
the
LIMITS
OF
critique

RITA FELSKI

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does not flatten and reduce them, that grasps their idiosyncrasy as well as their importance. Texts cannot influence the world by themselves, but only via the intercession of those who read them, digest them, reflect on them, rail against them, use them as points of orientation, and pass them on.

Here we can thank Derek Attridge for his helpful coinage “idioculture,” which he defines as follows: “the singular, and constantly changing, combination of cultural materials and proclivities that constitute any individual subject . . . registered as a complex of particular preferences, capabilities, memories, desires, physical habits, and emotional tendencies.”²⁹ The notion of an idioculture, in short, speaks to both the commonality and the uniqueness of personhood, to the labile mix of influences that makes us what we are. That our sense of self is fashioned, in large part, by the people we encounter, the ideas we stumble across, the experiences we embrace or submit to, does not render it any less salient or less real. Personhood is fashioned out of the dynamic push-and-pull of multiple influences rather than the imperious diktat of a single ideology. Even if we are all products of the cultural blender, each mixture of influences, vocabularies, memories, orientations, and temperament possesses a distinct and unmistakable flavor. We make ourselves out of the models we encounter; we give ourselves a form through the different ways we inhabit other forms. And we bring these differences to the event of reading, even as we are reoriented—sometimes subtly, sometime significantly—by the sum of what we read.

POSTCRITICAL READING

The question of reading can no longer be deferred. It is time to connect these comments on the mobility and agency of texts to current debates about interpretation. As we’ve seen, a number of critics are now casting around for alternatives to the fault-finding mentality of critique. Should we commit ourselves, as Timothy Bewes has argued, to the most generous reading possible, striving to read “with the grain” instead of “against the grain”? Should we be “just readers,” as Sharon Marcus proposes, riffing off the double meaning of “just”

(“mere readers,” as opposed to overconfident theorizers and masterful explicators, yet also “ethical readers,” seeking to do better justice to the words we encounter)?³⁰ Should we resuscitate the notion of a hermeneutics of trust associated with Ricoeur and Gadamer? Or rally around Sedgwick’s vision of reparative reading?

Hedging my bets, I prefer to stick with the broader term “postcritical reading.” One advantage of this phrase lies in its relationship to prior thought: the postcritical, to underscore the obvious, is not to be confused with the uncritical. Like others, I find the vagueness of the term to be also its singular strength, allowing it to serve as a placeholder for emerging ideas and barely glimpsed possibilities. It is a term that is gaining traction in various fields to denote pragmatic and experimental modes of engagement that are not prefortified by general theories.³¹ The role of the term “postcritical,” then, is neither to prescribe the forms that reading should take nor to dictate the attitudes that critics must adopt; it is to steer us away from the kinds of arguments we know how to conduct in our sleep. These are some of the things that a postcritical reading will decline to do: subject a text to interrogation; diagnose its hidden anxieties; demote recognition to yet another form of misrecognition; lament our incarceration in the prison-house of language; demonstrate that resistance is just another form of containment; read a text as a metacommentary on the undecidability of meaning; score points by showing that its categories are socially constructed; brood over the gap that separates word from world.

So what does this leave? More than we might imagine. Let us concede, first of all, that a stress on the transtemporal movement of texts and their lively agency is not entirely alien to the history of interpretation. If actor-network theory is a philosophy of relation, so, in its more modest way, is hermeneutics, which casts texts and readers as cocreators of meaning. Translated into ANT language, the reader-text connection becomes part of a network rather than a self-enclosed dyad—yet a connection that remains vital to literary studies, especially in the classroom. Reading, in this light, is a matter of attaching, collating, negotiating, assembling—of forging links between things that were previously unconnected. It is not a question of plumbing depths or tracing surfaces—these spatial metaphors lose much of their allure—

but of creating something new in which the reader's role is as decisive as that of the text. *Interpretation becomes a coproduction between actors that brings new things to light rather than an endless rumination on a text's hidden meanings or representational failures.* Some of these interpretations will "take" and help to spawn new networks, while others will plummet out of sight without attracting disciples or generating durable attachments.

