

2 Transaction in Educational Settings

2.1 The Ease of Reading

The previous part on reader-response criticism started with Wolfgang Iser's comparison of the reading process to an "often difficult journey" (1980: 16), which I then qualified by emphasising the different types of application that writers such as Frank Smith, Louise M. Rosenblatt or Iser himself had in mind. They can range from a young native speaker's first encounter with picture books to a university professor's tenth rereading of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in preparation for an academic essay. Yet, we refer to all these cultural practices with a single verb – 'to read'. In everyday situations the context provides sufficient clues which type of reading is meant in each case (e.g. text messages, good night stories, body language, Tarot, newspapers, between the lines, romances, horoscopes, cartoons), but the matter becomes more complicated with educational settings.

While aesthetic reading, reading comprehension and narratological analysis are three distinct types of engagement with texts, they are often presumed to unfold automatically and concurrently. Based on this logic, students are expected to articulate their personal responses, understand the basic facts of the narrative (who? where? when? etc.) and comment on artistic choices (e.g. narration, focalisation, time structure, character constellation, style) after a first encounter with the text. However, sharing personal observations, extracting information from a piece of writing and looking behind the scenes are not exactly the same thing. Therefore, Rosenblatt felt the need to differentiate at least between aesthetic and efferent reading, which she associates with different cognitive frames and readers' expectations. Frank Smith criticises that reading comprehension tasks, which are supposed to check a basic and allegedly neutral understanding of a text, are already "subject to personal predilection" (2004: x), influenced by narratological analysis and closely tied to the extraction of facts. Rosenblatt does acknowledge a whole spectrum of responses, ranging from the aesthetic to the efferent (cf. 1994: 27–8), as the two stances are sometimes difficult to separate. For the purposes of critical reflection, however, they are conceptually kept apart in this chapter. She indicates that "various stages in a developing process" (1994: 7) can lead – via the negotiation and co-construction of meaning – from highly subjective first impressions to a more reflected and justifiable reading of a text. Chapter 3 develops such a staged approach in greater detail. For the moment, we look at factors that influence various perceptions of reading, ranging from a basic skill that almost everyone will eventually master to erudite explications

of the most sophisticated works of art that human genius has ever blessed the world with.

In “A Performing Art” (1966) Rosenblatt is concerned with the formidable challenges that literary classics pose to the uninitiated: “As the reader submits himself to the guidance of the text, he must engage in a most demanding kind of activity” (1966: 1000). In the same essay she encourages her fellow teachers to muster “the courage to admit to our students that the actual business of recreating a work is difficult and tricky and sometimes frustrating, but always exciting and challenging” (1966: 1003). While she rejects “a single interpretation which the teacher can impose”, she is worried that a *laissez-faire* approach would stifle the students’ development: “Undisciplined, irrelevant or distorted emotional responses, and the lack of relevant experience or knowledge will, of course, lead to inadequate interpretations of the text” (1966: 1001). Therefore, she asks for “a very stringent discipline” (1966: 1001) that takes students to task in case they falter in their self-improvement and do not work to the best of their abilities.

All proponents of aesthetic reading are caught in this double bind: on the one hand, they acknowledge and actively encourage the constructivist nature of reading; on the other hand, they promise that through an ongoing process of rereading, self-correction and the negotiation of meaning in pairs and groups, students will eventually produce an adequate interpretation of the text. Looking at the humble beginnings from the vantage point of advanced interpretation/analysis, even ardent advocates of aesthetic reading, including Rosenblatt herself, find this challenge daunting. Since it is the teacher’s responsibility to organise the transitional stages in between, which gradually shift the balance towards greater objectivity and sophistication, the teacher’s role as a facilitator of reading (cf. Delanoy 2015: 20, 35) requires much more attention.

A similar double bind is evident in German publications on (aesthetic) reading in the classroom. While a commitment to reader-response criticism has produced several collections of student-focused activities (cf. e.g. Caspari 1994: 157–225; Haas, Menzel & Spinner 1994: 24; Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 71–82; Freitag-Hild 2010: 102–21; Haas 2013), there are also more recent attempts to establish a classification of reading competences that can be trained and tested (cf. e.g. Hallet, Surkamp & Krämer 2015). While a focus on traditional reading comprehension and narratological analysis is conducive to such an endeavour, the re-definition of aesthetic reading as the application of a specific set of skills (cf. Diehr & Surkamp 2015: 25–7, 33; Hallet & Nöth 2015: 48) creates certain problems. Apart from the temptation to treat literature as a container of information, such a procedure also favours a top-down approach that retrospectively

defines certain milestones from the vantage point of school-leaving exams, which tend to be standardised tests. I am more inclined to agree with Christiane Lütge who states that “the very search for – testable – literary competences seems full of contradictions and leaves us with an insoluble dilemma” (2012: 195). She identifies these current challenges by observing that the lists of competences and the tasks based on these descriptors “may not (yet) fully reflect the complexities and intricacies of teaching literature” (2012: 195). However, this apt comment also reveals a more fundamental issue: we have begun to treat literature as a serious problem – not only due to external exigencies, but in and of itself. Extending reading to multiliteracies and listing every single aspect as a separate competence has added further complications. In *Films, Graphic Novels & Visuals: Developing Multiliteracies in Foreign Language Education – An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Daniela Elsner, Sissy Helff and Britta Viebrock make such a point: “Learners today face enormous perceptual challenges due to immensely complex communication technologies that often make use of visual icons” (2013: 7). The same logic is then applied to comics: “It is obvious that the reading of graphic novels requires an enhanced power of concentration, along with multimodal reading strategies, just like the reading of internet-pages, hypertexts or other multimodal twenty-first century texts does” (Elsner 2013: 64).

The attempt to save literature by enlisting as many contexts in which it can be usefully instrumentalised has led to a situation in which the few texts that are read in schools are needlessly burdened with unrealistic expectations. Reading an autobiographical comic in the classroom may now serve the development of language competences (e.g. reading comprehension), motivational, attitudinal, aesthetic and cognitive competences, cultural studies, multiliteracies (especially comics literacy, visual literacy and critical media literacy), literary literacy (e.g. genre competence, narrative competence), and so on (cf. Lütge 2012; Hallet et al. 2015). Provided that teachers know what all these categories require as independent approaches to multimodal texts, their interrelations and potential synergies still require a lot of work on a conceptual level. While in academic settings it has become the norm to approach a text from a very specific angle in an already specialised field, there is always the implicit pressure that teachers in secondary schools and their students are supposed to cover a text in its entirety. Together with a PISA-induced demand to make reading a more controllable, testable and efficient activity, there is a trend to quietly discard the idea of aesthetic reading and return to a stronger focus on analysis in the precious little time that is reserved for literature (cf. Delanoy 2015: 24–5). This is clearly at odds with the idea that students are supposed to enjoy reading and develop personal connections to books.

