Terry Eagleton asserts as much in Literary Theory (20-24), when he argues that literary studies filled a moral void that was created by "'the failure of religion'" in the late nineteenth century. Eagleton adds a Marxist twist (with which I do not concur), however, by arguing that religion was the traditional cultural mechanism by which bourgeois society controlled the masses; therefore, Eagleton argues, the conferment of literary education on the oppressed working classes constituted the institution of a substitute, or alternate, means of control over the oppressed masses. Thus "the pill of middle-class ideology was to be sweetened by the

sugar of literature" (23), Eagleton concludes, and literary studies became the bourgeois tool of "moral ideology for the modern age" (24).

[24] For a detailed discussion about the relevance of cultural knowledge for learning and communicating, see E.D. Hirsch, Jr.'s introduction to The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy.

[25] Interestingly, the free order perspective on reality reflects a new, postmodern approach to understanding the human experience, and therefore it coincidentally provides an example of the occurrence of spontaneous change in the culture at large. In other words, the development of postmodern perspectives on reality (like chaos theory) represent efforts in Western culture, through the spontaneous reorganization of Western thought, to discover and create new methods for understanding the environment. For an in-depth discussion about postmodern perspectives on reality, see Appendix A, "Free Order Theory and Chaos."

[26] Free order theory asserts that, while human beings can and must continuously develop their capacity for understanding, the mystery inherent in a chaotic reality nevertheless suggests that there will always be a limit to the certainty that can be achieved through reason, empiricism, or intuition. Ironically, the limiting factor is not man's ability to learn nor is it the impossibility that an omniscient truth exists. It is instead the elusive finality of reality that limits humanity's ability to achieve certain and complete knowledge of reality, for even when we think we have found the "final solution" or the "ultimate truth," we have no way of knowing whether or not the complex, dynamic, and mysterious reality in which we reside has another dimension or aspect of truth that is beyond our mortal comprehension.

[27] Free order theory values all sincere efforts the individual makes to understand his reality, including metaphysical belief systems. Truly, so long as a belief system acknowledges the authority for each individual to make his own choices relative to such systems, and so long as the belief system does not contradict the tenets of free choice and exchange, it does not contradict free order theory. Indeed, free order theory argues that, in light of the mystery, complexity, and dynamism that clouds reality, aspects of reality such as the metaphysical realm are beyond intellectual comprehension. Man cannot know with intellectual certainty, for example, whether the universe is rationally ordered, divinely ordained, or absurd and meaningless. Instead, these possibilities are metaphysical theories which, though they can be and frequently are supported by rational argument, empirical probabilities, and intuition, are in the end primarily matters of faith. Free order theory asserts that an individual's exercise of faith in a particular metaphysical theory constitutes an important aspect of his spiritual dimension. Moreover, the individual has the authority, the responsibility, and the ability (through reason and imagination) to develop this and other dimensions of his Self by exercising his free choice about such profound issues. Thus, although free order theory does not itself proclaim an omniscient truth, it views such metaphysical aspects of reality as realms of individual choice and personal truth. See Section One for a discussion about the creation of Self.

[28] Ellis argues that categorization is presupposed by other linguistic concepts like information, communication, and reference:

> Something important must have happened before information, communication, or reference could become possible: these are all ideas

> that presuppose the existence of a language and therefore cannot have described the basis of language. Encoding requires a language to code, and thus the message encoded is not transmitted by language but is itself already a piece of language. ... Similarly, the notion of 'reference' is ... [not] an explanation of how language is constituted; it is instead a use to which we can put language. ...We cannot make sense of the notion of referring to a state of affairs without a language already being in place. (115-116)

Ellis concludes that, clearly, for communication to be possible, "there must first have been a considerable degree of processing of experience -- of analyzing it, abstracting from it, focusing and shaping it... [because] what is communicated is *not the facts of the situation merely in itself...* but the place of that situation within the set of categories of the language" (29).