We now know that secular interpretation—even in the guise of critique—has not stripped itself of its sacred residues and that reason cannot be purified of all traces of enchantment. What of Hermes, then, the figure often associated with hermeneutics? Hermes is, of course, the fleet-footed herald and messenger of Greek myth, "the friendliest of the gods to men."³² He is the deity of roads, crossroads, thresholds, boundaries—of translations and transactions across realms. Darting from place to place, always on the move, he reminds us of the constant shuttling between text and reader, word and world, that defines the hermeneutic enterprise. He is also the god of the windfall and of chance—the deity to be thanked when one gets a lucky break or receives an unexpected gift. In this sense, too, he serves as an apt symbol for acts of interpretation—where understanding may come in a quicksilver flash or an unexpected burst of insight. But Hermes is also a guileful trickster and a thief, a master of cunning and deceit, a conjuror of illusion. He reminds us of our fallibility and vulnerability and of the fact that the act of interpretation can make fools of us all.³³

In 415 BC, the many statues of Hermes scattered throughout Athens were vandalized in the course of a single night by unknown perpetrators. This mysterious episode—linked to the murky history of Athenian religious politics—foreshadows the feverish iconoclasm of our own time. As we have seen, some critics are keen to knock Hermes off his pedestal and spray-paint his shrine; they accuse his followers of being in cahoots with a reactionary metaphysics or a totalitarian politics. Hermeneutics has been diagnosed, deconstructed, and denounced. Looking quizzically at this drive to demystify, we have queried the various efforts to get "beyond" interpretation. Let us embrace the divinities that watch over our work rather than try to expunge them! The charismatic powers of Hermes will inspire our endeavors and give wings to our thoughts. The qualities he em-

bodies—agility, nimbleness, spirited gaiety, mischievousness, ingenuity, mobility of action and thought—are ones we sorely need. Our enemy is not interpretation as such but the kudzu-like proliferation of a critical methodology that has crowded out alternative forms of life. The ANT scholar Adam S. Miller puts it well: "The need for interpretation and translation is not the mark of a fallen world, it is the substance of life. To live is to interpret."³⁴

There are no grounds, then, for concluding that interpretation is at odds with actor-network theory. To be sure, Latour has no time for a hermeneutic philosophy that brags about the interpretative ingenuity of the human subject vis-à-vis a mute and inert object world. It is not a matter of rejecting interpretation, however, but of extending it: "Hermeneutics is not a privilege of humans, but, so to speak, a property of the world itself."³⁵ That is to say, many different kinds of entities are engaged in communicating, mediating, signaling, translating; the world is not a dead zone of reification but is as rife with ambiguity as any modernist poem. And yet, within this expanded frame, how humans respond to poems or paintings still retains its salience, as offering clues to art's specific mode of existence. Interpretation, we might say, constitutes one powerful mode of attachment, whose mechanisms are not well captured by the prevailing assumptions of literary studies.³⁶

Happily, France is now seeing something of a hermeneutic revival—a somewhat surprising event, given the invective often heaped on the idea of interpretation in the heyday of poststructuralism. What these new French critics take from the hermeneutic tradition is an emphasis on the text's entanglement with its readers. This text is no longer a monument to dead thought (*histoire*) nor a self-referential web of linguistic signs (*écriture*). Rather, it springs to life via a mundane yet mysterious process in which words are animated by readers and reanimate readers in their turn. Blending phenomenology and pragmatics, Foucault and Fish, these critics offer a fresh take on questions of reading: one that embraces its affective as well as cognitive aspects—employing the language of enchantment, incandescence, and rapture without embarrassment—and that takes as axiomatic its many connections to daily life.