Looking again at certain conceptualisations of aesthetic reading that were introduced in part 1, we find a number of instances in which reading is presented as both easy and automatic: Iser's concept of consistency-building is described as a fully automated process; so is his understanding of "light reading" (1980: 219), which closely follows generic conventions. The readers' first impressions, their personal responses to art, are seen as happening 'naturally' in Dewey's theory (cf. 2005: 2–4). This is mirrored in Monika Fludernik's model of a 'natural' narratology, in which the first three levels are more or less automatic and based on daily experiences and culturally established patterns of storytelling (cf. 2005: 43–5). Fludernik associates some of the key concerns of narratology, such as characters, themes or plot, with level 1, which is the most basic (cf. 2005: 339–40). This affinity between storytelling and daily experiences directly relates to the appreciation of students' responses in the transactional theory of reading: "That personal knowledge which every child brings into the classroom and which long pre-dates any abstract awareness of poetic process and technique or of critical method, is not to be despised and might usefully be encouraged much further up the school than is commonly the case" (Benton 1986: 62). This is at odds with Iser's claim that art has to be difficult to generate true experience or Wolfgang Iser's observation that literary prose is not 'natural' and requires a very specific set of reading skills (cf. 2015b: 10). Such a discrepancy can only be solved by specifying the contexts and purposes of reading, but also by conceptualising it as an ongoing process that involves different stages. Before letting the aesthetic and the efferent merge again into what Rosenblatt calls "the capacity for thinking rationally about emotional responses" (1995: xviii), her two approaches to reading are now described as diametrically opposed in order to clarify how task-design and testing are directly influenced by how one conceives of reading.

In the case of an efferent stance, students retrieve facts based on standardised forms of enquiry, so that the results can be presented in highly regulated formats (text types) and evaluated according to predefined criteria. In traditional literature classes these are book reports, summaries, literary essays, character portraits, answers to comprehension questions, a time line based on the reconstruction of the story out of the discourse or any other task that requires detailed analysis, close (re)reading and/or the extraction of information. Although these formats are assumed to test reading comprehension, they involve general language competence, productive skills and an intimate knowledge of the generic conventions of the form in which the results have to be presented. This is Rosenblatt's elaboration of the same idea:

With traditional concerns of the literary critic, the literary analyst, and the literary historian as models, the “study of literature” has tended to hurry the student reader away from the evocation, to focus on efferent concerns: recall of details, paraphrase, summary, categorization of genres, formalistic analysis of verbal techniques, “background knowledge” and literary history. (1986: 126)

Such assignments often encourage students to treat the literary text as a self-contained unit and often demand retrospective, abstract and synoptic analysis on a macrostructural level. Students are required to disentangle themselves from the ‘lived through’ quality of aesthetic reading and focus on what the text intends to communicate in general terms. This may take the form of the lowest common denominator or “the message” of the text, which “implies that a work of literature has a single meaning” (Grimm, Meyer & Volkmann 2015: 179). In this sense a better term would be ‘having-read’ comprehension, as the progressive form of the verb evokes the wrong associations. Here is one of Smith’s arguments against such ideas:

So-called comprehension tests in school are usually given after a book has been read and as a consequence are more like tests of memory. [...] If I say that I comprehended a certain book, it doesn’t make sense to give me a test and argue that I didn’t understand it, although I may have understood it differently from the test constructor. (2004: 26)

Students are often asked to follow predetermined strategies and paths to reach a specific goal, collect information accordingly, organise it, restructure it and present it within the framework of a narrowly defined text type, such as a poster presentation, a book report or similar formats. All of this is closely tied to reading as a skill and the conventional way of teaching literature as a purely cognitive analysis that serves the extraction of information. It is far removed from how people read as a hobby, but all the more tempting, as its product-orientation makes testing a lot easier and allows for the operationalisation of specific steps.

Aesthetic reading acknowledges the fact that there is no escape from responding to a narrative on a personal level, which has been widely propagated and defended by Lothar Bredella (cf. e.g. 1996; Bredella & Burwitz-Melzer 2004) or Werner Delanoy (cf. 2002; 2015). Narratives – and instances of life writing in particular – rely on personal experiences in a double sense: not only do they present the embodied life of a character (cf. Bredella & Burwitz-Melzer 2004: 71), but they also heavily rely on the readers’ ability to bring them to life by engaging with the story world and turning the script – Rosenblatt’s musical notation or blueprint – into a fully realised experience. This involves personal, emotional and ethical responses, which have to be the starting points for any educational engagement with a text. It requires the ability to empathise with characters and

understand their entanglements in specific situations rather than in general terms. Fludernik stresses “the peculiar micro-textual dynamics of plot episodes in which reader expectations are apt to be upset at each and every turn, just as the protagonist’s intentions and goals are likely to be interfered with, requiring continual reorientation relative to the character’s overall aims and needs” (2005: 21–2). These are not mere distractions or fillers, but essential to our experience of the narrative and our understanding of the main characters. A summary, understood as a collection of the major events in chronological order, explicitly asks readers to disregard the aesthetic qualities and nuances together with personal experiences, associations and emotional responses. There is no doubt that the ability to write concise summaries represents an important and highly valued skill, indispensable in many occupational fields (cf. Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 26), but it is less apparent how this relates to aesthetic reading and why literature is particularly suited for such a task.

