Readers and Reading as Interaction with Literary Texts

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The concept of reading as the interaction between the reader and the text makes it possible to examine some less studied dimensions of the reading process and the literary experience. It centres attention on what the readers do when they actually read and on their own contribution to the mental representation of the text. Such a concept also helps to understand the reader's interaction with the electronic texts.

To describe reading as the process of the reader's interaction with texts is common practice in both literary theory, especially in reader-response criticism, and psychology of reading. By including both the reader and the text, or the literary text if that be the case, such conceptualisation of reading makes it possible to focus on different aspects of the interaction, the reader's part in producing meaning in the process of reading conceived as either textual world or the mental representation of the text, the process of reading itself, and the potential of the text to generate various meanings, if read. When attention is paid to individual aspects of the reader's activity during linear reading of print-based texts and the challenges of different formats of digital texts, it is easy to understand why reading is now considered to be the most complex form of human linguistic behaviour. In a way, the anticipations of the complexity of the processes of literary reading can be traced to the earliest studies of some British critics in the 1920s.[1]

The interest in readers first started with the endeavours to construct a more persuasive defence of the importance of literature by claiming for it a distinct communicative power. In order to present a persuasive argument for such a power, the reader's interaction with literary texts was conceptualised as a special form of communication between the writer and the reader in which the writer's artistic experience was transferred to

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the reader. The fundamental belief: 'For evidently, whatever else literature may be, communication it must be: no communication, no literature' was shared by a number of authors[2] of the time. As long as the critics were interested simply in communicating literary experiences in abstract terms, most frequently without additionally qualifying them as aesthetic[3], such a transfer seemed to be unproblematic. However, when they turned to a detailed discussion of the activities of readers in interaction with texts, the qualities of their literary experiences and the conditions of the transfer of artist's experiences into the reader's mind, there appeared numerous problems, and the complexity of the reading processes as a linguistic transfer of artistic experiences started to seem less easy to conceptualise.

As early as 1921 Percy Lubbock spoke about the problems of literary experience as 'the shadowy and fantasmal form' of a book which

> melts and shifts in memory; even at the moment when the last page is turned, a great part of the book, its finer detail, is already vague and doubtful. […] A cluster of impressions, some clear points emerging from a mist of uncertainty, this is all we can possess, generally speaking, in the name of a book. The experience of reading it has left something behind, and these relics we call by the book's name. (Lubbock 1)

He also came to observe that in reading readers tended to treat a book as a piece of life around them by selecting elements that struck them the most. Creation of this kind is, in his view, daily practice:

> [W]e are continually piecing together our fragmentary experience of the people around us and moulding their images in thought. It is the way in which we make our world; partially, imperfectly, very much at haphazard, but still perpetually, everybody deals with his experience as an artist. (Lubbock 7)

The parallel between the process of reading and the daily activities of imperfect perception and understanding lead Lubbock to search for the possibilities of overcoming this common feature of literary reading providing the reader with such an unreliable basis for talking about literature in more attentive ways of reading literary texts.

The reader's tendency to choose individual textual clues from literary texts in accordance with their own interests is not the only factor limiting the potential of what texts have to offer. In her frequently reprinted essay *The Handling of Words*, Vernon Lee perceives the communication of literary experiences from the writer to the reader as a struggle between the thinking and feeling of the writer and the thinking and feeling of the reader (Lee 65). She tries to find out why it is so difficult for writers to persuade the readers and manipulate them to accept writers' words. She

believes the answer lies in the reader's different minds: The writer makes his book not merely out of his own mind's content, but out of the reader's mind too, so the impact of literature depends on the greater or lesser similarity of their minds. The writer has to find out how to manipulate 'single impressions, single ideas and emotions stored up in the Reader's mind and deposited there by no act of the Writer's' (Lee 1). She recommends that writers should not follow their descriptions in the order that is familiar to themselves, but rather endeavour to consider the reader and the possibility that the unfamiliarity of the author's thoughts could be distracted by the reader's own different thoughts and feelings (64). She emphasises the inevitable dependence of the results of reading on the reader's own previous experience and knowledge by drawing a parallel between the readers' own meanings and understanding of texts and the sound of the strings of a piano on which the writer/pianist can only play/press the keys. In this way, she also raises the question of the inevitable difference between what is offered by the writer in the text and what the reader gets out of it as literary experiences. The description of what exactly readers talk about when discussing literary texts and the question of the importance of the readers' own contribution in reading will continue to attract critical attention.

