CHAPTER V

THE ZEN-BASED READING PROCEDURE

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This is the first of three chapters constituting the practical and experimental part of this study. In this chapter, the Zen-based Conflict-to-Insight Reading Procedure is introduced and explained. In the next two chapters, the Reading Procedure is applied to the reading of two novels. This chapter is divided into 5 sections. This introduction (5.1) briefly reviews the key findings of the theoretical research in the last few chapters that have influenced the concept and design of the Zen-Based Reading Procedure, and establishes the aim, scope, and limits of the Reading Procedure. Section 5.2 presents the Procedure's Reading Guidelines. Section 5.3 gives an overview of the 3-Reading Strategy, which is the Procedure's action framework. In Section 5.4 the critical tools are introduced with explanations of their functions and examples of their different uses. Section 5.5 integrates the 3-Reading Strategy and the critical tools in a step-guide to the implementation of the Strategy. Section 5.6 summarises the chapter.

5.1.1   Review of key findings of theoretical research

This review of key findings of my theoretical research outlines the thinking behind the basic concept of the Zen-based Reading Procedure, the overall design of the reading strategy, and the selection of critical tools. I began this study with the assumption (Ch. I. 1.2) that in any reading situation, differences between the reader's cultural background or values and those of the text can result in the reader experiencing what I term a sense of conflict—conflict that Iser has identified as non-comprehension, resistance, and even outright rejection of the text. To the extent that it is recognised, both in the west and in Asia, that any kind of intersubjective understanding requires insight and empathy, the understanding of a text, especially a cross-cultural text, may be considered a process of progressing from conflict to

insight. Among the world's major thought systems, only Buddhism appears to have a body of publicly available literature centring on a consistent and systematic programme for the development of insight (*prajna*). Since the reading and understanding of texts form an important part of Zen development of *prajna*, my first hypothesis was that it may be possible to derive from relevant aspects of Zen epistemology and approaches to texts a theoretical framework for a conflict-to-insight reading procedure for the analysis of modern and contemporary literary works.

In the exploration of Zen discourses on how *prajna* functions (Ch. III, 3.4.2), I compared the accounts of the experience of *prajna* by Zen practitioners with accounts of the experience of intuitive insight by western thinkers of very high intellect and my own experience of insight in the course of practical problem-solving. Using my own experience as the "lowest common denominator", I noted the basic similarities in the experiences, especially the fact that insight follows upon rigorous attention to detail and sustained logical analysis of a problem. The similarities suggested to me that the experience of insight must be a common occurrence in human experience. This led me to my second hypothesis, which is that if some of the critical concepts and tools used in Zen development of *prajna* were used with the same kind of rigor and logic in the analysis of a literary work of fiction, they may lead to more and fresher insights into the work's discourses.

Subsequent research on the relationship between the development of *prajna* and the Zen approach to texts showed that the Zen "theory" of reader response is significantly different from western theories of aesthetic and subjective reader response (Ch. IV, 4.2.4). Generally speaking, in western reading theory and praxis, the aim is to retrieve, constitute, or produce "meaning" from a text. In Zen, however, the experience of reading *sutras* may be described as a struggle between the reader and the text, where the reader is trying to find meaning and closure and the text is not allowing him/her to do so. As has been explained (Ch. IV, 4.4.2 to 4.4.4), the techniques of narration in the *sutras* "lure" the reader to the "dead-end" of his/her imagination and logic, at which point, the reader experiences *prajna*-insight—not into what the words of the texts "mean", but into what the text is doing to the reader. The *sutras*' aim is to "cure" the reader of the appropriative reading habit of reaching for meaning and closure by forcing the reader to deconstruct the meanings and closures he/she imposes on the text, thereby practicing a system of what I call "reverse hermeneutics". From this experience, I derive my third hypothesis, which is that if I incorporate in the Zen-based Reading Procedure a similar technique of holding the reader

back from rushing to meaning and closure, the Procedure may help him/her to reach the point of *prajna*-insight and the discovery of discourses "hidden" in the narrative techniques and structures of literary works. From the research on the Zen approach to texts I borrowed from the opening narrative of the *Lankavatara Sutra* a basic two-reading model and then added one more reading to arrive at a 3-reading strategy based on a synthesise-investigate-validate format.

In selecting Zen critical aids (i.e. reading procedures, critical concepts and analytic tools) for the Zen-based Reading Procedure, I took into account the findings from my research on local theory, local response to and use of western theories, and trends in locally developed reading strategies (Ch. II, 2.2.2). I found that local critics and scholars tend to reject theories perceived to be in conflict with their own belief systems. On the other hand, they will use critical-methodological tools that are culturally neutral and can be used with the value frameworks of their belief systems. An important criterion in my selection of Zen critical tools is therefore that they must be culturally neutral, trans-ethnically acceptable, and based on universally accepted truths about experience (e.g. cause-and-effect, the difference between perception and reality, and that time is experienced as flowing in one direction, forward).

The criterion used in the selection of critical procedures was that they should blend in with procedures used in local critical practice. In this connection, I noted two fairly common reading strategies. One is the strategy of beginning the critical analysis by selecting aspects of the text that are alien to or in conflict with the reader's worldview (e.g. "ethnocentric" or "Islamic" approaches). This finding lends support to my observation that reading in a multi-ethnic society is nearly always an experience of reader-text conflict, as well as to the idea that I might begin the Zen-based Reading Procedure's 3-Reading Strategy with the identification of the reader's conflict with the text. The other procedure is that of selecting a particular aspect of the text and making it the focus of textual examination (e.g. Key-word Conceptual Theory). This finding lends support to my selection of the Principals and Satellites analytic tool for the Zen-based Procedure.

5.1.2   Aim, scope and limits of the Reading Procedure

The Zen-based Conflict-to-Insight Reading Procedure is designed as a basic approach to analysing works of fiction. Its aim is to uncover a text's discourse by releasing the text from

the bondage of the reader's appropriative reading habits. Its key feature is the 3-Reading Strategy, which starts the process of textual understanding with the identification of the reader's conflict with the text. The rationale is that these conflict-points open windows of opportunity for intersubjective (i.e. reader-text) dialogue. The Strategy is designed to intervene at these opportune moments to facilitate a change in the reader's reading habits: from an instinct-driven, often anxious reaching after meaning and closure to a state of mental quiescence in which meaning and closure are de-prioritised, enabling more careful and more comprehensive observation of the text and its workings.

To facilitate this change of reading habits, the Procedure offers three sets of critical aids, some of them drawn from Zen discourses on *prajna* (insight) development and adapted for the purpose of reading literary fiction. The first set of critical aids consists of four Zen-based Reading Guidelines, adapted from four Zen guidelines to the reading of *sutras*. These guidelines define the general approach to reading as well as the structure, scope and focus of the Reading Procedure. The second set of critical aids is the 3-Reading Strategy. The third set consists of 5 critical tools, three of which are adaptations of Zen analytic formulae. These critical tools are used for the kind of close textual investigation and reasoning that can lead to the intuitive breakthroughs, commonly called "insights", which enhance the reader's ability to discover the text's core and hidden discourses.

The Procedure is recommended to be used as the initial approach to a text. Its heuristic value lies in its step-by-step organisation of the investigative process, enabling the systematic unravelling of a text's discourse, its thematic and schematic structures, and its ideological substructures. The Procedure is hermeneutic in intent, but does not claim to bring a reader to an "objective", far less a "perfect", understanding of the text. What it provides is a way of managing or guiding reader responses so that the text is given a chance to "correct" the reader's misapprehensions or misperceptions about aspects of the text at various stages of the reading.

One of the outcomes of Zen's reverse hermeneutics is that it prioritises critical analysis over imaginative meaning-making. This is opposed to, say, Iser's theory of aesthetic response, which depends on the imagination to constitute the meaning of a text. Since I shall be borrowing Zen methods of logical analysis, the Zen-based Reading Procedure is biased towards the use of logic and not the imagination. It is therefore probably better suited for discovering the discourses of narrative fiction than for the reading of poetry,

since poetry appreciation generally requires the synthesising force and free play of the imagination. In the Reading Procedure, western categories of the narrative (e.g. setting, theme, character, and plot) are used without redefinition. This is partly because the procedure draws its hermeneutic principles and models from Zen's philosophical and not its literary traditions; but mainly because the modern novel (as opposed to the fable or the epic) is a western genre. However, because all the components of the Zen-based Reading Procedure are designed to approach the text from an "unconventional" angle, there will be a degree of re-orientation in terms of how the novel's narrative categories (e.g. plot, major and minor characters) are treated. The critical value of the re-orientation is that it enables fresh, insightful and intellectually challenging ways of approaching a text. Finally, the Reading Procedure is designed not to challenge or supplant, but to supplement and complement other approaches to fiction. The sample readings in the next two chapters will show that the Procedure's laying bare of a text's discourses invites further explorations guided by other theories and approaches.