Let us listen, for example, to Marielle Macé. "Works take their

place in ordinary life, leaving their marks and exerting a lasting power," she writes. "Reading is not a separate activity, functioning in competition with life, but one of the daily means by which we give our existence form, flavor and even style."³⁷ In an important recent book, Macé traces out the means by which scraps and snatches of the books we read weave their way into the texture of our daily experience. This bleeding of literature into life is not the result of a naïve reading that requires a corrective slap on the wrist from the critical theorist. Rather, it is the means by which artistic models help to shape what Macé calls a stylistics of existence.

Reading, in this sense, is not just a cognitive activity but an embodied mode of attentiveness that involves us in acts of sensing, perceiving, feeling, registering, and engaging. (Here Macé's discussion also brings to mind Richard Kearney's stunning elaboration of a "carnal hermeneutics" that involves and intertwines body and thought, sensing and sense.)³⁸ To speak of a stylistics of existence is to acknowledge that our being in the world is formed and patterned along certain lines and that aesthetic experience can modify or redraw such patterns. In the act of reading, we encounter fresh ways of organizing perception, different patterns and models, rhythms of rapprochement and distancing, relaxation and suspense, movement and hesitation. We give form to our existence through the diverse ways in which we inhabit, inflect, and appropriate the artistic forms we encounter. Reading, Macé insists, is not simply a matter of deciphering content but involves "taking on" and testing out new perceptual possibilities.

We see here how literature's singularity and its sociability are intertwined rather than opposed. The text is not sequestered away in haughty or melancholic isolation; it is unmistakably worldly rather than otherworldly. That it is a social artifact, however, does not mean that its uses can be predicted by consulting the oracle of the critical theory textbook. The act of reading embodies a "pas de deux," an interplay between text and person that refuses the false choice of autonomous aesthetics or instrumental politics. We cannot simply oppose interpretation and use, Macé argues, as if we could somehow arrive at a way of engaging with the literary work that is scrubbed clean of our mundane needs, desires, and interests. This is the dream of transcendence, of reading and writing from nowhere, of engagement

without the original sin of appropriation, that literary critics are often reluctant to relinquish.

Conversely, the uses of literature cannot be totted up via a one-note calculus of power: as if we read books only to shore up our social status; as if these books entice and seduce us only in order to bludgeon us into submission to the status quo. The effect of such theoretical shortcuts, to reprise a Latourian language, is to shrink and slash networks, leapfrog over coactors, and turn active mediators into passive intermediaries. They can only explain the work of literature by shoving it, eyes averted, into a premeasured box—without doing justice to the labyrinthian paths, unexpected detours, obscure motivations, and sheer happenstance by which "ways of reading," to quote Macé's title, connect up with "modes of being."

Here Macé shows a certain audacity in championing the figure of Emma Bovary. Rather than serving as a symbol of the pathologies of immoderate reading, Flaubert's heroine now embodies a certain universality in clarifying the vital role of projection, identification, and imaginary transformation in aesthetic experience. "This desire to read," Macé observes, "feeds on closeness. . . . We need to do justice to this passivity of the reader, the passivity of being seized by and abandoning oneself to models." What looks like mindless submission involves a more complex choreography, as a reader surrenders to a text so as to savor the pleasures of being estranged from ordinary consciousness. Such moments of self-forgetting allow us to try out other selves, explore fictional models, slip free, for an instant, of well-worn habits of thought. Emma thus stands for the sheer messiness and impurity of subjectivity. We need to stop opposing empathy and interpretation, suffering and acting, affective experience and hermeneutic distance, Macé declares.³⁹ Emotions are not mere icing on the cake—at best a pleasurable distraction, at worst a mystifying spell to be broken so that the work of hard-nosed analysis can begin. Rather, affective engagement is the very means by which literary works are able to reach, reorient, and even reconfigure their readers.⁴⁰