First and foremost, the aim of aesthetic reading is to understand oneself better, other people, different cultures, ideologies and contexts – not by gathering information, but through entanglement and vicarious experiences. Dewey, as we have seen, sees a continuum between everyday life and aesthetic experiences (2005: 2), as both feed into each other and produce long-lasting effects on human beings. He directs his criticism specifically against the idea of making art difficult by separating it from ordinary life and creating exclusive contexts and locations:

The arts which today have most vitality for the average person are things he does not take to be arts: for instance, the movie, jazzed music, the comic strip, and, too frequently, newspaper accounts of love-nests, murders, and exploits of bandits. For, when what he knows as art is relegated to the museum and gallery, the unconquerable impulse towards experiences enjoyable in themselves finds such outlet as the daily environment provides. (2005: 4)

From Dewey’s point of view art needs to have a level of experientiality that is accessible without years of training: “It is quite possible to enjoy flowers in their colored form and delicate fragrance without knowing anything about plants theoretically” (2005: 2). For exactly the same reason the psychologist Richard Gerrig rejects Coleridge’s “willing suspension of disbelief” (1983: 6), as it creates an artificial separation between types of experiences that should be seen as a continuum (cf. Gerrig 1998: 17). He uses the expression “*willing construction of disbelief*” (Gerrig & Rapp 2004: 267) to illustrate the problem that – more often than not – humans are rather willing to accept narratives as the truth and that it takes conscious effort to establish a critical distance and recognise design and bias. The essence of teaching cultural studies and critical media literacy in the

classroom could be summarised as establishing and maintaining this distance. While identification with characters and situations often occurs naturally, further steps have to nudge readers away from a facile acceptance of a single perspective as ‘the truth’. However, and this is really the main point here, students also have a right to experience narratives for themselves before teachers add new layers of complexity to the ongoing discussion and confront them with other views.

Frank Smith believes that students can develop a level of appreciation and understanding that may not match the teacher’s desired interpretation (cf. 2004: 26) and still be valid in its own way. To him reading is a naturally developing set of skills that is needlessly complicated by theories:

Reading is complex, but so also are walking, talking, and making sense of the world in general – and children are capable of achieving all of these, provided the environmental circumstances are appropriate. What is difficult to describe is not necessarily difficult to learn. One consideration that this book emphasizes is that children are not as helpless in the face of learning to read as often is thought. (2004: xi)

The most relevant observation in this paragraph is that things can be easily learned by doing them – “*Children learn to read by reading*” (Smith 2004: 169). According to Smith, it is hard and ultimately unnecessary to describe in detail all the skills that are involved: “Every time a new text is read, something new is likely to be learned about reading different kinds of text. Learning to read is not a process of building up a repertoire of specific skills, which make all kinds of reading possible. Instead, experience increases the ability to read different kinds of text” (2004: 188–9). Smith, it has to be restated, has young readers in mind who learn reading for the first time, mainly through practice and an intuitive grasp of what is required.

Briefly returning to our comparison of reading to driving, we may observe that, although a complex set of skills is involved, nearly everyone can achieve a passable mastery of cars independent of advanced motor skills or cognitive skills. There also seems to be consensus that most people learn to drive by steering actual cars as a holistic experience (cf. Evans & Green 2006: 184) under increasingly difficult circumstances while receiving a lot of scaffolding through an experienced instructor who helps whenever necessary, but otherwise lets learners drive on their own.

Dewey and Smith’s point is that the problem of reading – or experiencing art in general – is not that this experience is so very different from everyday life or other human activities, but that it is constantly framed as if it were. Instead of emphasising the continuities between lived experience and literary reading,

it has often been taught as a very technical, excessively analytical pursuit that involves elaborate terminologies and insider knowledge. Smith, however, begins his book *Understanding Reading* with the bold claim that reading is what we do all day long:

We read the weather, the state of the tides, people's feelings and intentions, stock market trends, animal tracks, maps, signals, signs, symbols, hands, tea leaves, the law, music, mathematics, minds, body language, between the lines, and above all [...] we read faces. "Reading," when employed to refer to interpretation of a piece of writing, is just a special use of the term. We have been reading – interpreting experience – constantly since birth and we all continue to do so. (2004: 2)

If everything we do in life results from a form of reading, Smith has to take the next logical step and propose that "reading cannot be separated from thinking. Reading is a thought-full activity. There is no difference between reading and any other kind of thought, except that with reading, thought is engendered by a written text. Reading might be defined as thought stimulated and directed by written language" (2004: 27). Instead of singling out reading as the most complex skill outside of normal cognition, he presents it on a continuum with other thought processes – the two flow into each other and are, in fact, the same thing. Cognitively speaking, this is correct, as there is no separate brain area for reading. We also rely on the same semantic and episodic memories to interpret real life and fiction. This continuum – the naturalness of storytelling and reading – is going to be a major concern in the third part of this thesis. However, and here I disagree with Smith, if we want to become chess masters, we have to play chess at increasingly higher difficulty levels. The flow experience of mastery requires endless hours of practice in the specific field, not pattern recognition in general.

Smith's most surprising move is to claim that the situations presented in narratives are, in fact, easier to read than those in real life because of the over-determination of literature. The text offers a controlled environment and a guided experience that focuses readers' attention on foregrounded elements instead of leaving them exposed to random events and the noise of unrelated bits of information. In this sense, art is indeed different from life.

The thought in which we engage while reading is like the thought we engage in while involved in any kind of experience. Fulfilling intentions, making choices, anticipating outcomes, and making sense of situations are not aspects of thinking exclusive to fluent reading. We must draw inferences, make decisions, and solve problems in order to understand what is going on in situations that involve reading and situations that don't. Reading demands no unique forms or "skills" of thought. An enormous advantage of reading over thinking in other circumstances is the control that it offers over events. (2004: 191–2)

In *Reading Fictions, Changing Minds: The Cognitive Value of Fiction* Vera Nünning presents the same argument (cf. 2014: 41) and then goes on to quote Keith Oatley, who explains that fiction is easier to read than real life, as it provides far more context for characters' thoughts and actions (cf. 2014: 42, 90, 187, 297; see also Mar & Oatley 2008: 173, 176). This is a staple of reader-response criticism and one of many links to cognitive literary studies: "art provides a more complete fulfillment of human impulses and needs than does ordinary life with its frustrations and irrelevancies. Undoubtedly, such a sense of fulfillment and emotional equilibrium is largely due to the intense, structured, and coherent nature of what is apprehended under the guidance of the text" (Rosenblatt 1995: 33; see also 37, 42–3; Dewey 2005: 44–6, 49). In *Aspects of the Novel* E. M. Forster dedicates a whole chapter to this idea (cf. Forster 1985: 43–64). Not shy of occasional hyperboles, he offers the following comparison:

In daily life we never understand each other, neither complete clairvoyance nor complete confessionals exist. We know each other approximately, by external signs, and these serve well enough as a basis for society and even for intimacy. But people in a novel can be understood completely by the reader, if the novelist wishes; their inner as well as their outer life can be exposed. (1985: 47; see also 64)

Despite the untenable polarisation between art's eminent transparency and life's depressing obscurity, Forster confirms Rosenblatt's observation that the laboratory conditions of the literary text allow for much more controlled and precise experiences than real life could ever offer.