For the sake of reading ease, in the following discussion of the Reading Procedure, I shall adopt the style of a *vade-mecum* ("go with me") and use the editorial "we" to refer to the reader and myself.

5.2 READING GUIDELINES

The Reading Guidelines define the Zen-based Procedure's general approach to reading fiction. Adapted from the "Four Refuges", a set of Mahayana guidelines for the interpretation of *sutras* (see Chapter IV, 4.5.2) the Procedure's guidelines are:

1. Prioritise the primary text (i.e. the novel being analysed).
2. Prioritise the text's discourse.
3. Prioritise the unambiguous.
4. Prioritise logical analysis.

5.2.1 Guideline 1: Prioritise the primary text

This first guideline prioritises the primary text (the novel under study) and de-prioritises secondary texts (critiques and commentaries about the novel). The aim is to encourage independent exploration of works of fiction and the development of logical-critical skills;

and to discourage overdependence on the views and opinions of the works' authors, scholars, critics, and reviewers. To ensure that the reader is not unduly influenced by the reputation, academic stature, and social standing of the author and other authority figures in the world of literary studies, secondary texts are used in this order of preference: (1) texts relating to historical, literary, and other allusions in the novel; (2) other texts by the same author; (3) biographical data about the author; and (4) other people's critiques and reviews.

5.2.2 Guideline 2: Prioritise the text's discourse.

This second guideline gives priority to the text's discourse. It covers two aspects of the reading experience: critical focus and value judgments. The critical focus of the Zen-based Reading Procedure is the uncovering of a text's discourse. Literary-formal aspects will be taken into account in relation to the discourse, and not for their own sake. Thus, the text's use of language and its style (e.g. its narrative voice) will be examined, but only insofar as they affect the discourse—in tone (e.g. ironic or serious), perspective (e.g. anti-colonial or Buddhist) and attitude (e.g. detached or critical). If the prose is "elegant" and the depiction of the fictional world "true-to-nature", they are discussed only if these qualities are pertinent to the discourse.

In terms of value judgments, in the Reading Procedure, it is expected that the reader will form subjective judgments throughout the reading of the text. The Procedure does not impose any value of its own, nor is it designed to influence the reader's value judgments. It merely helps the reader to become aware of his/her judgments based on what the text says about any given issue. The ideal is that the text should be judged on its own terms.

5.2.3 Guideline 3: Prioritise the unambiguous.

In this third guideline, to prioritise the unambiguous means to derive meaning or inferences from what is clearly and determinately stated in the text, rather than from what are ambiguous, indeterminate, and open to interpretation. It also means that problematic passages should be considered in the light of other passages that are definitive and unambiguous, and in the context of the novel and its reality. This guideline does not mean that we may not concretise indeterminacies or infer, say, symbolic meanings from a character or a situation. What it implies is that we should, as far as possible, avoid using such concretisations and symbolic inferences as the defining factor in interpreting a text. An

example from past readings of L. Fernando's novel, *Scorpion Orchid* (1992), will illustrate the significance of this guideline.

In *Scorpion orchid* (henceforth *Scorpion*) one of the characters, a Malay prostitute with the given name of Salmah, passes herself off as a Chinese named Sally. Some critics (e.g. Abdul Majid Nabi Baksh 1981: 52-56) assume that this act of cross-ethnic passing has made her "ethnically ambiguous". Based on this assumption, they interpret Sally as a symbol of multi-ethnic Malaysia, and her rape by multi-racial assailants as symbolic of the violence done to the nation by its racially divided people. To conclude that certain aspects of a text have symbolic value (e.g. that Sally-Salmah symbolises the nation) requires an imaginative leap. Imaginative leaps are undoubtedly important in literary analysis and interpretation. But when the leap is based on a questionable assumption (in this example, that cross-ethnic passing makes a person "ethnically ambiguous"), the interpretation become problematic.

This guideline—to prioritise the unambiguous—requires us to ask the question: Does the text give clear and definite indication that we could or should interpret Sally/Salmah as ethnically ambiguous? This question is addressed this question in my reading of *Scorpion* in the next chapter.

5.2.4   Guideline 4: Prioritise logical analysis

This fourth guideline, to prioritise logical analysis, is based on the empirical experience of Zen practitioners who tell us that when the logical, analytical mind is pushed to its utmost limit, *prajna* or penetrating insight occurs (Ch. III, 3.4.2). One of the aims of prioritising logical analysis in the Zen-based Reading Procedure is to guard against getting attached to interpretations (such as imaginative leaps) without first investigating whether the interpretations are supported by textual evidence and/or logic. The more important aim is to allow the investigative principles and tools to lead to *prajna*-insights into the texts.[1]

Prajna-insights are particularly important for the discovery of hidden discourses in novels designed like cryptic puzzles to engage the reader in literary games (see Hutchinson, *Games Authors Play*, 1983). Game-playing authors typically go to great lengths to hide the core discourse and the key to its discovery. From my experience of reading *Scorpion* and *Flowers in the sky* (henceforth "*Flowers*"), I know that close textual investigation is

required to find the key to the core discourse; and to decipher the key it is necessary to use analytic logic to eliminate false or "red-herring" solutions until I reach a "point of desperation" and am ready to give up. It is at this point of letting go that a solution suddenly offers itself. The theoretical assumption is that if it is truly a *prajna*-insight (and not a wild leap of the imagination), the insight will validate itself by leading the reader to the core discourse and explaining other problematic aspects of the text. The main objective in the design development of the Zen-based Reading Procedure is to create the conditions for these moments to occur more frequently and more consistently by guiding the reader's investigative process. The 3-Reading Strategy is the result of this design objective.

5.3   THE ZEN-BASED 3-READING STRATEGY: OVERVIEW

The 3-Reading Strategy is the Zen-based Reading Procedure's action framework. It integrates within its framework the 4 Reading Guidelines and the 5 Critical Tools. Its most important feature is that it uses the reader's conflict with the text (Key Conflict) as the "break-in" point for engagement with the text. This opening move is based on the principle that intersubjective conflicts open windows of opportunity for dialogue and insight. The aim is to intervene at these conflict points with investigative exercises designed to minimise the effects of appropriative reading habits and to optimise the conditions for insight, which is particularly important for the discovery of the text's hidden discourses. This opening move also turns the Reading Procedure into a highly personalised but systematic investigation of the text. Figure 5.1 is an overview of the 3-Reading Strategy and the action steps in each Reading.
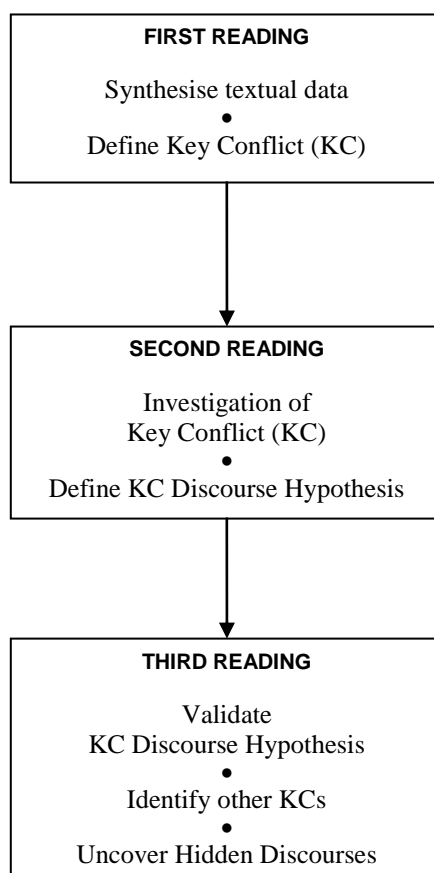
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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│          FIRST READING          │
│                                 │
│      Synthesise textual data    │
│                •                │
│      Define Key Conflict (KC)   │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
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│         SECOND READING          │
│                                 │
│         Investigation of        │
│         Key Conflict (KC)       │
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│     Define KC Discourse Hypothesis │
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│          THIRD READING          │
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│            Validate             │
│       KC Discourse Hypothesis   │
│                •                │
│        Identify other KCs       │
│                •                │
│     Uncover Hidden Discourses   │
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Figure 5.1 Zen-based 3-Reading Strategy: action steps

5.4   CRITICAL TOOLS

The 5 critical tools used in the 3-Reading Strategy are designed to enable the open-minded analytic scrutiny and validation of inferences required for gaining insight into the underlying principles, patterns, and structure of a novel's discourses. The set of critical tools consists of a Break-in Tool (Key Conflict or KC), a Diagnostic Tool (Discourse Hypothesis), and three Forensic Tools (3-Perceptions, Principals and Satellites, and 10-Timeframes).