Especially valuable in Macé's work is this refusal to disconnect affect from interpretation, her insistence—against antihermeneutic accounts of aesthetic experience—that these elements are intertwined rather than opposed. And here we can rope in another pertinent work

of French criticism: Yves Citton's *Lire, interpréter, actualiser: Pourquoi les études littéraires?* Responding to a remark by President Sarkozy, who wondered why students destined to become counter clerks were reading *La Princesse de Clèves* rather than learning something practical, Citton unfolds an energetic defense of literary education and the present relevance of past works of art. Literary studies, he argues, should defend itself as a distinctively hermeneutic enterprise, as a matter of "lecture" rather than "histoire" or "écriture." Advocating what he calls "*une lecture actualisante*"—where *actualiser* means to realize, to bring to life, but also to make contemporary—Citton insists that interpretation is not a matter of exhumation but one of reinvention, that attention to past context should not overshadow questions of transtemporal resonance and how literary works speak to us now.⁴¹

In a vigorous defense of an affective hermeneutics, Citton insists that reading is never just a matter of cognitive or analytical decoding. Emotional cues prompt inferences or judgments by conveying vital information about character and episode, style and world view; the affective and analytical aspects of meaning are closely intertwined. Meanwhile, textual details vibrate and resonate with special force when they hook up with our passions and predilections, our affectively soaked histories and memories. It is an axiom of hermeneutics that we cannot help projecting our preexisting beliefs onto the literary work, which are modified in the light of the words we encounter. This hermeneutic circle, however, includes not just beliefs but also moods, perceptions, sensibilities, attunements: not only do we bring feelings to a text, but we may in turn be brought to feel differently by a text.

But how, we might ask, is such talk of affect to be incorporated into literary studies as a scholarly subject and a form of academic credentialing? And what is to prevent the language of criticism from lapsing into subjective effusion or an idiosyncratic flurry of private associations? It is not a question of throwing critical analysis overboard, remarks Citton, but one of establishing a better balance between method and inspiration so as to enliven the dryness of our intellectual vocabularies. Meanwhile, the concern of hermeneutics is neither "the text itself" nor the lives of readers but the question of where and how the two connect. Our students are not let off the hook, in other words, in terms of acquiring the knowledge and analytical skills nec-

essary to explicate a text's pertinent features. And yet Citton also urges us to be less shame-faced and sheepish about our inclinations, attachments, judgments, enthusiasms, devotions, obsessions. Why are we so hesitant to admit that studying literature can be, among other things, a way of fashioning a sensibility, redirecting one's affections, reevaluating one's priorities and goals?⁴²

It is not that such affections are "innocent" or beyond reproach; no one would dispute that literary studies, like any and every other worldly activity, can include moments of misrecognition, overvaluation, self-congratulation, aggression, or self-delusion.⁴³ It is rather that, at a certain point, the practice of skeptical regress becomes intellectually uninteresting as well as counterproductive, especially in the light of the current erosion of public support for the humanities. Here we can circle back to the tenets of actor-network theory. "If you are listening to what people are saying," remarks Latour, "they will explain how and why they are deeply attached, moved, affected by the works of art that make them feel things."⁴⁴ We might well wonder why the legitimacy of literary studies requires condescending to such intuitions. Latour's work is a sustained polemic against the urge to purify: to separate rationality from emotion, to safeguard critique from faith, to oppose fact to fetish. In this light, the experience of the art work—like his examples of religious language or love talk—does not only convey information but produces a transformation.⁴⁵ The import of a text is not exhausted by what it reveals or conceals about the social conditions that surround it. Rather, it is also a matter of what it sets alight in the reader—what kind of emotions it elicits, what changes of perception it prompts, what bonds and attachments it calls into being.

One consequence of this line of thought is a perspective less dismissive of lay experiences of reading (which also precede and sustain professional criticism).⁴⁶ Instead of looking through such experiences to the hidden laws that determine them, we look squarely at them, in order to investigate the mysteries of what is in plain sight. To be sure, feelings have histories, and individual sensations of sublimity or self-loss connect up to cultural frames, but underscoring the social construction of emotion is often a matter of presuming the critic's immunity from the illusions in which others are immersed. What would it mean to halt this critical machinery for a moment? To treat experi-

ences of engagement, wonder, or absorption not as signs of naïveté or user error but as clues to why we are drawn to art in the first place? To forge a language of attachment as robust and refined as our rhetoric of detachment? At the least, it would require us to treat texts not as objects to be investigated but as coactors that make things happen, not just as matters of fact but also matters of concern.