The turn to the reader in the 1970s

The questions about the conditions and qualities of readers' interaction with literary texts in processes of assembling textual meanings were reopened by numerous writers of criticism in the 1970s when readers' interaction with texts became the critical preoccupation. The interest in the reader's productive role in the construction of meaning has led to a vast body of scholarship about readers and reading recognising the importance of the readers' part in reading. Let us just have a look at some selected reader-oriented descriptions. In his preface to *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, Stanley Fish observes: 'Meaning is an event, something that happens, not on the page, where we are accustomed to look for it, but in the interaction between the flow of print (or sound) and the active mediating consciousness of a reader-hearer.' (Fish x)

The event of reading seems the most difficult concept of the reader's interaction with texts to be presented by Wolfgang Iser in his *Act of Reading*:

> Reading is an activity that is guided by the text; this must be processed by the reader who is then, in turn, affected by what he has processed. It is difficult to describe this interaction, not least because the literary critic has very little to go to on

in the way of guidelines, and, of course, the two partners are far easier to analyse than is the event that takes place between them. (Iser 163)

Like Vernon Lee previously, Iser emphasises the role of the preexistent content and experience in the reader's mind in the production of textual meaning:

[T]he structure of the text sets off a sequence of mental images which lead to the text translating itself into the reader's consciousness. The actual content of these mental images will be coloured by the reader's existing stock of experience, which acts as a referential background against which the unfamiliar can be conceived and processed. (Iser 38)

In *The Structure of Literary Understanding* Stein Haugom Olsen states that in order to understand literary texts readers must be able to use their extratextual knowledge from daily life to recognise similar presentations of situations in literary texts:

It is a common feature of literary works that they invoke the reader's knowledge of non-literary aspects of the world. To understand a literary work a reader must be able to transfer distinctions and concepts from ordinary living to works of literature. (Olsen 96)

The ways in which readers use extraliterary knowledge and experience in their interaction with texts to build around them a 'scenario, a text world, a set of states of affairs, in which that text makes sense' (Enkvist 7) seem to elude a detailed description of 'what elements in the contents of the reader's mind' and in which ways contribute to their understanding. It is taken for granted that readers can imagine themselves in situations very different from the ones they are in; they can create images of the sensations they could have and become aware, in part, of the meaning they should see in them, but it is obviously difficult to conceive how all this comes true. Countless studies are devoted to an experimental examination of a wide range of different personal characteristics and textual features that could be considered factors influencing readerly interaction with texts. Thus for instance empirical research of Rand Spiro (313) suggests the role of the reader's prior knowledge at several stages of reading: in receiving individual parts of stories, in selecting what is remembered, in the attribution of alien elements and distortion of existent ones and, of course, in the final formulation of the reader's coherent semantic representation of the text. Later research tries to include even more specific aspects of reading. The two joint projects of Douglas Vipond and Russell Hunt (Vipond and Hunt; Hunt and Vipond) discuss the possibilities of different modes

of literary reading as resulting from changed readerly attitudes, or rather interests. They also describe the direct impact of such changing attitudes on the quality of reading and evaluation. Based on extensive research with actual readers and substantiated by valid empirical evidence, such analyses offer new insights into the process of reading and contribute to a more realistic picture of readers' interaction with texts; however, they still cannot satisfactorily answer the questions about the reader's actual idiosyncratic use of their knowledge in interaction with texts.

The examination of individual textual features, i.e., of the elements in the text that provoke readers' world-building around the text and the details in the built-up world in the reader's imagination, at first seems to promise better results when it follows the linearity of readers' interaction. Advances in linguistics and discourse analysis have opened up new vistas for linguistic analysis of textual features triggering various responses and structures organising readers' perceptions of individual text items (see Fowler) and provided interesting insights into the functioning of literary texts as a special form of socially agreed speech acts (see Pratt; Ong). They have revealed important dimensions of the social embeddedness of readerly interactions with texts, the various influences on such interaction, and a new orientation in analytical studies supporting intense self-reflection about reading. Examination of individual properties of literary texts that are responsible for the various experiential states of readers continues to attract critical attention.