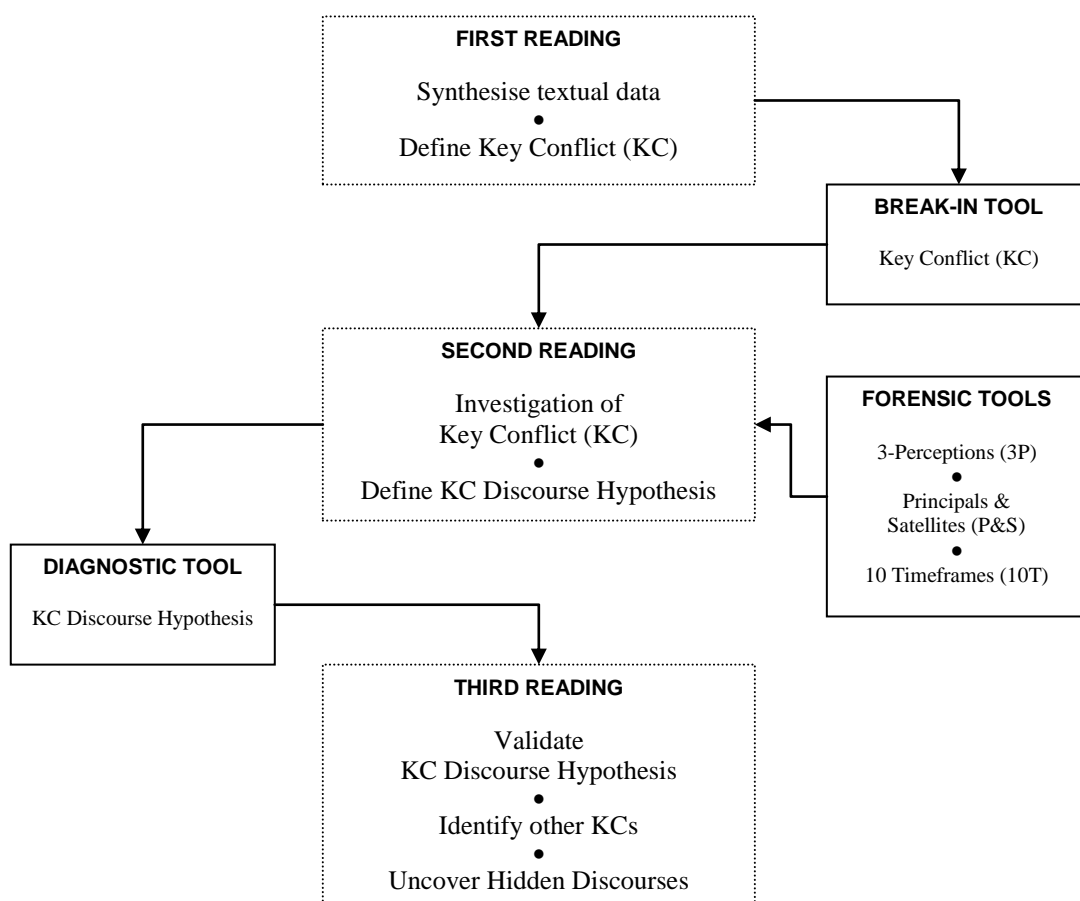Figure 5.2 shows where these critical tools fit in the 3-Reading Strategy.

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              ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
              ┊         FIRST READING           ┊
              ┊                                 ┊
              ┊     Synthesise textual data     ┊
              ┊               •                 ┊
              ┊     Define Key Conflict (KC)    ┊
              └─────────────────────────────────┘
                                      ┌───────────────────────┐
                                      │     BREAK-IN TOOL     │
                                      │                       │
                                      │    Key Conflict (KC)  │
                                      └───────────────────────┘
              ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
              ┊        SECOND READING           ┊    ┌──────────────────────┐
              ┊                                 ┊    │    FORENSIC TOOLS     │
              ┊        Investigation of         ┊    │                      │
              ┊        Key Conflict (KC)        ┊    │  3-Perceptions (3P)  │
              ┊               •                 ┊    │          •           │
              ┊   Define KC Discourse Hypothesis┊    │     Principals &     │
              └─────────────────────────────────┘    │    Satellites (P&S)  │
     ┌──────────────────────┐                        │          •           │
     │    DIAGNOSTIC TOOL    │                        │  10 Timeframes (10T) │
     │                       │                        └──────────────────────┘
     │ KC Discourse Hypothesis│
     └──────────────────────┘
              ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
              ┊         THIRD READING           ┊
              ┊                                 ┊
              ┊           Validate              ┊
              ┊     KC Discourse Hypothesis     ┊
              ┊               •                 ┊
              ┊       Identify other KCs        ┊
              ┊               •                 ┊
              ┊    Uncover Hidden Discourses    ┊
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Figure 5.2 Zen-based 3-Reading Strategy: deployment of critical tools

5.4.1   Break-in Tool: Key Conflict (KC)

The Key Conflict (KC) is called the Break-in Tool because we cannot enter the investigative process without it. The KC is the reader's problem or "quarrel" with the text, and it is identified and defined by the reader after the first reading. This personalises the investigation of the text. The KC need not be complicated or profound. It can be as simple as "I dislike Character X because…." Once identified, the KC is the focus of investigation during the Second Reading.

There are two reasons for starting the textual investigation with the KC. First, it is often easier for us to state what we dislike about a text than to articulate what we think is the theme, make a list of "useful" questions to ask about a text, or find "the question to which the text offers a reply" (Ricoeur 1990: 174). Second, psychologically, our conflict with a particular aspect of the text indicates that our values are being destabilised by it. In the Zen-based Procedure, this destabilisation is used strategically to intervene with a methodology to

redirect us to a closer engagement with the text, and to modify our reading habits. A common reader habit is to "grasp" at aspects of the text that are personally significant to us, to derive from these aspects a hypothesis about the text's discourse, and then to use this hypothesis as a conceptual map with which to interpret the whole text. The tendency is then to look only for other aspects that support the hypothesis and ignore segments that do not. This gives rise to interpretations that may not be "wrong", but may not do the text the justice it deserves. The KC tool forces us to look more closely at what we have grasped. Have we grasped at something that is really in the text? Or have we grasped at something in our own internal "text", which we have projected onto the text?

5.4.2   Diagnostic Tool: KC Discourse Hypothesis

The KC Hypothesis is our hypothesis of the text's discourse, which we arrive at after investigating the KC. The hypothesis can be simple and simply expressed; e.g. "I think the character is made to appear so dislikeable because…." If there is more than one KC, there will be more than one hypothesis. Thus KC1 will result in the KC1 Hypothesis, KC2 in the KC2 Hypothesis, and so on. The KC Hypothesis is a diagnostic tool used in the Third Reading to determine which segments of the text deal with the same issues as the KC, and which do not.

The concept of the KC Hypothesis is based on the assumption that in any given text, there are usually several issues being problematised. These issues may or may not be related to one another. Since the aim of the Reading Procedure is the discovery of discourses, we need a diagnostic device to identify the various issues. It should be noted that the conceptual content of the KC Hypothesis is not imposed from outside the text, but is derived from each reader's personal investigation of the KC. It does not function like a conceptual map, used to find the (quickest) route to a pre-fixed destination. It functions rather like a testing agent, held up against the text as a whole to identify which aspects fit its description, and which do not. It is therefore exploratory in nature and more effective for the discovery of in-text discourses.