[29] Donald B. Calne is a professor of neurology at the University of British Columbia. His book, Within Reason: Rationality and Human Behavior, is a fascinating study of the role of reason in human evolution and everyday life.

[30] New Criticism, also referred to as Anglo-American Formalism, was especially popular in the mid-twentieth century. New Critics view the text as autonomous from the author, and as a self-sufficient structure of meanings (Abrams 25). New Criticism encourages the "close reading" and explication of the text, and especially values "complex unity," where texts "are both complex and unified -- ... in which every part seems to 'fit' or contribute to the larger whole" (Evans xxxix).

[31] The writer creates from within a culture, however, and thus the general experience may be one of cultural interest rather than universal interest. This does not make a text less valuable, but only makes it more difficult (though not impossible, I would argue) for readers outside the culture to achieve an understanding or appreciation of it.

[32] "Humanism" as used in this thesis refers to a belief that, through the exercise of human reason and talents, individuals can achieve fulfillment in this life (Beckson & Ganz 228); to a belief in "the dignity and worth of man and his capacity for self-realization through reason" (Webster's 556); and to a belief that classical education (i.e., the humanities, or the liberal arts) can contribute significantly to the development of the individual's reasoning ability and thus to his potential for self-fulfillment.

[33] Abrams further notes that "in our Age of Reading, the first casualty in this literary transaction has been the author. ... [thus,] the text forfeits its status as a purposeful utterance about human beings and human concerns, and even its individuality, becoming simply an episode in an all-encompassing textuality" (270).

[34] The "spontaneous overflow of emotion" refers to Wordsworth's famous explanation for the creative process; specifically, that poetry reflects the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility" (Wordsworth 437).

[35] Eliot's analogy compares the creative process with "the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide. ...When the two gases ... are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulfurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the

platinum itself is apparently unaffected; has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum..." and the poet's emotions and feelings are the elements (Critical Theory Since Plato 762-763).

[36] Meaning and interpretation are explored in greater detail in the discussion about the audience in Section Two.

[37] See Paulson's essay, "Literature, Complexity, Interdisciplinarity," in Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science, (37-53), ed. N. Katherine Hayles (1991).

[38] The reader may refer back to an earlier section for this quote.

[39] Refer to the discussion earlier in this section under "Free Order Assumptions about Language and the Text" for a review of the categorizing and communicating powers of language as a tool for choice and exchange.

[40] The concept of Self is discussed in Section One, and the importance of Self to the individual's categorical structures is discussed in Section Two.

[41] See the previous discussions about the author and the readers to review the concepts of creative exchange and dialogical exchange as associated with the literary experience.

[42] It can be argued that theories advocating strict materialism, such as Marxism, are closed because they assume a materialistic determinism that forces all criticism into an analysis of material forces. Such an approach is undoubtedly applicable to certain texts and can thus be productive in their analyses. But while the application of a closed theory (like Marxism) in the critical analysis of a particular text might provide some interesting insights, the insistence of its strict and exclusive application across a broad range of texts cannot be effective. Indeed, closed theoretical frameworks are limited by their tendency to discover the same ideas in all texts, and they therefore do not have the capacity to

evolve and grow in response to the different needs, properties, or qualities of the great variety of texts that are generated in a free order culture.

[43] Abrams further observes that "the degree to which we are indebted to Aristotle's theory for concepts that make possible a discriminating and organized appreciation of literary art is obscured by the extent to which his terms and distinctions long ago became the common vocabulary of discourse about works of narrative and dramatic literature" (45).

[44] See Section Two for a review of the importance of the text in the dialogical exchange.

[45] Abrams bases his summaries of "description," "explanation and interpretation," and "evaluation" on Morris Weitz's work on procedures in critical discourse in Hamlet and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism.

[46] See Section Two for a review of the creative exchange that the reader enjoys through interpretation.

[47] Refer to Section Two for the discussion about dialectical exchange.