Let me offer a brief example of how some of these ideas might be brought into the classroom. A few years ago, I overhauled a class in literary theory that I had been teaching for well over a decade to bring it into closer alignment with my changing concerns and commitments. The first half of the course still resembles the standard survey course, introducing undergraduates to structuralism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, deconstruction, feminism, postcolonial studies, and so on, giving them a basic fluency in familiar theoretical idioms. In the second half, however, we turn our attention to topics usually given short shrift in such surveys: empathy and sympathy, recognition and identification, enchantment and absorption, shock and the sublime, the pleasures of fandom and connoisseurship as they shape how and why people read. These experiences are chosen for their everyday entailments as well as their continuing, if often subterranean, presence in academic criticism. I propose to my students that they are not ideological symptoms to be seen through but complex phenomena that we have hardly begun to look at. The wager of the course is that they can learn to think carefully about their attachments as well as cultivating detachment; that thoughtful reflection is not limited to the practice of critique; that we can move beyond the stultifying division between naïve, emotional reading and rigorous, critical reading.

The first part of the course—effectively an induction into various styles of suspicious interpretation—remains gratifying to teach. Besides introducing my students to current debates in literary studies, it is, for some of them, their primary exposure to Freud, Foucault, feminism, and other major strands of modern intellectual history. And yet I have come to feel that a course devoted entirely to critique is an exercise in bad faith in skirting or simplifying the question of why literature matters. Devoting the second half of the course to postcritical reading forces the class to grapple with tough questions. How do

works of art move us, and why? Are certain features of texts more likely to trigger empathy or recognition, absorption or disorientation? What does it mean to talk about identifying with a character? (At least three distinct things, I propose: structural or formal alignment, moral allegiance, and emotional empathy.)⁴⁷ To what extent do our attachments work with or against our political or analytical perspectives toward texts? How do specifics of style, emplotment, viewpoint or mise-en-scène steer audiences toward particular reactions or moods? And how are our affective responses shaped by extratextual factors ranging from the idiosyncrasies of individual history to structures of expectation and preevaluation that shape collective practices of reading?

In his final essay for the course, one student chose to analyze a poem by James Wright in dialogue with recent accounts of empathy by Suzanne Keen and others, clarifying how poetic devices help bring about an education of emotion and a movement between self-elucidating and self-transcending forms of empathy. Another student investigated questions of enchantment in *The God of Small Things*, detailing the sensual and rhetorical seductions of its style and the absorptive dimensions of its literary world while developing a forceful argument against the rationalist mistrust of enchanted states. A third elucidated his sense of shock on watching the French film *Irreversible*, as being triggered not only by its graphic and sexually violent subject matter but also by disorienting camera angles and a reverse plot, while engaging larger questions about the aesthetics of shock in postmodernity. These essays were no less scrupulous or carefully argued than the ones my students had produced earlier in the semester under the sign of suspicion. The most noticeable difference, however, was a surge of élan in the classroom, a collective sigh of relief at encountering an analytical language for reflecting on, rather than repudiating, their aesthetic attachments.

The antidote to suspicion is thus not a repudiation of theory—asking why literature matters will always embroil us in sustained reflection—but an ampler and more diverse range of theoretical vocabularies. And here, the term “postcritical” acknowledges its reliance on a prior tradition of thought, while conveying that there is more to

intellectual life than the endless deflationary work of “digging down” or “standing back.” Rather than engaging in a critique of critique, it is more interested in testing out alternate ways of reading and thinking. What it values in works of art is not just their power to estrange and disorient but also their ability to recontextualize what we know and to reorient and refresh perception. It seeks, in short, to strengthen rather than diminish its object—less in a spirit of reverence than in one of generosity and unabashed curiosity.