5.4.3   The three Forensic Tools: basic critical functions

There are three Forensic Tools. They are called "forensic" tools because they facilitate the close and thorough textual investigation necessary to settle our doubts about our perceptions

and interpretations of the novel. All three tools are borrowed from analytic structures or formulae found in Zen discourses. They are: 3-Perceptions (3P), Principals and Satellites (P&S), and 10-Timeframes (10T)

The tools are always used in combination with one another, and have multiple functions. In this section, I shall present their basic characteristics and functions.

i.   The 3-Perceptions (3P)

The 3-Perceptions (3P) is an adaptation of the Three Natures, used in Zen critical practice to reveal the constructed nature of perceptions and concepts by comparing them against empirical reality to enable the knowledge of ultimate reality (see Ch. IV, 4.5.3). In the Reading Procedure, the 3-Perceptions is a Forensic Tool to check the reliability of perceptions (it may be the reader's, a fictional character's, or a critic's perception) by showing up the contradictions and discrepancies between someone's perception of any aspect of a narrative and the depiction of that aspect as presented in the narrative.

The three perceptions are defined as follows: (1) Imagined Perception is someone's perception of a given fictional aspect or situation; (2) Narrated Perception is the fictional reality, i.e. what the novel actually says about the aspect or situation; (3) Modified Perception is the reader's revised perception, after comparing the Imagined Perception with the Narrated Perception. The formula for the 3-Perceptions is thus Narrated Perception minus Imagined Perception gives us Modified Perception. The Modified Perception is not exactly the same as the Narrated Perception because during the comparison of the Imagined Perception and the Narrated Perception, thoughts and insights will occur to us based on our perspectives, intentions, previous experiences and knowledge. A useful model to bear in mind here is Vasubandhu's metaphor of the consciousness as a stream of seeds constantly changing in response to the influence of the other consciousnesses. Basically, we never see anything in exactly the same way twice, which is probably why Zen philosophers assert that reality is the momentary now. Since the Procedure's investigative aim is to sift out our preconceptions (or fictions) from the novel's fiction, 3P is its basic forensic tool.

ii.   Principals and Satellites (P&S)

The Principals and Satellites (P&S) tool is used in Zen discourses for analysing the functions and relations of parts in a complex whole. It is the application of the Zen principle of non-discrimination to the investigation of complex phenomena. When examining a phenomenon, one has to focus on each of the parts in turn without losing sight of its causal or temporal interrelationship with other parts. The part being studied is the Principal; the parts not focused on are the Satellites. When the investigation shifts to one of the Satellites, the Satellite becomes the Principal and the former Principal becomes a Satellite (see Ch. IV, 4.5.4).

The Zen-based Reading Procedure borrows the P&S tool directly from Zen, without changes. The basic critical function of the P&S tool is to enable the close study of any part of a novel and its relations to the other parts. The "part" may be a character, an event, an issue, a theme, a metaphor, or a thematic or schematic structure. The significance of this tool is that it brings to the analysis of fiction the Zen principle of non-discrimination. What this means is that when we investigate an issue, the P&S tool does not allow us to prioritise any character, segment, event, or episode to the exclusion of others. All aspects related to the issue are to be examined as Principals by turn. This non-discriminatory approach enables us to gain new perspectives and new insights, which are invaluable in the discovery of the novel's discourses. One of the most important aspects of P&S is that it undermines the conventional assumption that in any given narrative there is one central character, and one main plot supported by subplots. Thus although at first glance, the P&S concept seems similar to the idea in western phenomenology of "foreground and background", it has an entirely opposite purpose and effect, as I shall explain.

In any writing task, the writer has to prioritise certain aspects of the narrative and downplay others. In the novel, the pattern of prioritising generally changes from section to section or from scene to scene, giving the phenomenon of "foreground and background". Characters are foregrounded in certain scenes, but are relegated to the background or made to disappear in others. In some narratives, some characters are foregrounded more than others. In mainstream critical approaches, the number of pages taken up by characters is usually accepted as an indication of their relative importance in the narrative because they are so much in the "foreground". Based on this principle, characters are categorised as "major" and "minor"; and the assumption is that major characters play major roles while

minor characters play minor roles. When this assumption is coupled to the privileging of *mimesis* (or verisimilitude to the empirical world) as an aesthetic value, we have what E. M. Forster (1970: 75ff) calls "round" (i.e. more complex, multi-dimensional, and lifelike) and "flat" (i.e. simple, one-dimensional, and less lifelike) characters. A correlation is then perceived between the "lifelikeness" of the characters and the importance of their roles or "dramatic" functions in the novel.

While this formula may work for western novels, it cannot always be applied to local novels. It is particularly inapplicable in the case of *Scorpion* and *Flowers*. For this discussion, I shall use an example from *Flowers*. In *Flowers*, two characters, Venerable Hung and Mr. K., take up more pages than any other character. This may be the reason that critics tend to regard them as the main characters, and the encounter between them as the "main plot". Yet, in the text's account of their encounters, there is no dramatic unfolding of events suggestive of a "plot" in the Aristotelian sense. The stories of Hung and K. are in fact two separate narratives running alongside each other. The two men meet only a few times, each time briefly and, in terms of dramatic movement, inconsequentially. On the other hand, the comic episode (the "Ganesh episode") centring on the fortuitous appearance of a statue of the Hindu god, Ganesh, in Mr. K.'s front garden, has the clearly defined exposition-complication-climax-resolution structure of a plot. Yet critics have treated the Ganesh episode as the "subplot" and the characters involved in it as "minor characters". In this judgment one hears the ghosts of English Literature teachers past, who gave the rule-of-thumb that the comic parts of Shakespearean plays (even comedies) are the subplot. But this may not be the best way to approach the Ganesh episode. Critics in the past, who have treated the episode as a comic subplot, have generally failed to appreciate its importance in the novel's network of discourses (see Ch. VII).

The critical value of the P&S tool in the Zen-based Reading Procedure is that, by requiring us to examine the characters and episodes in turn as Principals, we have a clearer idea of the roles and functions of seemingly minor characters and episodes. This non-discriminating approach enables us as readers to see the novel from an angle that the writer may not have intended. It allows us to cut through the façade that the writer has constructed for our "consumption", and to uncover the discourse or agenda that is consciously or unconsciously hidden behind it. As the Zen-based readings of *Scorpion* and *Flowers* will show, the P&S tool enables some extraordinary insights into the texts' discourses. The reading habit that the P&S tool modifies, then, is the tendency to be blinded, so to speak, by

the glaringly obvious in a narrative—a tendency that may have a great deal to do with the dependence on received, western theories of the novel.

iii.   The 10-Timeframes (10T)

The 10-Timeframes (10T) is a historicist framework used in Zen for analysing phenomenal change and the interrelationship of past, present and future events (see Ch. IV, 4.5.5). Its basic principle is that every moment in the past, present and future has its own past, present and future. The ten timeframes are (1) the past of the past, (2) the present of the past, (3) the future of the past; (4) the past of the present, (5) the present of the present, (6) the future of the present; (7) the past of the future, (8) the present of the future, (9) the future of the future; and (10) the totality of all these times. These time divisions are interdependent—"defined only in terms of each other, not existing absolutely—and yet do not lose order or proportion" (Cleary 1996: 38). This tool is used without change in the Zen-based Reading Procedure.

The 10T's basic critical function is to provide a framework for mapping out timelines of events in order to determine whether and how a character's feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and actions have been influenced by preceding events, and how they then influence future actions and events. The application of 10T is always implicit in analyses of plots and characters. Its critical value is that it develops in the reader a consciousness of the temporal-causal relational dynamics in the development of character, theme, and plot. The historicist consciousness evoked by 10T is a corrective to the usual textbook approach to the analysis of fiction, which tends to treat characters and events as components serving the ends of the plot or theme. This opening sentence of a section called "The Building Blocks of Narratives" in a textbook (Montgomery et al. 1992: 180) designed to develop "advanced reading skills" exemplifies this approach:

> Many different narratives may be built from the same basic components. By components we mean types of character and types of event, and—more abstractly—types of lack and restoration, and ways of getting the narrative from beginning to end.

Arising from this approach is the tendency to "essentialise" characters, labelling them as psychological (or in the case of Malaysian novels, ethnic) "types"; e.g. "impulsive",

"rational", "villainous", "heroic", "Malay", "Indian" and so on. Any development in the character that may be noted is usually related to the plot or the theme. The reading is then plot- and theme-led, resulting in two reading "faults". First, we may overlook subtle details delineating and explaining a character's change of perspective. Secondly, we may interpret a narrative from back to front; that is, we use our knowledge of the plot's ending to infer the theme, and to interpret the novel's beginning and middle based on the inference. For example: some past readings of *Scorpion* are based on the assumption that the four main characters typify the four main ethnic groups in Malaysia. Their going their separate ways after the riots is then interpreted as a hardening of "racial" attitudes presumed to have been there from the beginning. From this interpretation, it is taken for granted that the riots are caused by interethnic animosity. But how much of this interpretation is based on the analysis of events and the characters' development as they unfold in the fictional timeframe? How much is based on the fact that the narrative ends with the four friends going their separate ways? And how much is based on the reader's consciousness that the novel first appeared 7 years after the eruption of interracial violence in Malaysia?