[48] In free order theory, this stimulation of creative interest can be viewed as part of the creative exchange between critic and text.

[49] In fact, the value that motivates the critic to address a text may be unrelated to its "literary" or "aesthetic value," but may be based rather on some other value such as the reputation of the author, the community's response to the text, or the text's historical significance, for example. Indeed, it is even possible that a critic might evaluate an "ineffective" text as an example of poor literature, thus attributing to it the value of example.

[50] Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe comes to mind as an example of a text that might not be considered of high literary value by contemporary standards

because it is overtly propagandistic and, some might feel, tedious. Yet the historical significance of this book is unarguable, and the fact that Stowe's recurrent moral admonishments moved her readers so effectively suggests its value as cultural rhetoric, as a representation of nineteenth-century American literature, or as a study guide to the American emancipation movement, for example.

[51] Eliot's comments are taken from his essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (Critical Theory Since Plato 760-764), and are actually directed toward the author's creative effort. While I do not concur that an author's effectiveness is dependent on his incorporation of literary tradition into his creative effort, I do assert that criticism can be most effective when it incorporates the varieties of value that literary works can bring to a culture.

[52] The consequences of negative diversity in literary studies are explored further in Section Four.

[53] Because much of Chopin's work revolves around issues relating to freedom, it seems to be ideal for a free order critical analysis. However, it is not only in treating the *topic* of freedom that Chopin's work is illuminating. It is also illuminating in its capacity to reflect her community's efforts to adapt to a changing environment and to integrate new ideas into the culture at large -- in other words, to reflect the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change. It is important to recognize that many topics other than emancipation and suffrage could be equally productive for a free order analysis. For example, themes such as coming-of-age, prohibition, parenthood, survival, etc. could all provide interesting material for exploring the concepts of free choice, exchange, spontaneous order, and the dialectical process of spontaneous cultural change.

[54] The Enlightenment tradition involves libertarian ideas related to natural rights and contractual government; the Judeo-Christian tradition involves the egalitarian ideas of free will and reason as inalienable properties of every spiritual being (i.e., human or higher on "the great chain of being").

[55] In fact, while the philosophical foundations of these American values were widely accepted with the formation of the Union, there was a great deal of disagreement and confusion about how such values would be actualized. The social conventions and economic traditions of the period clouded the perspective of early Americans about the responsibilities and rights of different groups of individuals. For example, separation of domains for men and women was common, with the men traditionally responsible for activities involving the exercise of reason and women responsible for activities involving nurturing and sensibility. Similarly, slavery was an integral part of the new nation's economic system and a remnant of the history of human behavior. Nonetheless, once freedom was codified as a moral value in the American culture, it was only a matter of time before the self-organizing activity of the social order would extend these rights to all members of the community. The *exercise* of moral choice occurs on an individual level, though, and the Self-creation by which individuals develop their moral consciousness is unique to each individual in form and degree. As a result, at any particular moment some members of the community may fall short of integrating the codified values into their exercise of choice. Fortunately, the dynamics of a free order system are such that through exchange transactions and relationships, these values are naturally reinforced in the community. Thus the actualization of these rights is an ongoing process that is facilitated through the exchange process, and the suffrage and emancipation movements

therefore represent a series of especially dramatic events in the free order culture's ongoing self-organizing activity.

[56] The 13th Amendment (1865) outlawed slavery throughout the nation; the 14th Amendment (1868) extended citizenship to all blacks; and the 15th Amendment (1870) made it illegal to deny voting rights on the basis of race.

[57] In fact, I would argue that while Chopin's stories are often spell-binding, her ability to create emergent creative orders that leave the reader with more than a good yarn reflects her literary skill and explains the aesthetic appeal of her work.

[58] The full text of Kate Chopin's short story, "La Belle Zoraïde," can be found in Appendix B.