Even 'listening' to a severely disturbed 'mad monologist' (cf. Allrath 1998) provides readers with more information and insight than any real-life encounter with the average stranger, during which they do not have the luxury of reading people's private thoughts for dozens of pages. Contrary to real life, where things may occur unexpectedly or seemingly out of context, the controlled environment of the narrative offers a plethora of highly relevant insights. In her book on *Narrative Causalities* Emma Kafalenos raises this point when considering autobiography and placing events into a larger meaningful context:

... life is generally more difficult to interpret than narratives are because we are left to determine where we are in a narrative sequence without the guidance of novelist, playwright, or historian. In our own experiencing of the world, each of us takes on for ourselves the historian's task: to decide which segment of the ribbon of life to consider as a related set of events. (2006: 131)

Narratives are always framed and actively guided. They foreground important elements and remove the noise of daily life. Smith uses the concept of

redundancy to explain why it is possible to understand printed text even when not all the details are clear to us and why authors manage to reduce a narrative to a mere blueprint, relying on our ability to fill in the rest: “Redundancy exists whenever the same information is available from more than one source, when the same alternatives can be eliminated in more than one way. And one of the basic skills of reading is the selective elimination of alternatives through the use of redundancy” (2004: 63). What Smith means is that Iser’s gaps could be filled in any number of ways, but that the text provides enough hints so that highly unlikely solutions can be immediately discarded. Iser’s comment on light reading suggests that, in his opinion, certain genre offerings are so predictable that we can draw conclusions based on a minimum amount of information. As long as the cognitive frame that pre-structures the reading of a romance novel is not actively challenged, readers become almost telepathic: they know things before they read them and see things before they happen. In this case, System 1 drives the operation and provides what we call intuition – the best guess under present circumstances. Smith’s concept of redundancy does not involve the repetition of the same elements within the text, but the maintenance of a cognitive frame through intermittent reinforcement: “In making use of redundancy, the reader makes use of prior knowledge, using something that is already known to eliminate some alternatives and thus reduce the amount of visual information that is required. Redundancy represents information you don’t need because you have it already” (2004: 65). Students, for example, can narrate entire plotlines based on the genre label alone. They can list prototypical characters, objects, locations and actions. Provided that a narrative follows the standard plot very closely, there is little to learn: every aspect is just a confirmation of what readers already know. In this sense, creating engaging narratives is a tightrope walk between boring (cf. Smith 2004: 60) and overwhelming the readership. Smith’s argument – which is very close to Iser’s – seems to be that there is usually a comfortable amount of redundancy. Experienced readers may pick up things faster, but redundancy works in such a way that the necessary clues accumulate over time and insistently point in certain directions. The most outlandishly complex narratives may turn out to be surprisingly accessible once the novelty of the first encounter has worn off.

In this context it is interesting to look at Gombrich’s view of how much information is available in paintings in contrast to real life when we try to make sense of an object: “It is hardly necessary to stress how immeasurably richer is the information we have at our disposal in this process of trial and error when we move around in the real world, compared with the interpretation of representations” (2014: 232). He points out different angles, touch and the movement of objects

that all provide a richness of information that is not available in visual art, which makes “perceptions [...] not disclosures but [...] essentially prognostic in character” (2014: 232). However, he quickly acknowledges the artist’s use of “redundancies” (2014: 233) that attempt to cancel out ambiguity and pure speculation. What looks like a deficit model of art is, in fact, its greatest strength. With the help of salience, overdetermination, defamiliarisation and redundancy, all the unnecessary information that can easily be supplied is left out and the essential elements are strategically foregrounded. The same effect can be achieved in film through various means, such as shallow focus, and with “amplification through simplification” in comics (McCloud 1994: 30; see also Mar & Oatley 2008: 177). By taking out or blurring the background, for example, the characters and their emotions are automatically emphasised. In other words, by losing information, by reducing the complexity of real life, those elements that the artist wishes to highlight become all the more visible. In this sense, cartooning is a radical application of Iser’s concept of overdetermination.

Smith’s defence of reading as a basic skill among others does not end here. Like Ansgar Nünning and Carola Surkamp (cf. 2010: 194, 198; see also Nünning 2014: 18) he argues that human thought is essentially based on storytelling in the first place, that we can only make sense of the world by narrativising it. In this sense, stories are much closer to a ‘natural’ way of understanding life than other forms of presenting information:

The human brain runs on stories. Our theory of the world is largely in the form of stories. Stories are far more easily remembered and recalled than sequences of unrelated facts. The most trivial small episodes and vignettes are intrinsically more interesting than data. We can’t see random patterns or dots (or clouds or stars) without putting faces or figures to them. [...] Thinking thrives on stories, on the construction and exploration of patterns of events and ideas, and reading often offers greater scope for engaging in stories than any other kind of activity. (Smith 2004: 192; see also Nünning 2014: 61)

This closely resembles Monika Fludernik’s argument in *Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology* (cf. 2005: 36–7, 41), where she sets out “to redefine narrativity in terms of cognitive (‘natural’) parameters, moving beyond formal narratology into the realm of pragmatics, reception theory and constructivism” (2005: xi; see also 16–17). From this point of view “man’s enmeshment or engagement with his environment operates as a central constitutive feature and as a fundamental cognitive frame” (2005: 7; see also 311), so that stories become a natural outgrowth of a body’s interactions with the world. Within her constructivist framework of embodied cognition, real-life experiences, conversational storytelling and literary art are all based on bodily experiences and our ability to become

emotionally involved (cf. 2005: 10, 12–13, 17–19, 313, 318). She even grounds her definition of narrativity in this type of experientiality (cf. 2005: 13).