The 10T addresses these issues by examining the episodes separately, and from the viewpoint of the characters. Each episode is always the characters' "present moment". This moment has its own past, which the characters may know only partially; and it has its own future, which they do not know. Each "present moment" is studied to see how it has or has not been affected by the past, and how it affects the future. By taking this approach, we can identify, for instance, the precise moment when the idea that the riots are racially motivated first entered the narrative in *Scorpion*; it is when Peter D'Almeida insists that he is the victim of racist violence.

5.4.4 The three Forensic Tools: combined critical functions

From the above descriptions of the three Zen-based Forensic Tools, it will be noted that their basic critical functions have to with the analysis, deconstruction, and validation of perceptions. In this regard, they reflect their functions in Zen *prajna* development. As was discussed in Chapters III and IV, an important philosophical concern in Zen is the knowledge and analysis of the nature of perception; and the principal aim of *prajna* development is to deconstruct the subject-object polarity, which is held to be the cause of subjective and therefore faulty perceptions.

In the Reading Procedure, the Forensic Tools are always used in combination. Every investigation makes use of the 3P formula because it involves a comparison of someone's perception of reality with the reality presented by the text. The principle of P&S is implicit in the Procedure's investigative methodology; in every investigative exercise only one narrative aspect, segment, character, or issue is focused on. And in the comparison of perception and reality, 10T is implicit because the time factor or element of change is always taken into account. I shall now discuss three basic ways in which these Forensic Tools work together in textual analysis to deconstruct and validate perceptions. I shall illustrate with examples from my reading of *Scorpion*.

i. Validating the reader's perception of aspects of the text

The validation of the reader's perception of an aspect of the text is always necessary when investigating a Key Conflict (KC) after the First Reading. In this example, my KC is the text's depiction of Santinathan's character. I do not understand why he has to work as a labourer after his expulsion from university and my perception is that it is a clumsy narrative device to make him fit the Malaysian stereotype of the Indian labourer. This perception has to be validated by the Second Reading, when I use the three Forensic Tools in combination, as follows.

- P&S is the principal tool in the investigation of the KC because I re-read only the segments where Santinathan figures in the narrative.
- 10T is implied throughout because as I re-read the Santinathan segments, I note the sequence of his experiences, and contextualise them in the fictional timeframe.
- 3P is applied after the reading, when I compare my Imagined Perception (my perception of the text's depiction of Santinathan based on the First Reading) with the Narrated Perception (what the text actually says about Santinathan based on the Second Reading). The result is my Modified Perception (my revised perception of the text's depiction of Santinathan).

ii. Validating Character A's perception of Character B

In investigating a KC Discourse Hypothesis (Third Reading), it is sometimes necessary to ascertain whether one fictional character's perception of another character is valid. In the

example that follows, my KC Discourse Hypothesis (derived from my Modified Perception of the depiction of Santinathan's character) is that the text's discourse is about the maintenance of ethnic identity; about how those who feel that they are in the centre of an ethnic group want to control those they perceive to be marginal by either driving them out (as Santinathan does with Neela) or forcing them to conform (as he fails to do). I seem to find confirmation for this hypothesis in the episode where Sally accuses Sabran of showing concern for her only after knowing that she is Malay and not earlier, when he was still under the impression that she was Chinese. My question is: Is Sally's perception of Sabran correct? Is Sabran a Malay-male chauvinist? To validate Sally's perception of Sabran, I examine whether it is supported by what the text actually says about Sabran.

- P&S is used to investigate only those segments relating to how Sabran thinks about Sally.
- 10T is a crucial tool here because I am investigating the sequence of events from the time Sabran finds out about Sally's disappearance to the time she makes her accusation.
- 3P is applied after the reading, where the Imagined Perception is Sally's perception of Sabran; the Narrated Perception is what the text says about Sabran's motives for looking for Sally; and the Modified Perception is my conclusion of the validity of Sally's perception of Sabran.

I discover from this investigation that Sally is mistaken about Sabran. Sabran had insisted on looking for Sally as soon as he learned of her disappearance, i.e. *before* he knew her true ethnic identity. My KC Discourse Hypothesis is not necessarily disproved; but the investigation has alerted me to the fact that from Sally's point of view, it is Sabran, the western-educated Malay, who is marginal because he has diluted his Malay identity by failing to be a good Muslim. This leads to the discovery of another discourse in the novel; namely that in relation to the nation as a whole, it is the English-educated (and not just the non-Malays) who are marginal.

iii.   Validating a character's perception of the novel's reality

Very often, in order to determine a novel's theme or discourse, critics depend on what a character has to say about the fictional reality, or the reality presented to us in the novel. An example is Peter D'Almeida's assertion that the men who had assaulted him were motivated

by racist sentiments. This assertion has never been challenged by past critics, who have tended to assume that the novel is about interethnic conflict. This makes Peter the "spokesman" for the novelist.

In the Zen-based Reading Procedure, we have to be sure that Peter is indeed the novel's spokesman. We therefore have to compare his perception of the fictional world's reality with the text's presentation of it. Based on my observation that Santinathan is almost unnaturally cruel to his own sister and that there is a conflict between Salmah and Sabran, I am inclined to the view that conflict and violence in the novel have more to do with a basic desire to control others than with race. To settle my doubts, I examine how the text depicts violence and conflict in relation to ethnicity.

- P&S is applied in focusing on all episodes depicting violence and conflict, e.g. the riots in the city; acts of violence in the story proper as well as in the excerpts from traditional and historical texts interspersed throughout the narrative.

- 10T is an important tool in this investigation because the inclusion of traditional and historical texts alluded to in the novel makes it necessary for me to place the novel's discourse in the context of the historically "real" world, to determine whether and when in the recorded history of the region we find evidence of interethnic conflict and violence. At the same time, the investigation becomes New Historicist[2], because the novelist's inclusion of those particular historical texts (and not any other) represents a particular view or interpretation of history, and I must ask what the implications of this interpretation of history are for the novel's discourse.

- 3P is applied after the investigation, where Imagined Perception is Peter's perception of the fictional world's reality; Narrated Perception is how the text presents the reality of the fictional world; and Modified Perception is my conclusion about the validity of Peter's perception of reality after comparing Imagined Perception with Narrated Perception.

The investigation shows that in the text's depiction of its reality, the violence of the riots has more to do with anti-British or anti-colonial sentiments than with interethnic conflicts; that there are more mentions of intra-ethnic violence than inter-ethnic violence (e.g. the excerpt from the *Hikayat Abdullah* of someone being threatened with a bamboo

flogging is actually a report of how a Chinese secret society in Singapore recruits its members); and that most acts of violence are gratuitous and idiopathic, like the "multi-racial" rape of Salmah and the torture of Peter's uncle during the Japanese Occupation. I have to conclude that Peter's perception of reality is contradicted by the novel's depiction of reality. This conclusion, taken together with my earlier conclusion after reading the Sally-Sabran segments and the Santinathan-Neela segments, suggests that there is another discourse in the novel, and it probably has to do with the problematisation of Peter's perception of reality, which is shared by several of the other characters.

I might then ask, why have past critics never challenged Peter's perception? Is their acceptance of Peter's view based on extra-textual, historical fact? But since the question is best answered with a New Historicist approach, I shall leave the research to others. The primary concern of the Zen-based Reading Procedure is the application of investigative methods that can lead to the insightful discovery of a novel's discourses. Critics who wish to take a New Historicist or any other theory-guided approach to the novel will be able however to use either the Reading Procedure as a whole, or the 3-Reading Strategy together with its critical tools, or just the forensic tools, to perform their analyses.

The five critical tools just presented are used to check, correct, and validate perceptions, regardless of whether the perceptions are those of the reader, the fictional characters, or the interpretive community. In all instances, the perceptions are checked against the text's reality. The advantage of having "job-specific" critical tools for validating perceptions and hypotheses is that the appropriative reading habit of jumping to conclusions and rushing to closure can be systematically eliminated, as the following step-guide to the implementation of the 3-Reading Strategy shows.