[59] Of course, there are exceptional circumstances where one's ability to exercise reason is limited, as in the case of mentally disabled individuals, for example, in which case other individuals must act on their behalf. Similarly, while children enjoy the capacity to reason, their reasoning abilities are not developed to the degree that they can make complex decisions and, therefore, they must depend on their guardians to act on their behalf until their reasoning capability matures.

[60] A comparison between Hazard Adams' two anthologies of literary theory provides one indication of the explosion in literary theories during the latter half of the twentieth century. The first anthology, Critical Theory Since Plato, features the work of 115 theorists who made important contributions to the field over approximately 25 centuries. The second anthology, Critical Theory Since 1965 (co-authored by L. Searle), features almost half that many contributors (55) for the 21 years from 1965 until it was published in 1986.

[61] For example, free order theory is rooted in humanist concepts, and it is bounded by highly debated forces such as free choice, exchange, property, and reason; New Criticism is rooted in a Kantian concept of disinterested aesthetics that views the literary work as a world in itself; Marxist criticism rooted in Marxist materialism; and psychoanalytic criticism is rooted in Freudian or Jungian psychology.

[62] Clearly, free order theory does not promise the certainty of human progress that traditional Western perspectives do. Indeed, the Western tradition of progress is unquestionably rich and complex. It includes the Judeo-Christian belief that the "good" life will be rewarded with spiritual salvation; the Renaissance humanist attitude that humanity is elevated through the development of and respect for man's God-given talents; the deistic view that humanity is a blind but necessary component of a mechanistically ordained universe; the Enlightenment belief that natural laws can be discerned through reason alone, and that civilization can therefore be reformed only through rational means (with such a reformation representing the replication of the natural [rational) order of the universe]; the Romantic passion for individual and cultural self-realization through imagination, sensible communion with nature, and escape from the bondage of reason; and the utilitarian formula for social progress through a doctrine of "the greatest good for the greatest number." All of these attitudes about progress reflect a utopian desire to counter the uncertainty and disorder (or chaos) that naturally occurs in the human environment.

[63] For an exciting introduction to Chaos Theory, see Chaos: Making a New Science by James Gleick, first published in 1987. Gleick's book is generally considered to provide the most accessible discussion of the various developments in science, mathematics, and

technology that converged into chaos theory. For a summary of the theory, see the prologue (1-8).

[64] See, for example, the variety of interesting essays about the relationship of chaos theory to literature in Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science, ed. N. Katherine Hayles. Hayle's introduction in Chapter One provides an informative overview of both the elements of chaos theory (including spontaneous order) and its associations with literature. For an example of an effort to apply chaos theory to literary criticism, see Harriet Hawkins' Strange Attractors: Literature, Culture, and Chaos Theory.

[65] Hayles is a literary scholar (University of California - Los Angeles) who has extensively explored the literary implications of chaos theory. Her comment here acknowledges the influence in literary studies of the structuralist conception of language as a binary system, and it credits the paradigm shift associated with chaos theory (i.e. the "embrace" of chaos) for the eventual overpowering of structuralist theory by post-structuralist schools of thought like deconstruction. Extending this analogy, then, free order theory can be viewed as representing the emergence of order out of this post-structural chaos. This emergence of order can be manifested through a variety of free order principles, such as the reconstruction of the text (as opposed to deconstruction), for example, or the revalidation of the autonomous individual as a unifying element in interpretation (as opposed to the antihumanist implications of ideological theories).

[66] A survey of pre-modern Western literature seems to support Hayles' juxtaposition of order/disorder with good/bad. For example, Dante's Inferno presents chaos as eternal punishment for the sinful; Milton's Paradise Lost presents it as the disarray that results

from defying God; and Pope's Essay on Man presents it as an unpleasant but necessary component of a divine order that escapes man's understanding.

[67] For example, in The Color Purple, the whiskey-swilling, sexy-singing, daughter-of-a-preacher "Shug Avery" character can be seen as the personification of disorder in Celie's life; yet it is this same character who strongly influences Celie to value and assert herself, thereby bringing order to Celie's life.

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