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In these final pages we have opted for a language of addition rather than subtraction, translation rather than separation, connection rather than isolation, composition rather than critique. Accounting for the social meanings of art becomes a matter of multiplying actors and adding mediators rather than pruning them away. Instead of typecasting the work of art as either beaten-down sycophant of power or dauntless dissident, we have sought to make room for a more diverse cast of characters. Refusing to stay cooped up in their containers, texts barge energetically across space and time, hooking up with other coactors in ways that are both predictable and puzzling. Only by making attachments and forging alliances are they able to make a difference. Rather than stressing their otherness, autonomy, nontransferability, we point out their portability, mobility, and translatability. Instead of asking “What does this text undermine?” we inquire “What does this text create, build, make possible?” Against those who declare “The text is singular! It cannot be appropriated!” we intone our own mantra: “The text is singular! Of course it will be appropriated!”

Drawing on a variety of resources—actor-network theory, post-historicist criticism, affective hermeneutics—I have sketched out some possible paths for literary and cultural studies. Reading is now conceived as an act of composition—of creative remaking—that binds text and reader in ongoing struggles, translations, and negotiations. The literary text is not a museum piece immured behind glass but a spirited and energetic participant in an exchange—one that may know as much as, or a great deal more than, the critic. This text

impinges and bears on the reader across time and space; as a mood changer, a reconfigurer of perception, a plenitude of stylistic possibilities, an aid to thought.

It is not—to be quite explicit on this point—that historical knowledge is to be discarded or brushed aside. Of course we need to know about the French Revolution, medieval penitents, the Boxer Rebellion, sumptuary laws, suffragettes, nineteenth-century factory conditions, the civil rights movement, changing attitudes to death, and Indian partition. Such understanding is an indispensable corrective to the bouts of amnesia that can befall us—those moments when we forget that our institutions and ways of life, passions and prejudices, are not those around which past lives were organized. We are shocked, for a while, out of the somnolence of our temporal self-centeredness. In fact, the curatorial role of the humanities—preserving and caring for the vulnerable artifacts of the past—is, I would argue, one of its most important features. And historical modes of reading can certainly be employed in ways that avoid the pitfalls of critical contextualism, as in Sharon Marcus’s subtle and illuminating account of the relations between women in Victorian England.⁴⁸

It is not a concern with the past that is the problem but the use or misuse of the “context concept”: on the one hand, as a synonym for sociohistorical generalities and critical condemnations that, in seeking to explain everything, explain very little; on the other hand, as a concerted attempt to glue a text fast to the moment of its first appearance. “Texts,” a recent overview of the current state of literary studies observes, “are taken to be inseparable from context rather than existing as privileged entities that transcend their circumstances of conception.”⁴⁹ That such remarks have become commonplace does not render them any less puzzling. Don’t texts, after all, routinely transcend their circumstances of conception—straying into new networks that have little or nothing to do with their original meaning or purpose?

Admittedly, I have taken a few liberties with actor-network theory by grafting some of its tenets onto my own agenda. ANT, after all, is committed to multiplying mediators and including a full spectrum of human and nonhuman actors. The fate of literary works, it would

insist, is tied to countless agents: publishers, reviewers, agents, bookstores, technologies of consumption (e-readers, Amazon.com), institutional frames (women's and ethnic studies, for example), forms of adaptation and translation, the physical and material properties of books ranging from fonts to photographs, and so on. From such a perspective, the reader-text relationship forms only a small part of a vast and sprawling network. Keeping this in mind, teachers of literature can certainly point their students to salient connections, while reminding them that their own selves are not fountains of infallible intuition but have been worn into shape by rubbing against countless coactors. And yet, while an occasional course on actor-network theory may sneak its way onto an English syllabus, the chances of most classes on the Victorian novel or contemporary women's fiction being refurbished as classes in the sociology of mediation are close to nil. That is not, after all, what most teachers and students come to literature *for*. What remains at the heart of the discipline—for better or for worse—is a training in advanced techniques of reading, tested out in the encounter with a corpus of significant texts. A commitment to describing the hybrid networks in which literary works are embedded must be weighed against, and balanced with, the habits, preferences, and passions that define an existing field of inquiry.⁵⁰