5.5   THE 3-READING STRATEGY: STEP-GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

The 3-Reading Strategy is a series of investigative tasks structured to modify reading habits by allowing the text to "correct" the reader's interpretations. The term "3-Reading" refers to the synthesise-investigate-validate format of the Strategy (see Ch. IV 4.5.1). Figure 5.3 provides a visual overview of the 3-Reading Strategy.

FIRST READING	SECOND READING	THIRD READING
OBJECTIVES Synthesise textual data ● Define Key Conflict (KC)	**OBJECTIVES** Investigate Key Conflict (KC) ● Define KC Discourse Hypothesis	**OBJECTIVES** Validate KC Discourse Hypothesis ● Identify other KCs ● Uncover Hidden Discourses
INVESTIGATION TYPE None	**INVESTIGATION TYPE** One-pointed investigation	**INVESTIGATION TYPE** Scan & validate
ACTION STEPS 1. Read novel normally 2. Note segments or aspects of the novel that evoke sense of conflict 3. Define Key Conflict (KC)	**ACTION STEPS** 1. Describe Imagined Perception 2. Re-read KC segments 3. Describe Narrated Perception 4. Describe Modified Perception based on comparison of Imagined Perception and Narrated Perception 5. Derive KC Discourse Hypothesis based on Modified Perception	**ACTION STEPS** 1. Re-read segments resembling KC 2. Compare segments with KC 3. Filter out if similar 4. Formulate KC2 if different 5. Take new KC2 through Action Steps of Second Reading 6. Repeat till non-conflict is reached and/or hidden discourse uncovered
CRITICAL TOOLS None	**FORENSIC TOOLS** 3-Perceptions (3P) Principals & Satellites (P&S) 10-Timeframe (10T)	**DIAGNOSTIC TOOL** KC Discourse Hypothesis

Figure 5.3 Overview of 3-Reading strategy: readings and components

5.5.1   First Reading: Define Key Conflict (KC)

The objectives of the First Reading are (1) to synthesise the textual data; and (2) to define the Key Conflict (KC), so that we have our Break-in Tool to enter the Second Reading. The first objective is achieved naturally when we read a novel for the first time, because the mind is in appropriative mode. We are busy synthesising textual data (e.g. the fictional setting, the cast of characters) in order to know what the novel is about, what happens to the characters, and how the story ends.

To achieve the second objective, we need three action steps. The first step is to be mindful of aspects of the novel that evoke in us a feeling of discomfort or a sense of conflict during the reading. The primary symptom of conflict is the urge to question, criticise, or reject. These are signals that our personal life-discourses—our knowledge, experience, convictions, assumptions, and values—are being questioned, threatened, or criticised by the text. Since the text is always an "other" to us, it is natural to be "critical" of the text when we think the text is criticising us. The more culturally or ideologically "other" the text is, the

more urgent will be our desire to be critical. These critical urges are good points of entry for closer engagement with the text, for it is when we are most disturbed that the text is most "meaningful" to us. These critical urges should not be repressed or "held against" the text through the rest of the reading. We should not ask why we have these critical urges. We should merely note where and when they occur (by making marginal notes or keeping a "conflict record"), and set our criticisms aside for reflection later.

The second step is to identify the Key Conflict (KC) or "quarrel" with the text. This is the first conflict that comes to mind when we finish reading and review what disturbs us most about the text.

The third step is to define the Key Conflict (KC). This can be done by formulating a direct question to the text (e.g. "Why did you depict Character X in such a racist way?"). With the formulation of this question, we have defined our first Key Conflict (KC1), and created our personal Break-in Tool for the Second Reading. Note that the numbering of KCs is necessary because we will encounter other KCs later, which are then numbered KC2, KC3 and so on.

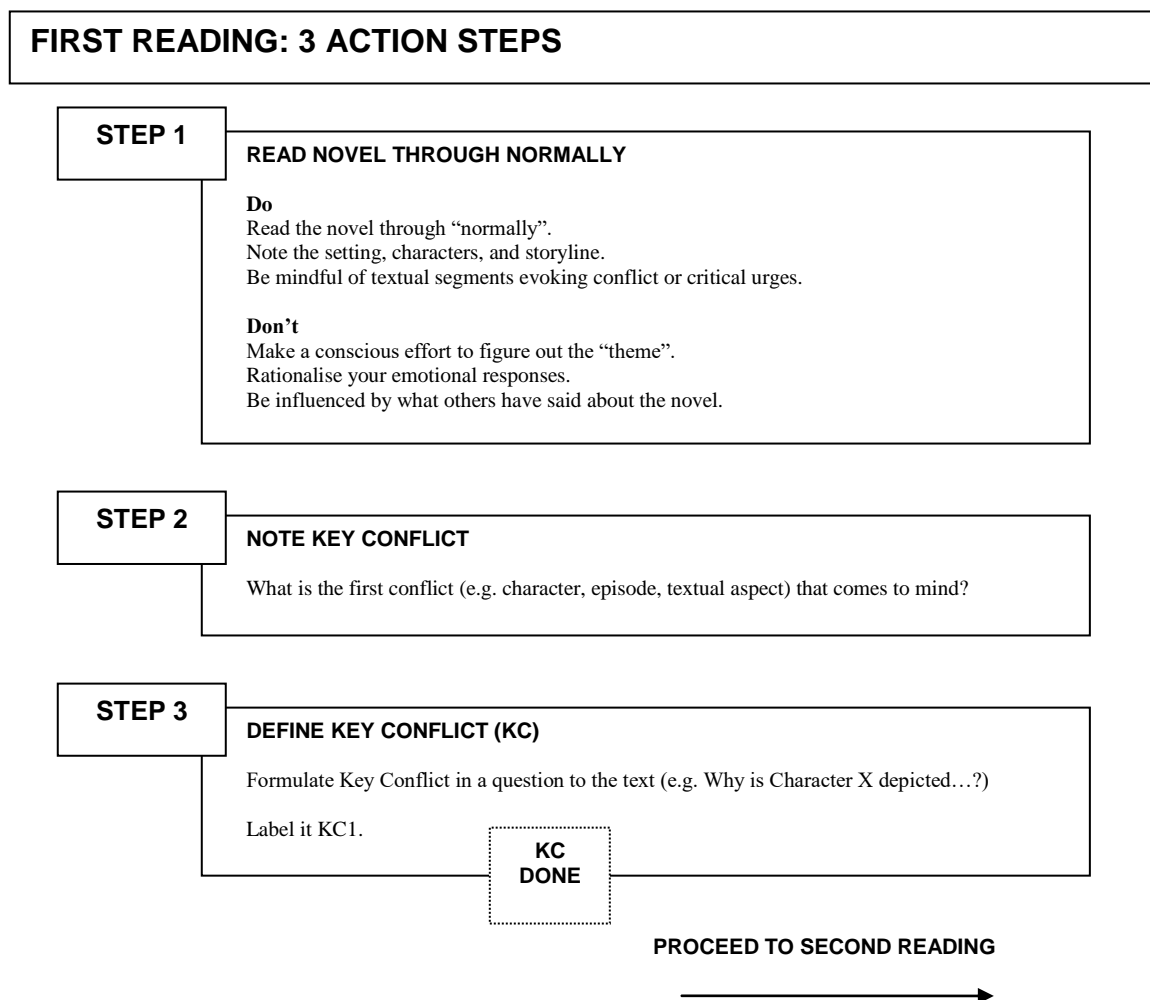Figure 5.4 summarises the action steps just discussed.

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│ FIRST READING: 3 ACTION STEPS                                     │
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STEP 1

READ NOVEL THROUGH NORMALLY

Do
Read the novel through "normally".
Note the setting, characters, and storyline.
Be mindful of textual segments evoking conflict or critical urges.

Don't
Make a conscious effort to figure out the "theme".
Rationalise your emotional responses.
Be influenced by what others have said about the novel.

STEP 2

NOTE KEY CONFLICT

What is the first conflict (e.g. character, episode, textual aspect) that comes to mind?

STEP 3

DEFINE KEY CONFLICT (KC)

Formulate Key Conflict in a question to the text (e.g. Why is Character X depicted…?)

Label it KC1.

KC DONE

PROCEED TO SECOND READING

→

Figure 5.4 Zen-based 3-Reading Strategy: Step-guide to First Reading

5.5.2   Second Reading: Formulate KC Discourse Hypothesis

The objectives of the Second Reading are (1) to conduct a one-pointed investigation of the KC; and (2) to formulate a KC Discourse Hypothesis. The KC Discourse Hypothesis is the Diagnostic Tool we shall take with us into the Third Reading to discover other discourses.