Like Dewey, the proponents of aesthetic reading and most cognitive scientists, Smith believes in the unavoidable subjectivity of making sense of the world and literature in particular (cf. 2004: 27). Thinking and feeling become mutually dependent and strongly intertwined processes: “Readers always read *something*, they read for *a purpose*, and reading and its recollection always involve *feelings* as well as knowledge and experience. Reading can never be separated from the intentions and interests of readers, or from the consequences that it has on them” (2004: 178; see also 68; Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 42). In some passages Smith sounds exactly like Dewey or Rosenblatt:

What is experience? [. . .] It is synonymous with being, with creating, exploring, and interacting with worlds – real, possible, and invented. It is engagement and participation, always involving the emotions and often including a deliberate quest for uncertainty. It is an essential condition for being human and alive. Reading is experience. Reading about a storm is not the same thing as being in a storm, but both are experiences. We respond emotionally to both, and can learn from both. The learning in each case is a by-product of the experience. We don’t live to acquire information, but information, like knowledge, wisdom, abilities, attitudes, and values, comes with the experience of living. (2004: 70)

If Smith’s concept of reading as an experience sounds radically different from what some teachers may expect from students who engage with texts, we have a clear indication why there is such a mismatch between what students actually take away from a text and what conventional ‘reading comprehension’ tasks ask for. Accordingly, Smith offers a concept of comprehension that foregrounds the importance of the text to the individual reader’s expectations:

Comprehension doesn’t entail that all uncertainty is eliminated. As readers, we comprehend when we can relate potential answers to actual questions that we are asking of the text. [. . .] In fact, as we acquire information that reduces uncertainty in some ways, we usually expand our uncertainty in other ways. We find new questions to ask. We comprehend when we can ‘make sense’ of experience. (2004: 60; see also 62, 162).

In addition, Smith emphasises one of Iser’s key ideas: a total understanding of a text is not possible, which means that the reading of a text is never completed. Unless students are explicitly asked to pursue a specific line of enquiry based on efferent reading, they engage with narrative texts to the extent that the different elements can be synthesised into a larger pattern that is sufficiently integrative. This depends largely on the readers’ expectations and what they intend to achieve by reading a certain text. Thus, comprehension is always limited, preliminary

and bound to a specific reader-text transaction (cf. Delanoy 2002: 3–4). When teachers intend to go beyond the scope of what each student has managed to glean from the text on his or her own – depending on individual theories of the world and to what extent they are and let themselves be challenged by a text – this has to happen in consecutive steps. The kind of interpretation that teachers are often interested in has to be arrived at gradually, via several steps and across a number of readings. This raises two important questions that are specifically dealt with in the next two chapters: what is the role of the teacher in this process and how should the steps be organised to facilitate a smoother transition from first impressions to a more informed and balanced reading that withstands the critical questions of other readers? The transmission-model of education is anathema to the organisation of meaningful encounters and experiences with texts in which students, for lack of a better metaphor, are detectives who “regard the information offered by texts in a more general sense as *evidence* rather than as a message, the basis for a response or understanding rather than the content of comprehension” (Smith 2004: 69). For Smith, searching for this evidence has to be propelled by an overall idea or hunch of what the narrative is and where it is going. Comprehension is driven by what we know, a tentative meaning, rather than abstract terms or concepts.

Accordingly, Smith is opposed to “the tendency to fragment reading and reading instruction into packages of decontextualized ‘basic skills,’ none of which particularly engage thinking” (2004: 27). Iser’s *gestalten* or images are exactly what Smith has in mind here: “Recognition, whether of dogs and cats or written words, is not a matter of breaking something down to its components, but of integrating it into a larger context” (2004: 2). In “Cognitive Science and Dewey’s Theory of Mind, Thought, and Language” Mark Johnson discusses this experiential background as a basic tenet of Dewey’s theory that is just as valid today:

Imagine that you have just entered a colleague’s office. There is an all-encompassing way it feels to be in that place, and the unifying quality of that place is clearly different from your own office. Your experience is a blend of perceptual, emotional, practical, and conceptual dimensions intertwined in that particular place. Granted, as soon as you enter the office, you have already begun to recognize objects, mark patterns, and focus on various parts of the entire setting, but Dewey argues that all of this discriminating activity takes place within a unified experienced background out of which objects, people, and events emerge. (2010: 132)

Without the overall meaning it makes little sense to talk of any details: “The qualitative situation is primary and objects emerge within it, relative to perceiving, acting agents who have values and purposes. In other words, we do not start with properties or objects and then combine them into experiences; rather, we start

with integrated scenes within which we then discriminate objects, discern properties, and explore relations” (2010: 133).

In *Narrative Comprehension: A Discourse Perspective* (1999) Catherine Emmott proposes a reading model that works with such ‘integrated scenes’, which she calls ‘contextual frames’. The narrative constituents do not exist as independent events, characters, objects, locations and times, but they are entangled and bound to each other (cf. Emmott 2004: 123). They gain meaning in particular configurations in specific contexts. Therefore, she claims that “for narrative fiction the reader needs to create and maintain a mental model of the context” (2004: vii) instead of keeping track of characters, locations, objects etc. in isolation. Readers become entangled in narratives (cf. Iser 1980: 131) because the characters are. Similar to Iser’s model of theme and horizon, Emmott argues that contextual frames interact with and recall each other across the entire network. This is quite a departure from the conventional understanding of plot: “Narrative is usually defined as a succession of events but another important feature of narrative texts is that some or all of the events are described as they take place within a particular context. As a result, these events are ‘brought to life’ for the reader, being ‘acted out’ rather than presented in a summary form” (2004: 236). Vicariously ‘living through’ (cf. Rosenblatt 1995: 38) these scenes – being actively entangled – is very different from stating what happened. We need to have a holistic understanding of what the scene is about before we can determine what the details mean. The following chapter looks specifically at the role of teachers to set up and facilitate different engagements with literary texts that favour aesthetic reading over the extraction of information.

2.2 The Teacher of Literature as a Facilitator

Werner Delanoy’s “The Complexity of Literature Teaching in the Language Classroom” (1996) is an excellent starting point for a clarification of the teacher’s role in students’ transactions with literary texts. It originated in a contested interpretation of *Dead Poets Society* with a group of first-year university students of English whose responses did not live up to Delanoy’s initial expectations. Like most teachers, he had a specific reading in mind that was “politically motivated” (1996: 62; see also 64–6) in his case. He had hoped they would take a critical stance towards the class and gender hierarchies of the film or, at least, embrace such an approach as eminently meaningful as soon as it was introduced to them. This led to a frustrating “clash” (1996: 63) between Delanoy’s interest in deconstruction – a “relatively narrow” focus, as he later admits (1996: 77; see also 79) – and the students’ strong emotional bonding with the main characters (cf.