A more detailed analysis of such features is attempted in the project by Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon in their empirical study of the reader's processing of narrative, *Psychonarratology: Foundations for the Empirical Study of Literary Response* (see Bortolussi and Dixon). Their analysis of the reader's interaction with narratives is based on an interdisciplinary use of insights of narratology, literary studies, linguistics, epistemology, and findings of cognitive psychology and discourse processing based on extensive experimental work with manipulated texts aiming to establish the impact of individual textual features on experimental readers. In order to scrutinise individual textual effects on readers, the study maintains a strict distinction between the use of the term 'textual feature' as referring to anything in the text that can be objectively identified, and 'reader's constructions' for readers' experience as events and representations happening in the minds of readers, including various kinds of subjectively constructed mental representations. They reject the frequent earlier assumption that the author's intended message is unambiguously coded in the text and that the reader's task is simply to decode this message; on the contrary, they view the text as a stimulus to which the readers respond.

Readerly responses are possibly subject to any number of influences in the reader's mental makeup or of the reading context. Thus in the nine years of their experimental research Bortolussi and Dixon have endeavoured to examine such influences in a systematic manner by observing actual readers as they read. Perfectly aware of the fact that the readers' interaction with texts vary with the characteristics of individual readers, the nature of the text, and the context in which the reading takes place, they are sure that the answer to the central question: 'What do readers actually do with the text?' requires a large body of empirical evidence on how these variables operate, how they interact, and how they combine to determine the readers' interaction with texts. Their massive experimental work provides several interesting answers concerning various details of readerly interaction with texts, as for instance how readers use their prior knowledge, expectations, and beliefs in interacting with the textual features of characterisation, how they attribute different traits to characters, how they form concepts of narrators, narrative perspective and spatial perceptions of narrative venues. They never lose sight of the fact that the mind cannot be directly observed, which is why the complexities of the mental reading experience are not amenable to empirical observation and individual literary experiences are only knowable with a certain measure of abstraction; to achieve such an abstraction they imagine a carefully constructed statistical reader.

In this connection it is worth mentioning that cognitive linguists are also interested in the results of the reader's interaction with texts that in psychology are conceived of as 'the mental representation of the text', which usually means the final stage of comprehension at which acquired knowledge from the text can be integrated into previous schemas and becomes usable to the reader. Though emphasising that readers must carry out complex reasoning with respect to a text and construct elaborate situation models which integrate information from the text with readers' real-world knowledge and provide interesting insight in the semantic processes of reader's active construction of meaning, linguists dealing with reading have had little to say about the nature and shape of such mental representations of texts (see Kintsch and van Dijk).

In recent decades, various studies of the reading process have tried to resolve in new ways the ancient question of the reader's emotional involvement in reading and to provide answers to this question with new analyses of the various possible emotions accompanying reading. Such studies may range from the reader's motivation for reading, sustaining the interest while reading, to various attempts to describe and analyse particular emotions accompanying reading or resulting from it. Readers'

responses to literary texts are usually believed to include some emotions engendered by their experience of texts like: 'I laughed', 'I cried' and even 'I was frightened' (Gerrig 179), though this means having emotions about situations readers must know to be unreal. Descriptions of such spontaneous responses may also involve other positive emotions such as admiration, fascination with the text's form and delight in its beauty, and include various negative responses. The capacity of literary texts to elicit (some) emotional responses is taken for granted and having emotional responses is considered a natural part of appreciation. It is commonly agreed that readers must bring with them their existent psychological makeup, attitudes, interests, values, prejudices and so forth; however, the ways in which literary texts address the emotions of readers and the nature of emotions elicited in that way are less clear. Emotions are still regarded as underdefined and insufficiently known. Noël Carrol ('Art' 191) believes that the readers' emotional involvement with narrative texts is generally promoted by the garden-variety emotions: fear, anger, horror, reverence, suspense, pity, admiration, indignation, awe, repugnance, grief, compassion, infatuation, comic amusement and the like. He believes that emotions not only are responsible for keeping the reader 'glued to the story' but also have an important function of focusing the reader's attention. They organise the reader's attention in terms of what is going on and the way in which the reader attends to individual parts of the text. In Carrol's view, emotions shape the way in which the reader follows the text and organises perception. Other authors emphasise the important relationship between readerly emotions and cognition and the omnipresent cognitive overtones of emotions (see van Peer 218).