The one-pointed investigation of the KC1 in the Second Reading is the most crucial part of the 3-Reading Strategy, because it is necessary to make sure that the KC Discourse Hypothesis is not based on misperceptions or oversight. To conduct the investigation, the following steps are taken to put into operation the Forensic Tools: 3-Perceptions (3P), Principals and Satellites (P&S), and the 10-Timeframes (10T).

1.   Describe the Imagined Perception of the KC. The Imagined Perception is the impression formed during the First Reading. (See example in Ch. VI, 6.3.1)

2. Describe the Narrated Perception based on one-pointed investigation of KC. The Narrated Perception is what the text actually says about the character or situation in question. Using the P&S Tool, seek out only the segments of the text directly related to the KC, and re-read them carefully. Using the 10T, arrange the events in chronological order if they occur in the texts as flashbacks or flash-forwards. This helps us to get a clearer picture of how the situation or character develops in relation to other events in the fictional timeframe. (See example in Ch. VI, 6.3.2.)

3. Describe the Modified Perception based on a comparison of the Imagined Perception and the Narrated Perception. The Modified Perception profile is the revised perception of the KC. It is not the same as the Narrated Perception because it includes insights gained during the Second Reading. (See example in Ch. VI, 6.3.3.)

4. Derive a KC Discourse Hypothesis based on the Modified Perception. The KC Discourse Hypothesis is a simple statement of what we think is the main issue being problematised in the KC segments. Single-issue Discourse Hypotheses are preferable because we are going to use this Hypothesis as a Diagnostic Tool in the Third Reading to uncover new KCs and discourses.

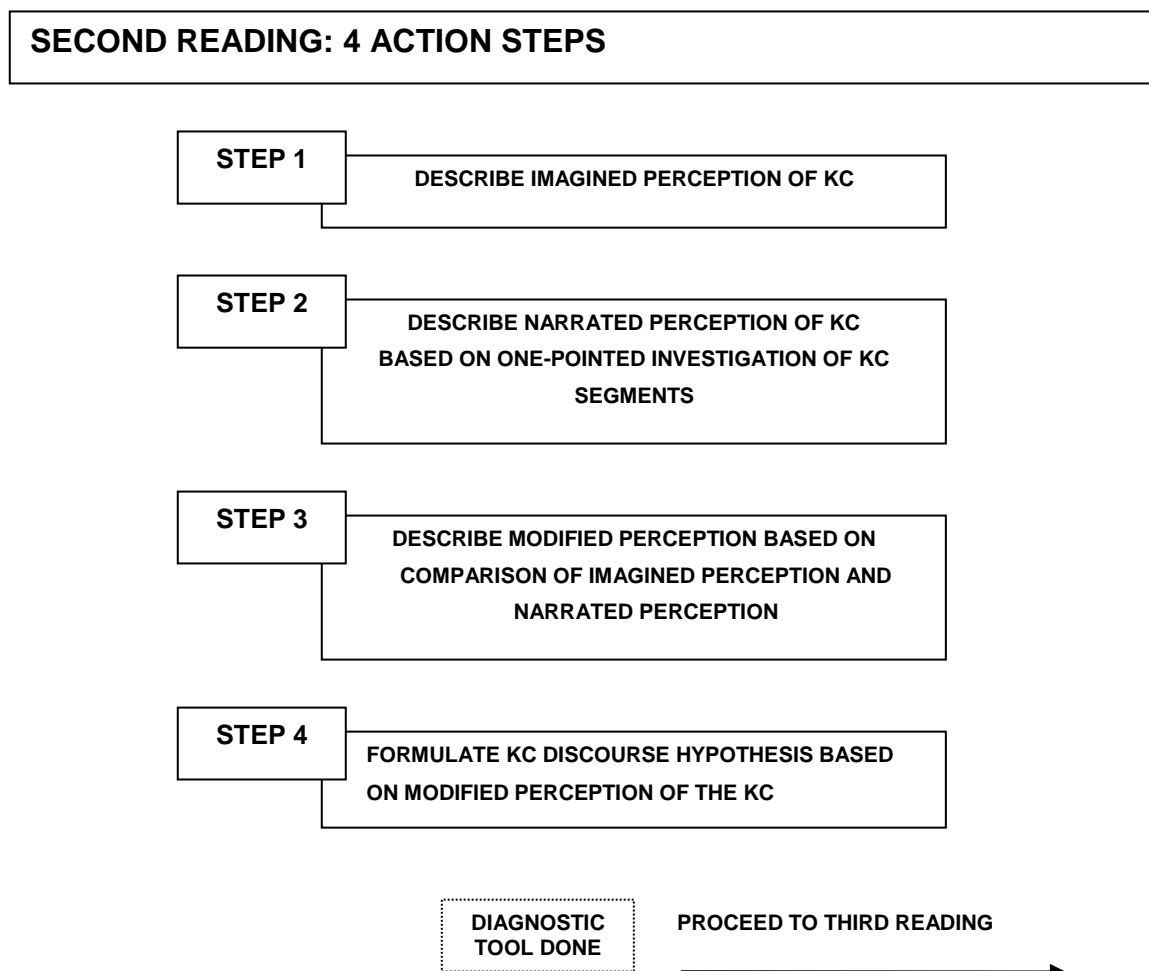   Figure 5.5 summarises what has just been discussed.

SECOND READING: 4 ACTION STEPS

STEP 1 — DESCRIBE IMAGINED PERCEPTION OF KC

STEP 2 — DESCRIBE NARRATED PERCEPTION OF KC BASED ON ONE-POINTED INVESTIGATION OF KC SEGMENTS

STEP 3 — DESCRIBE MODIFIED PERCEPTION BASED ON COMPARISON OF IMAGINED PERCEPTION AND NARRATED PERCEPTION

STEP 4 — FORMULATE KC DISCOURSE HYPOTHESIS BASED ON MODIFIED PERCEPTION OF THE KC

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL DONE — **PROCEED TO THIRD READING** →

Figure 5.5 Zen-based 3-Reading Strategy: Step-guide to Second Reading

5.5.3 Third Reading: Discover new and hidden discourses

The objectives in the Third Reading are (1) to validate our KC Discourse Hypothesis; (2) discover new KCs and discourses; and (3) uncover the text's "hidden" discourse. Proving our KC Discourse Hypotheses correct is of minor importance. If the hypothesis is wrong we must simply abandon it. This does not mean that we have to start all over again; during the process of validation the text will be "correcting" us and giving us the basis for formulating either a modified or an entirely new Discourse Hypothesis. Our main concern is to discover new KCs and discourses, and ultimately to uncover the text's "hidden" discourse. The process of validating one KC Discourse Hypothesis and discovering new KCs in the process is done in the following steps.

1.   Use the KC Discourse Hypothesis to identify other segments in the text (e.g. episodes, characters, dialogue) resembling the KC.

2.   Conduct one-pointed investigation of identified segments, using the Forensic Tools, 3-Perceptions, Principals and Satellites, and 10-Timeframes. We are effectively taking these identified segments through the steps of the Second Reading. Here the 3-Perception (3P) principle is used, where the Discourse Hypothesis is the Imagined Perception; the outcome of the one-pointed investigation is the Narrated Perception; and the revised Discourse Hypothesis is the Modified Perception.

3.   Compare the Narrated Perception resulting from the one-pointed investigation with the KC Discourse Hypothesis. If they match, the KC Discourse Hypothesis is validated. The segments that have been investigated are filtered out and classified as part of that KC Discourse (e.g. KC1 Discourse).

4.   In the case of the segments that do not match, variations and differences mean that the investigated segments are probably part of another discourse, which may or may not be related to the KC1 Discourse. The task then is to convert the problematics (variations and differences) uncovered during the one-pointed investigation into new KC Discourse Hypotheses (e.g. KC2 Discourse Hypothesis) and use these hypotheses to explore discover new discourses by following Steps 1-4. (For an example of the process of deriving new Discourse Hypotheses, see Figure 6. 2 in Ch. VI, 6.5.) The process is repeated until we reach a point of non-conflict or until we have uncovered what we think is the novel's hidden discourse.

Figure 5.6 summarises the action steps just discussed.