1996: 65–6) that did not allow for any critical distance. This breakdown of communication ultimately required a substantial shift in methodology:

Despite our conflicting interests, it seemed to me that both an aesthetic and a political approach could lead to important insights. The problem which arose from this situation was how further learning steps could be structured to foster a dialogue between the two approaches. What I mean by dialogue in the context of literature learning is that all the partners in interaction (e.g. aesthetic texts, teachers, students) should have the right to articulate their interests without any of them dominating the other(s). In addition, a dialogue should give everyone the opportunity to enrich their own perspective by confronting different viewpoints. (1996: 66)

Delanoy did not abandon his “emancipatory aims” and the teacher’s responsibility “to support students in developing complex identities” (1996: 72), which one could link to the concept of ‘critical (media) literacy’ in a broader sense. However, this is something that students have to develop themselves, as Delanoy acknowledges, under the guidance of the teacher. The literature classroom has to become a ‘playground’ of ideas and emotions to enable experiments with different interpretative approaches (cf. 1996: 72–3). This requires “three elementary pedagogical principles, namely *active learner participation*, *process orientation* and *dialogic problem-solving*” (1996: 75; see also 75–7). Delanoy did not lose sight of his ultimate goal – “to question the film’s socio-political implications” (1996: 77), but he accepted the fact that “all the learning steps should be related to the interests and abilities of the learners”, which “required a careful structuring of the learning process” (1996: 76). After reconsidering his methodology, he came to a conclusion that represents a fitting summary of the points raised so far: “acts of teacher mediation can intrude upon the relationships between the learners and the aesthetic text. Teachers of literature in an EFL-context, therefore, should be particularly sensitive to how their role as a facilitator of aesthetic experience can influence their learners’ response and classroom interaction” (1996: 84). This is a remarkable statement as it addresses a teacher’s potentially harmful intervention in the students’ interactions with texts. Accordingly, Delanoy associates the specific challenges of teaching literature mostly with the question of how to acknowledge the individual students’ reading experiences in a meaningful sequence of lessons that does not foreground the teacher’s own interpretation and thus embraces the students’ contributions as equally valid (cf. 2002: 35).

In the past it was more acceptable for teachers to have students read out aloud, elicit responses to check whether their answers matched the public meaning of a text, point out important textual features in the form of a model analysis or simply tell them why this work is widely recognised as a perennial classic (cf.

Delanoy 2002: 138). Michael Benton openly criticises such “conventional classroom practice where the teacher takes the class on a guided tour through the poem, pointing out the main attractions of such sight-seeing and inevitably imposing his or her own ‘reading’ on the whole experience” (1992: 92; see also Collie & Slater 1988: 7). Reader-response criticism and aesthetic reading, in contrast, are about the transformative processes and experiences that occur while students are transacting with a text. Taken seriously, this would reduce a teacher’s involvement in class to a marginalised role, as Eva Burwitz-Melzer observes (cf. Bredella & Burwitz-Melzer 2004: 225). Since teachers cannot and should not do the reading for their students (cf. Collie & Slater 1988: 8), Burwitz-Melzer redefines their duties as those of mediators and coordinators, of instigators and organisers of new learning processes, much in the same way that Delanoy reconceptualised his own role in the classroom as that of a facilitator (cf. 1996: 84; see also 2002: 4–5, 135–6).

While the role of the teacher as a facilitator is unanimously accepted in general terms (cf. e.g. Grimm, Meyer & Volkmann 2015: 20), there is a temptation in teaching literature to directly explain what a work means and how it should be read in view of the educational context for which it was chosen (cf. Sklar 2013: 159–60). During a first encounter with a narrative, students are not likely to arrive at an understanding that requires substantial cultural and historical background knowledge (cf. Delanoy 1996: 76). Yet, providing all the necessary information beforehand comes with its own problems: “If students are informed about the biographical, historical, cultural and social background they might not relate the text to their concerns and interests but read it with the expectation that it will confirm what they have been taught about the biographical, historical, cultural and social background” (Bredella & Delanoy 1996: xi). If one takes aesthetic reading seriously, then efferent reading should not be the starting point of an engagement with literary texts, which are ideally suited to address real-world issues in an aesthetic form and allow readers to explore a new and maybe unfamiliar world before it becomes categorised and rationalised.

This is why Rosenblatt proposes a reading process in several steps that assigns the teacher the role of facilitator: “It seems so much easier all around if the teacher cuts the Gordian knot and gives the students the tidy set of conclusions and labels he has worked out. Yet this does not necessarily give them new insights. Hence the emphasis throughout this book on the teacher’s role in initiating and guiding a process of inductive learning” (1995: 232; see also Collie & Slater 1988: 8). Rosenblatt raises an important point here: if teachers are not interested in how students respond to a text, but simply want them to know, for example,

why it has accumulated so much cultural capital, it is far more efficient to simply teach that kind of knowledge. When students are asked to gather the public meaning of a text by reading it, which naturally involves filtering it through their own consciousness, while the information they are supposed to find is neatly summarised online, it would be highly impractical to read the book. No matter what they would find in there, it cannot possibly live up to what is already out there in terms of the accumulated insights of countless readers. If we thus reduce literary texts to sources of information, then some people's reservations about literature in the classroom are fully justified:

Some will concede that the school and the teacher have the responsibility of developing constructive attitudes toward human relations but will ask, Why suggest this round-about way of transmitting such insight? [...] Why take the time of a literature class for discussions suggested by the haphazard accidents of student reactions? [...] Would it not be preferable to eliminate any such topics from the literature classroom and to depend on a more orderly method of presenting this information to the students? (Rosenblatt 1995: 225)

There are three simple reasons why aesthetic reading – at least as a starting point for a wider discussion of a literary text – is indispensable: (1) readers have to discover its meaning for themselves by finding a connection between what they read with their own lives and interests. From a cognitive point of view this is the only route to effective learning. It is also the only way to develop an interest in reading. If learner autonomy should become a reality, we have to trust students to discover things on their own. (2) Following Dewey (2005), Sternberg (1978) and Iser (1980), a work of art is constructed in such a way that it provides a unique guided experience that would be ruined by removing its aesthetic qualities. Through overdetermination, defamiliarisation and redundancy it creates effects that can only fully function in a sequential and contextualised manner. (3) These effects have to be experienced and responded to in an ongoing process that is constituted of specific narrative situations. There is no shortcut to that: “No one else can read a literary work for us. The benefits of literature can emerge only from creative activity on the part of the reader himself” (Rosenblatt 1995: 264).