Of the emotions arising during reading, suspense and empathy have attracted the most attention. Suspense is usually described as an emotional state. Several authors view it as the reader's response in narrative situations in which the outcome that concerns the reader intensely is uncertain when the course of events points to two logically opposed outcomes. One of the alternative outcomes is morally correct but improbable, whereas another outcome is morally incorrect or evil, but highly probable. The text must encourage the reader to form some (moral) preferences about alternative outcomes; the readers, on the other hand, are expected to form anticipations by using their extratextual knowledge, values, in particular moral judgments, and genre conventions (see Carroll, 'The Paradox' 84; Brewer 107; Vorderer 248). Because of the frequent condition of the use of individual moral consideration the readers' interaction with texts varies a great deal. This is also the case with empathy. The ability to take another person's perspective was first analysed empirically in developmental

psychology; in reading, it depends on the reader's individual disposition to emotionally react to other people, and this is the reason for considerable differences among readers, since some people are more empathetic whereas other feel little empathy, if at all. Suzanne Keen (4) describes empathy as a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect either in witnessing another's emotional state or when reading about such states. She attributes the capacity to experience empathy to the human brain's system for automatically sharing feelings by registering them in mirror neurons. In experiencing empathy, the readers feel what they believe to be the emotions of other people. In Keen's opinion, empathy involves emotion and cognition and is at the same time a source of the reader's pleasure. The various emotions resulting in pleasure during readerly interaction with texts have been the subject of numerous studies with rather varied descriptions of the pleasures of reading (Nell; Gerrig). Differences of emotions are enhanced by the inclusion of readers' own extratextual knowledge and experiences. In this connection, it is worth mentioning that such differences play an important role in textual perception and all verbalisations of literary experiences, in both private opinions of taste and critical evaluations.

Though the reader's interaction with literary texts has been scrutinised in hundreds of studies and books and extensively examined experimentally, it is premature to say that it has been adequately understood. It is obvious that readers have to build around the text a textual world (or an appropriate mental model) in which the text makes sense and becomes interpretable; the ways of building such textual worlds, however, are rather idiosyncratic and less known. Similarly, we cannot say with certainty what distinctions and concepts from ordinary living the reader must be able to transfer to reading and what the emotions accompanying reading are really like for individual readers. When literary narrative is no longer regarded as primarily a source of entertainment, it becomes a subject of interdisciplinary examination. Psychologists and cognitive scientists are interested in the cognitive, social, and emotional outcomes of 'exposure' to narrative in the short term and over one's lifetime. Various aspects of emotion occurring during readers' interaction with narrative fiction are examined before, during and after reading (see the beginning of Mar et al.).

The impact of various stylistic features of texts on readers has been experimentally examined, yet the insights based on individual analyses cannot be generalised to all forms of readers' interaction with texts. What data reduction processes are necessary in linear reading to achieve comprehension remains unsettled among cognitive linguists. And critics still face the problem of explaining the differences between the text on the page and the 'text' in the reader's head. Though linear reading processes

have been recently a frequent subject of fMRI examination, the insights from such imaging have not resulted in an acceptable explanation of such differences.

More and more researchers have come to realise that the reader's interaction with texts is always an associative and therefore a memory-enriched process. The enrichment derives from autobiographic episodic memory rather than from verifiable semantic memory related to textual information. The individual comprehension therefore depends on how long the reader's attention focuses on individual descriptions and how effectively such descriptions are related to the reader's own memory structures. The kind of knowledge that readers use in reading depends on the idiosyncrasies of their own situation and experience. When confronted with literary texts, readers obviously find more or less successful solutions to all such questions, but the ways in which they use their knowledge and experiences or have emotions seem to defy generalisations. Psychological research into reading provides at least partial answers to such questions. It (Brooke 361) has proved beyond doubt that in the reader's mental representations of texts (or in textual worlds) the information provided by the text and the reader's own contribution from the individual store of knowledge, memory and own experiences are intertwined in so complex ways that the source of individual items in the mental representation cannot be traced with any certainty even by reading specialists. So the search for certainty concerning readers' interaction seems to lead us to infinite subjectivity of reading depending on factors too complex to be generalisable. Experimental research on reading (*Reader Response*; Miall and Kuiken) can shed some light on partial aspects of literary reading but it is hardly expected to explain all the dimensions of living readers' linear interaction with literary texts or describe their immediate prediscursive literary experience, i.e., experience prior to the attempts to verbalise it in various interpretations.