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│  THIRD READING: 4 BASIC ACTION STEPS                         │
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│  STEP 1     ├────┬──────────────────────────────────────────┐
└─────────────┘    │   IDENTIFY SEGMENTS RESEMBLING KC        │
                   └──────────────────────────────────────────┘
┌─────────────┐
│  STEP 2     ├────┬──────────────────────────────────────────┐
└─────────────┘    │   CONDUCT ONE-POINTED INVESTIGATION OF   │
                   │   IDENTIFIED SEGMENTS                    │
                   └──────────────────────────────────────────┘
┌─────────────┐
│  STEP 3     ├────┬──────────────────────────────────────────┐
└─────────────┘    │   COMPARE SEGMENTS WITH KC SEGMENT       │
                   │   IF SIMILAR, HYPOTHESIS IS VALIDATED.   │
                   │   FILTER OUT                             │
                   └──────────────────────────────────────────┘
┌─────────────┐
│  STEP 4     ├────┬──────────────────────────────────────────┐
└─────────────┘    │   IF DIFFERENT, FORMULATE NEW KC         │
                   │   (e.g. KC2) DISCOURSE HYPOTHESES        │
                   │                                          │
                   │   USE NEW DISCOURSE HYPOTHESES TO        │
                   │   DISCOVER NEW & HIDDEN DISCOURSES       │
                   │   BY REPEATING STEPS 1-4                 │
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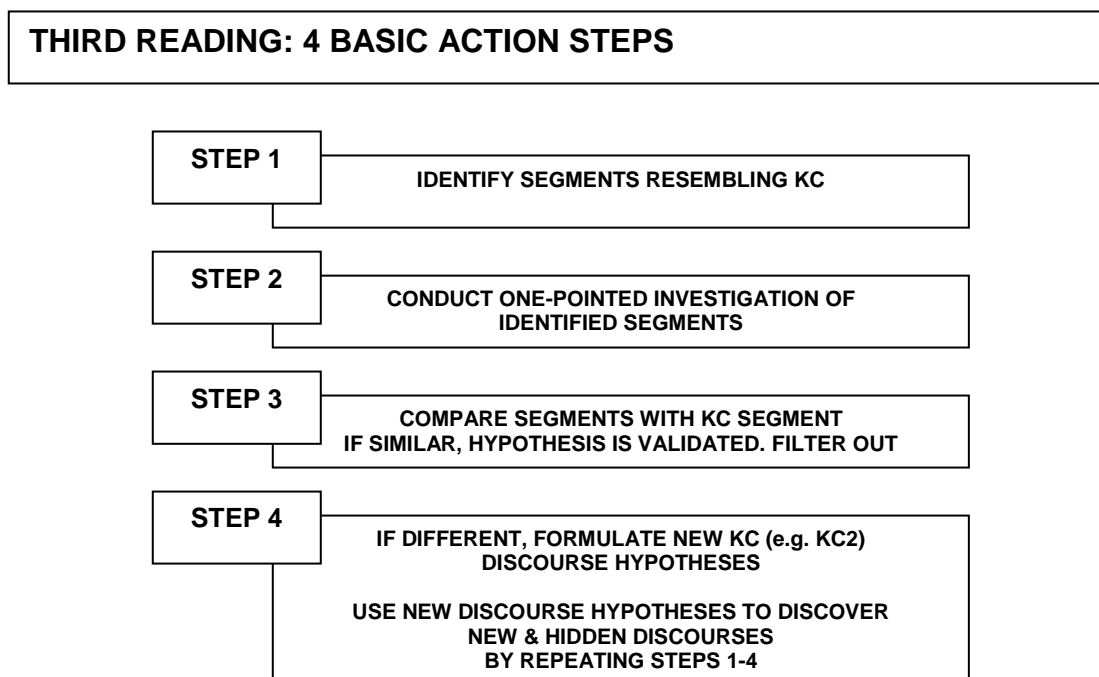
Figure 5.6 Zen-based Three-Reading Strategy: Step-guide to Third Reading

The rationale for identifying segments in the text resembling the Key Conflict (KC) the first move in the Third Reading is that once we have developed a KC Discourse Hypothesis, we are likely to be attached to it and to succumb to the urge to look for and "appropriate" evidence to support the hypothesis. In this respect, the KC Discourse Hypothesis may be said to replace the theories, structures, and values in other reading approaches which the reader uses as conceptual maps or templates against which to "measure" the text. It is true that in our Reading Procedure the Discourse Hypothesis is used to seek out segments that seem to fit. But as soon as the segments are found to fit, they are filtered out and packed away as part of a validated Discourse. Our attention is always turned to those aspects that do not fit. It is in this way that the KC Discourse Hypothesis, in its function as a Diagnostic Tool, is different from theories and value structures: it is an antidote to self-confirmatory readings; and it is geared to the discovery of hidden discourses.

The process is less complicated than it sounds or looks. It is a matter of identifying and filtering out the Discourses one by one. The task gets easier as we proceed because there is less of the text to investigate. Ideally, the process of discovering discourses goes on until we have no more questions to ask the text, at least for the time being. Non-conflict does not mean that we have uncovered all the text's discourses. Another reader who enters the text with different conflicts or from a different angle will uncover other discourses, or other aspects of the same discourses. Alternatively, we ourselves may come back to the text in a

few months' or years' time and find more discourses. If we use Vasubandhu's theory of perception to explain this, it is because new habit- and memory-seeds acquired in the interim would have altered the composition and nature of our consciousness and therefore our perception of ourselves and the world.

5.6   SUMMARY

This chapter introduced and explained the Zen-based Conflict-to-Insight Reading Procedure. I began by giving some background information as to how the findings of the theoretical research in Chapters II, III, and IV influenced the concept and design of the Procedure. I then established that the Procedure is designed as a basic approach to analysing works of fiction. Its primary aim is to modify reading habits and create conditions favourable for the experience of *prajna*-insight, in order to enable and facilitate the discovery of a text's discourse.

The Reading Procedure offers three sets of critical aids. The first set consists of four Reading Guidelines, which determine the general approach to texts as well as the structure, scope and focus of the reading experience. The second set is the 3-Reading Strategy, which is the Procedure's key feature. Based on the rationale that conflicts are windows of opportunity for intersubjective understanding, the Strategy is designed to start the process of textual investigation with the identification of the reader's Key Conflict (KC) with the text. The 3-Reading Strategy then intervenes with an investigative methodology that leads the reader away from the desire for meaning and closure, and reorients him/her towards a close and thorough investigation of the text, which gives the text a chance to "correct" the reader's perceptions.

Close and thorough investigation is facilitated by the Reading Procedure's third set of critical aids: 5 critical tools. The first tool is the Break-In Tool, the Key Conflict (KC), which is identified by the reader and which enables the reader to enter the Second Reading. The second tool is the Diagnostic Tool, which is the KC Discourse Hypothesis. The KC Discourse Hypothesis is formulated by the reader, and it is used to discover new KCs and discourses in the Third Reading. The other three critical tools are Forensic Tools, called 3-Perceptions (3P), Principals and Satellites (P&S), and 10-Timeframes (10T). Borrowed from Zen discourses on *prajna* development, these forensic tools enforce an approach to fiction that differs sharply from other approaches, which may be theme-, plot, character-, or theory-

led. This chapter's presentation of their basic critical functions, and how they are used singly and in combination, explains the way they change the nature and foci of textual investigation—from the analysis and deconstruction of the text's fiction to the analysis and deconstruction of the reader's perceptions or "fictions" about the text.

A step-guide to the implementation of the 3-Reading Strategy explains how the Strategy and the 5 critical tools are used together to induce the reader to engage in a "reverse" hermeneutic exercise, which basically involves the analysis, deconstruction and abandonment of his/her own faulty perceptions, so that the text's discourses either will reveal themselves, or, if hidden, will be discerned through *prajna*-insight. The task of the Zen-based Reading Procedure is accomplished when the text's discourse(s) have been laid bare, leaving the text open to further investigation and assessment of its ideological, stylistic, and aesthetic values by other, theory-led approaches. In practice, the reader may stop the investigation as soon as his/her personal Key Conflict has been resolved.

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[1] The occurrence of *prajna*-insight is well known and well documented in fields of knowledge involving research and intense logical investigation, for example the natural sciences and practical problem-solving. They are also known in reading practice, but are undocumented because "insight" tends to be treated as random and inexplicable. (See discussion in Ch. III, 3.4.3.)

[2] Lois Tyson (1999, p. 278) explains the difference between "historical" and "historicist" thus: "Traditional historians ask, 'What happened?' And 'What does the event tell us about history?' In contrast new historicists ask, 'How has the event been interpreted?' and 'What do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?'"