In *Teaching Literature: Nine to Fourteen* Michael Benton and Geoff Fox redefine the role of the teacher accordingly: “The main emphasis of the teacher's job is not, in fact, *explication du texte* but the cultivation of individual and shared responses to the text” (1985: 24; see also Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 50–1, 62–5). What is even worse is a constant elicitation of the ‘right’ answers (cf. 1985: 18, 107; Collie & Slater 1988: 8), which usually involves posing suggestive questions

till one of the students manages to guess what the teacher wanted to hear. The only solution is to choose social forms of interaction that prevent teachers from dominating classroom discussions during the early stages of reading a text. The reasons for this are simple: (1) teachers are frequently under pressure to achieve concrete results within a limited amount of time; (2) they are usually quite familiar with the literary text, which puts them at an advantage and makes the students' contributions appear sadly inadequate; and (3) they may be tempted to showcase their own superior knowledge by surprising students with profound observations. Based on Carol Feldman's research on teacher behaviour, Jerome Bruner observes that "the use of modal auxiliary markers in teachers' talk to students and in their talk to each other in the staff room" is significantly different: "Modals expressing a stance of uncertainty or doubt in teacher talk to teachers far outnumbered their occurrence in teacher talk to students. The world that the teachers were presenting to their students was a far more settled, far less hypothetical, far less negotiatory world than the one they were offering to their colleagues" (1986: 126).

Burwitz-Melzer (cf. 2004: 237–324) singles out the lockstep discussion of literary texts as the appropriate social form to complement aesthetic reading, presumably because it is still the most widely used form to treat literary texts in the classroom. However, based on her own observations of specific classroom settings, she notices that lockstep discussions are frequently handled badly, as teachers tend to dominate the discussions (cf. 2004: 248, 256, 292), ask narrow questions (cf. 2004: 291, 295–6), change their plans halfway through the procedure (cf. 2004: 295), or simply fail to organise the sequence appropriately (cf. 2004: 322). That is why Aidan Chambers makes the postponement of the teacher's input one of the basic requirements for the literary classroom: "The teacher doesn't offer her reading of a text until late in the discussion so that hers doesn't become the privileged point of view, or the one that determines the agenda" (1996: 45; see also Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 51; Delanoy 1996: 84). Accordingly, "the topics selected for discussion must come from the readers as a group rather than from the teacher or indeed from any dominant person" (1996: 70).

Since it is unlikely that a whole group of students is going to respond equally enthusiastically to a literary text, even when it was carefully chosen, teachers have to take into consideration that some students – given the chance – may criticise or even reject it for not conforming to their expectations. This is the risk of treating them as equal partners. With close friends and family members we accept the fact that tastes vary substantially, which means that not all twenty students in class are going to embrace the book we have chosen for them to read.

There are two decisive factors that may help to raise the acceptance of a text: the proper framing of the reading at the very beginning and an opportunity for students to voice their concerns *early* in the process. Nothing could be more detrimental to students' motivation and enjoyment of a narrative than forcing them to read a book in its entirety that they find hard to digest at the very beginning. Framing the text, scaffolding learners' engagement with it and listening to first responses are three of the most important duties of the teacher as a facilitator at the beginning of the reading process (cf. Delanoy 2015: 35–6).

Negative responses to a work of art are a natural part of life: we are eager to recommend books that we enjoyed reading, but we are equally vocal about mixed feelings, outright boredom or instant rejection. The important difference in an educational setting is that teachers have to channel these emotional responses so that they become productive (cf. Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 241). Generally speaking, language teachers have to enable students to adequately express themselves in different social settings and text types, which also has to include the articulation of criticism. Benton and Fox argue that, if we really want our learners to become independent and critical thinkers, we have to let them articulate their views: “if we want pupils to be discriminating, we must expect – even hope – that they will sometimes discriminate *against*. If we want to honour the individual reader's response, there is little consistency in ignoring negative responses” (1985: 107). Thus, language work also has to include the coordinated verbalisation of criticism: “readers usually need the means to work out negative responses, just as they need the opportunities to develop their positive responses” (1985: 108). This is the only way that students “believe that genuine negative responses will be honoured” (1985: 108). Otherwise they fall silent.

Since Delanoy takes reading as a process very seriously (cf. 1996: 75–6), he is fully aware of problems that may occur early on and that require a teacher's intervention in the form of “motivational encouragement” or “a careful and reflective response” (cf. 2015: 35). He conceives of reading as taking place in several steps, as this is the only way to intervene and help students out of a reader response that leads to an increasingly negative attitude. He also propagates his own version of critical (media) literacy, which he calls “*resisting*” (*Widerstehen*) (2002: 103; see also 7–10, 91–112). Most teachers would not see a problem when students enthusiastically embrace a text and love to talk about it. This returns us to the example we started with: Delanoy's discussion of *Dead Poets Society* with a group of undergraduate students. The problem was not, surprisingly, that they did not respond to the text, but the exact opposite: that they were so entranced by the narrative and identified with the teenage protagonists to such a degree that they

lost all critical perspective. What made the situation impossible to resolve was Delanoy's hope that they would perform one of the most complex tasks imaginable – a critical deconstruction of the film's underpinning ideological message – after what I gather to be the first viewing. From the students' perspective, the critical attitude was built directly into the narrative's structure: a rebellion of the younger generation against the antiquated traditions of a powerful establishment. Delanoy expected them to notice that the protagonists were all white, male, well-to-do (cf. 1996: 65) and only faced typical first-world-problems: girlfriend issues and daddies who did not approve of acting careers. Due to the extreme jarring of expectations there was no easy solution and Delanoy had to completely revise his plan: with hindsight he describes his first approach as something that students might experience as “an alien reading strategy aimed at killing their reading pleasure” (1996: 76). Jerome Bruner believes that a dialogic approach is essential to critical thinking and that one's stance – including the teacher's – has to be marked as one among many possible views:

For what is needed is a basis for discussing not simply the content of what is before one, but the possible stances one might take toward it. I think it follows from what I have said that the language of education, if it is to be an invitation to reflection and culture creating, cannot be the so-called uncontaminated language of fact and “objectivity.” It must express stance and must invite counter-stance and in the process leave place for reflection, for metacognition. It is this that permits one to reach higher ground, this process of objectifying in language or image what one has thought and then turning around on it and reconsidering it. (1986: 129)

Students' blind acceptance of whatever the partners in the dialogic process – texts, peers, teachers and their own readings – have to offer is difficult to discourage, as it functions as a comfortable form of scaffolding or framing. Since the transaction with the text comes first and readers are likely to embrace whatever writers have in store for them (cf. Gerrig & Rapp 2004: 267), a necessary strategy is to develop the individual's critical stance in a sequence of activities. For obvious reasons this can only happen as a “gradual shift from the pursuit of student interests” (Delanoy 1996: 77) to a more guided engagement with the text. This should not mean that students are tricked into believing that they get a chance to articulate their personal views, but then teachers take over and refocus their attention onto what really matters.