The challenges of electronic texts

The technological development of the last two decades has made possible the production of new forms of texts and new genres of literature on electronic platforms that have introduced profound changes in the reader's interaction with electronic texts due to their ever more frequent inclusion of visual representation. The change from the print-based media of the page and book to the screen as the dominant medium of communication in the new information technology has introduced profound changes in the logic of the representation of messages. The traditional organisation of

writing governed by the logic of time, of sequence of the elements in time and their temporal arrangements has been replaced by the organisation of the image that, by contrast, is governed by the logic of space, by the simultaneity of its visual/depicted elements in spatially organised arrangements (Kress 2). The new electronic texts: with easy inclusion of visual representation Internet, web, CD-ROMs and computer RAM constitute a new field for recording, organising and presenting texts that radically refashions the printed book and calls for a very different interaction on the part of the reader. Bolter (12) describes these media as the new contemporary writing space that introduces the possibility of the so-called hypertexts. In the 1960s, long before its actual emergence, hypertext was described by Theodor H. Nelson (qtd. in Landow 4) as 'nonsequential writing', a text branching and allowing choices to the reader, best read on an interactive screen. Now hypertext is used to describe an information medium that combines verbal and nonverbal information: a text composed of blocks of text, also called nodes (*lexia*), and of visual information, sound, animation, videos, and other forms of data, all presented in binary codes, connected by electronic links and inviting nonlinear, or rather multilinear/ multisequential interaction by the reader. All the presented components of such texts bear meaning and are part of the message to be comprehended simultaneously. With its digital technology and the changed relationship between the use of language and figurative presentation and sound, the new electronic texts/hypertexts create new conditions for experiencing meaning and information and introduce new ways of readers' interaction with digital texts by replacing unidirectionality with bidirectionality and introducing interactivity.

They also introduce perpetually unfinished and unstable textuality, reduced authority of the text, and profound changes in the relationships between the authors and their readers. Besides combining discrete units of text and various visual presentations, hypertexts use links to define relationships between individual textual elements. Links can perform different functions, ranging from making the structure transparent, providing possibilities of footnotes, returning the user/reader of the text to the basic document, to moving the user/reader to other websites. The use of links changes the reader's interaction with hypertexts: the act of reading becomes the act of choosing and deciding among various components of the hypertext, their individual combinations, and the span and quality of attention paid to each of them. Readers thus have to create their own individual paths through the hypertext and face countless possibilities of choosing different paths, also called chains or trails. In this sense readerly interaction with hypertexts is very different from linear reading.

In reading a linear novel, the reader is expected to forget the process of reading and to see the events and characters, whereas in interacting with a hypertext the reader must pay attention to the process by which the text is presented and renewed on the screen in order to continue deciding about and choosing the next screen. The reader is invited to 'navigate' the text by choosing different links. In this way the basic operation of authorship is literally transferred from the author to the reader who becomes a secondary author: 'In reading hypertext fiction the reader not only recreates narratives but creates and invents new ones not even conceived by the primary author.' (Liestol 98)

The use of digital technology has also brought about a profound change in the ways literary texts are created and read, leading to the emergence of a new genre: electronic literature. This genre is developing in different directions and so far includes various kinds of hybrid narratives and interactive texts, for instance the combination of narratives with videos into vooks and nooks that can only be read on e-readers. Though the body/amount of electronic literature is still limited, the institutions supporting its development are already active. The Electronic Literature Organization has the mission to 'promote the writing, publishing and reading of literature in electronic media' (Hayles 3). By definition electronic literature usually excludes print literature that has been digitalised and insists on the 'digital born', i.e., a first-generation digital object created on a computer and (usually) meant to be read on a computer or e-reader; the committee of the Electronic Literature, however, has opted for a more open definition of electronic literature as 'work with an important literary aspect that takes advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer' (ibid.). The first volume of *Electronic Literature Collection* offers free use of some sixty texts for educational purposes and clearly shows the hybrid nature of e-literature: a third have no recognisable words, virtually all have important visual components, and many have sonic effects (Hayles 4). Electronic literature is proliferating and developing into several distinguishable forms of interactive fiction: hypertext novels or short fictions, hypermedia narrative forms that refashion films or television, hypermediated digital performance, interactive or kinetic poetry. In Europe electronic literature promotion and research are organised by ELMCIP (Electronic Literature as a Model of Creativity and Innovation in Practice: http://elmcip.net/) under the auspices of HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area). The ELMCIP research project seeks to expand the definition of e-literature, so besides hyperfiction and hyperpoetry it includes also current diverse text-based practices, programmable and network media, new media based narratives,