Thus the alliance of actor-network theory and literary studies, like all alliances, will require translation, tinkering, fudging, and compromise. It is not a question of a heavy-handed application of ANT to literary studies—calling forth protests from those who feel that crucial dimensions of literature and literary experience are in danger of being lost—but a question of trying to speak well to fellow critics about issues of common concern. And here, perhaps, some of the ideas floated in this chapter can help us to wriggle out of the strait-jacket of suspicion without giving up on interpretation or lapsing back into an aseptic and sterile formalism. Critique has long lived off the reputation of being the most rigorous and radical form of reading—a reputation, I have argued, that is not entirely deserved. There are other ways of thinking about the social lives of texts, different combinations of method and mood. Forswearing suspicion, we are confronted not only with the text but with our implication and entanglement with that text. Aggressivity gives way to receptivity, detachment mingles

with an acknowledged attachment, a text's pastness does not trump its evident presentness, and aesthetic pleasures and sociopolitical resonance are intertwined rather than opposed. The aim is no longer to diminish or subtract from the reality of the texts we study but to amplify their reality, as energetic coactors and vital partners in an equal encounter.

8. Jennifer Fleissner, "Is Feminism a Historicism?" *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 21, no. 1 (2002): 45–66.
9. Karl-Heinz Bohrer, "The Tragic: A Question of Art, Not Philosophy of History," *New Literary History* 41, no. 1 (2010): 35–51.
10. Dimock, "A Theory of Resonance," 1061.
11. Bruce Robbins, "Afterword," *PMLA* 122, no. 5 (2007): 1650. See also Eric Hayot's insightful "Against Periodization," *New Literary History* 42, no. 4 (2011): 739–56.
12. Christopher Lane, "The Poverty of Context: Historicism and Nonmimetic Fiction," *PMLA*, 118, no. 3 (2003): 450–69.
13. Compare, for example, Latour's rejection of reductionism with the theory of articulation in cultural studies as "an attempt to avoid reduction." The latter is well described in Jennifer Daryl Slack, "The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 112–27.
14. Lawrence Grossberg, *Bringing It All Back Home: Essays on Cultural Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 255.
15. Howard S. Becker, Robert R. Faulkner, and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, eds., *Art from Start to Finish: Jazz, Painting, Writing, and Other Improvisations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 3.
16. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 71, 72.
17. *Ibid.*, 40.
18. James J. Gibson, "The Theory of Affordances," in *Perceiving, Acting, and Knowing: Toward an Ecological Perspective*, ed. Robert Shaw and John Bransford (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1977), 68; and Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (New York: Psychology Press, 2015).
19. C. Namwali Serpell, *Seven Modes of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 9, 22. For another valuable account of the parallels between texts and buildings as forms of induction, see Elizabeth Fowler's development of the notion of ductile space in "Art and Orientation," *New Literary History* 44, no. 4 (2013): 595–616.
20. A separate model of the agency of artworks—though with intriguing parallels—is developed by Alfred Gell in *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). See Eduardo de la Fuente's interesting discussion, drawing on both Gell and Latour, in "The Artwork Made Me Do it: Introduction to the New Sociology of Art," *Thesis Eleven* 103, no. 1 (2010): 3–9.
21. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 236.

22. Tony Bennett, "Texts in History: The Determination of Readings and Their Texts," *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 18, no. 1 (1985): 7.
23. Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 64.
24. On this question, see also James Simpson, "Faith and Hermeneutics: Pragmatism versus Pragmatism," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 33, 2 (2003): 233–234.
25. *Bond and Beyond*, cited in note 23 above.
26. Franco Moretti, "The Slaughterhouse of Literature," *Modern Language Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2000): 207–27.
27. Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 22.
28. Bernard Lahire, *The Plural Actor* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011).
29. Derek Attridge, "Context, Idioculture, Invention," *New Literary History* 42, no. 4 (2011): 682–83.
30. Timothy Bewes, "Reading with the Grain: A New World in Literary Criticism," *differences* 21, no. 3 (2010): 1–33; Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
31. Casper Bruun Jensen, "Experiments in Good Faith and Hopefulness: Toward a Postcritical Social Science," *Common Knowledge* 20, no. 2 (2014): 361. For some other pertinent discussions of the postcritical, see Janet Wolff, *The Aesthetics of Uncertainty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Antoine Hennion and Line Grenier, "Sociology of Art: New Stakes in a Post-Critical Time," in *The International Handbook of Sociology*, ed. Stella R. Quah and Arnaud Sales (London: Sage, 2000). A classic text is Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).
32. Walter F. Otto, *The Homeric Gods: The Spiritual Significance of Greek Religion* (New York: Octagon, 1978), 104.
33. Richard E. Palmer, "The Liminality of Hermes and the Meaning of Hermeneutics," <http://www.mac.edu/faculty/richardpalmer/liminality.html>.
34. Adam S. Miller, *Speculative Grace: Bruno Latour and Object-Oriented Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 109.
35. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 245.
36. The wording in this paragraph overlaps with my essay "Latour and Literary Studies," *PMLA* 130, no. 3 (2015).
37. Marielle Macé, "Ways of Reading, Modes of Being," *New Literary History* 44, no. 2 (2013): 214. This essay contains excerpts from Macé's book

- Façons de lire, manières d'être* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011), translated by Marlon Jones.
38. Richard Kearney, "What Is Carnal Hermeneutics?," *New Literary History* 46, no. 1 (2015).
 39. Macé, *Façons de lire*, 192, 190.
 40. For other helpful discussions of this point, see Cristina Vischer Bruns, *The Value of Literary Reading and What it Means for Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 2011); and Jean-Marie Schaeffer, "Literary Studies and Literary Experience," trans. Kathleen Antonioni, *New Literary History* 44, no. 2 (2013): 267–83.
 41. Yves Citton, *Lire, interpréter, actualiser: Pourquoi les études littéraires?* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2007).
 42. Citton, *Lire, interpréter, actualiser*, 155–56.
 43. Deidre Lynch, *Loving Literature: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 14.
 44. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 236.
 45. On this question, see Thom Dancer, "Between Belief and Knowledge: J. M. Coetzee and the Present of Reading," *Minnesota Review* 77 (2011): 131–42.
 46. As John Guillory remarks, "Scholarly reading can be said to preserve within it an encysted form of lay reading, a necessary recollection of the pleasures and rapidity of lay reading." See "How Scholars Read," *ADE Bulletin* 146 (Fall 2008): 12.
 47. For a helpful discussion of this issue, see Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
 48. Marcus, *Between Women*.
 49. Daniel Carey, "The State of Play: English Literary Scholarship and Criticism in a New Century," *Cadernos de Letras* 27 (December 2010): 19.
 50. Felski, "Latour and Literary Studies."

In Short

1. Ien Ang, "From Cultural Studies to Cultural Research: Engaged Scholarship in the Twenty-First Century," *Cultural Studies Review* 12, no. 2 (2006): 190.
2. Yves Citton, *L'avenir des humanités: Économie de la connaissance ou cultures de l'interprétation* (Paris: La Découverte, 2010), 133.
3. Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 35.

4. Christopher Castiglia, "Crittiquiness," *English Language Notes* 51, no. 2 (2013): 79–85. See also Steven Maras, "Communicating Criticality," *International Journal of Communication* 1 (2007): 167–86.
5. The aesthetic, moreover, also has an ethical dimension. As Jane Bennett points out, experiences of enchantment are not reducible to critical accusations of mindlessness or naïve optimism: rather, they are a means by which we come to experience wonder and pleasure in the world and to care deeply about its condition. Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 10.
6. *New Literary History* 46, no. 2 (2015), special issue, "Feminist Interventions."
7. Michel Chaouli, "Criticism and Style," *New Literary History* 44, no. 3 (2013): 328.