interactive installations and other forms of artwork consciously produced as E-literature, shaped through text-based installation, networked art, performance and other media. Various forms of e-texts develop and change, so the email novels that were popular in the 1990s have recently been replaced by various forms of e-texts dependent on mobile technologies such as short fiction delivered on cell phones (Hayles 11). All these texts depend on the reader's active interaction by the use of links to bring up new segments of text, or rather new screens; that is why readers are frequently referred to as users, screeners and even interactors.

The reader's interaction with electronic literature shares one characteristic feature with linear reading: it rests on the readers' willingness and ability to select aspects of their lives which are relevantly attachable to the text. Also, in reading the words inside individual blocks of narrative texts or nodes the reader may use conventional linear reading habits. The interaction by links makes reading very different, the processes of active choice and design to find the path necessarily result in the development of different readerly interests and rather different emotions. Leaving the frame of an individual text unit or node will result in the obligation of the reader to follow new rules and changed experience, since the readers have to determine their individual path through the text by choosing among available links. The experience of electronic literature is certainly different from linear reading because the reader must constantly make decisions as to which link to choose to bring up the next screen, the next segment of the story or image, the order of which is not predetermined as in linear texts by the total of computer-stored materials. The stored materials of a hypertext make possible countless paths through them: in interacting with a hypertext readers create their individual paths by selecting and combining the elements existing in a spatial and nonlinear arrangements of nodes and links. From the reader's point of view, each reading of a hypertext as a special path is linear, in the sense that the reader must move from episode to episode by activating links and follow the path of chosen elements of the text sequentially. It is, however, next to impossible for any two readers to be able to create identical paths through the same hypertext. Because each reading determines the story of a hypertext by choosing an individual path through it, it is possible to say that the hypertext has no story; there exist just various readings of it (see Bolter 125). For instance, the iconic example of electronic literature Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story* (see Joyce) with its 539 narrative segments and 950 links has been subject to several different readings by scholars (Bolter 124 *sq.*; Hayles 59 *sq.*) testifying to inexhaustible possibilities of readings, with each reading producing a different story through choosing various possible paths. Shifting words and

images create an infinite number of possible combinations; a work of literature is thus like an instrument to be played (Hayles 121) or an event of specific instance of the reader's singular interaction. Electronic texts thus invite different levels of interaction between the reader and the text. Will this result in a different model of literature? How the non-scholarly readers are to interact with electronic literature has not yet been discussed though several American universities have already introduced courses on electronic literature.

As it grows, the genre of e-literature will certainly raise lots of new questions: perhaps the most important one concerns the role of language when it is subject to the logic of the spatial organisation of the screen and, accordingly, has only partial role in the multimodal message. The discussion of the possible impacts of digital reading on the human brain opens even more disturbing questions: will the ever-shorter span of attention developing with e-reading make it impossible for the younger generations of readers to develop depth of thought and the capacity of empathy as stimulated by linear reading (Carr 220)? Will the transition from a reading brain to an increasingly digital one (Wolf 14) have a permanent impact on the circuits of the human brain? Amid these and similar questions one thing is certain: Readers' interaction with literary texts and electronic literature will remain in the centre of critical examination of the processes of meaning making in literary reading. As readers become social in new ways, digitally mobile and interconnected, the ways in which they interact with texts will call for new answers to the questions of why and how they respond to what forms of e-texts.

NOTES

[1] So many studies have been published in the field of reader response that my overview of literary reading as interaction with texts will be a very selective presentation of those that make it possible to chart the trend of this discussion.

[2] See, e.g., Abercrombie; Drinkwater; Cruse. In his *Principles of Literary Criticism*, I. A. Richards constructed a sophisticated theory of the 'scientifically oriented' psychological value of literary experience only to be abandoned in his later experimentally based study *Practical Criticism*, which was soon to become the most influential text in the later development of reader-response studies.

[3] The belief that literary experiences were continuous with all other experiences and did not form a separate category of experiencing was shared by many authors at that time within the theory of 'continuity of literary experience'.

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