When the teacher's role changes to facilitator, the students' roles have to change accordingly, meaning that they have to become more active: “Helping children engage in the drama of reading, helping them become dramatist (rewriter of the text), director (interpreter of the text), actor (performer of the text), audience (actively responsive recipient of the text), even critic (commentator

and explicator and scholarly student of the text), is how I think of our work as teachers of reading” (Chambers 1996: 5). Yet, for students to perform these roles, they have to actively take them on and this includes the role of the critic. Lothar Bredella (cf. Bredella & Burwitz-Melzer 2004: 101–9, 132) differentiates between three overlapping reader roles – the participant, the observer and the critic – that could be roughly correlated to three stages in a gradual development from subjectivity to greater objectivity. Bredella sees a hands-on, playful and immersive approach for the participant, a more critical and distanced perspective for the observer, halfway between the text and his or her own theory of the world, and a completely rational and analytical outsider’s stance for the critic. One important thing to note is that students always train with a text for the next reading. Sometimes teachers believe that the new information or critical categories should be immediately available to students, but this only works in highly controlled settings. A more analytical approach to literary texts *can* become natural and automatic (cf. Nünning 2014: 298), but the prerequisites have to be established first. Rosenblatt demonstrates a lot of optimism when she states that, “when the transactions are lived through for their own sake, they will probably have as by-products the educational, informative, social, and moral values for which literature is often praised” (1982: 275). However, for students to take on the central role in the classroom, they need some training and this has to be organised with the help of texts.

One of the advantages of addressing contemporary issues through the reading of literature is the idea that it offers a sandbox or laboratory for experiments, both for the creator and the co-creators, the readers (cf. Rosenblatt 1995: 190; Dewey 2005: 150; Bredella 2010: xxxviii, 20, 32, 76, 81; Nünning 2014: 36–7). Rosenblatt considers it essential that “the individual be liberated from the provincialism of his particular family, community, or even national background” (1995: 184), which is intended to have a double effect. It broadens readers’ horizon by introducing them to contexts inaccessible within their own world, but also creates some distance to their familiar environments, which are relativised through the presence of different perspectives. This invites a reader to move into what Iser calls the “third dimension” (1980: 218), a space between “his own habitual disposition” and “his discoveries”, which allows for a balance between the two and which Iser associates with the meaning of the text. It is a give and take between text and reader. Dewey states that a real experience requires effort (cf. 2005: 182–3) and Bredella argues that reading goes beyond a simple identification with characters: “we do not only identify with characters and feel with them. Literary texts also encourage us to reflect on how we are involved. There is a self-reflexive or meta-cognitive element in reading literary texts because we are not forced to

take part and interfere” (2010: 48; see also Rosenblatt 1995: 228). Yet, for all of these effects to take place and shape, teachers have to step back and let learners find out for themselves.

As we have seen so far, all approaches to aesthetic reading involve a system of steps that gradually leads students from their first impressions to a more accomplished and more articulate reading of a text. The challenge for the teacher, as we have seen in Delanoy’s example, is to organise and accompany this process as a facilitator of learning. In the following chapter we look at different models to conceptualise such a transition.

2.3 Reading in Stages

Although Rosenblatt is the earliest proponent of a staged approach, her references to the concept remain rather vague. She explains that she invited her students “to make articulate the very stages that are often ignored or forgotten by the time a satisfactory reading has been completed” (1994: 9–10), but she refrains from defining them. Her conceptualisation of the reading process can be inconsistent at times. In some instances she follows Iser and sets out “to differentiate between the reader’s evocation of the work and his interpretation of that evocation” (1994: 69), which requires “an effort to describe in some way the nature of the lived-through evocation of the work” (1994: 70). In other sections of *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* she suggests that the two stages cannot be separated, as they are happening at the same time:

Once the work has been re-created, it seems, the reader-critic can respond to it, evaluate it, analyze it. To limit the reading process to the production of the work, however, with the critical responses a purely subsequent activity, oversimplifies the actual reading transaction. Even as we are generating the work of art, we are reacting to it. A concurrent stream of feelings, attitudes, and ideas is aroused by the very work being summoned up under guidance of the text. (1994: 48)

Under the influence of Dewey, Rosenblatt usually favours an understanding of reading as a holistic and unique experience during the original evocation of the work of art, but here she makes a concession, as interpretation *can* occur as a natural part of any transaction with a text. Still, she prefers to conceptualise interpretation as a distinct second step, especially in educational settings, that involves “a reexperiencing, a reenacting, of the work-as-evoked, and an ordering and elaborating of our responses to it” (1994: 134). Delanoy objects to such a clear distinction between a ‘natural’ or aesthetic first reading and a more objective or efferent rereading (cf. 2002: 68), as both are part of an ongoing process that involves a constant re-vision of one’s understanding of a text’s meaning.

This is how Bredella and Delanoy formulate this idea: “Reading is conceived as a process in which students go through various phases of understanding. Thus they can become aware of how understanding develops and learn to articulate and discuss their responses with fellow students in order to clarify and modify them” (1996: x). According to this principle, it is more important to organise stages of engagement that require students to keep an open mind and participate in the ongoing dialogue, instead of ascribing these steps explicit functional priorities. At the same time, verbs like ‘develop’, ‘learn’, ‘clarify’ and ‘modify’ signal that sequences of lessons need to have goals that can only be reached via a series of interlocking tasks. What is required, then, is a staged approach that leaves some room for flexible forms of engagement and individual development while working on a shared goal in dedicated sections of every lesson. Before we reach that point, a few more preliminary considerations concerning the sequencing of tasks are in order to illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

In “Readers, Texts, Authors” Rosenblatt acknowledges that “strands or aspects of the extremely complex process going on during the reading transaction can be abstracted as interpretation, evaluation, criticism directed toward the emerging evocation” (1998: 887). However, to keep the transaction with the text ‘pure’ from any efferent interference, she postpones any serious discussion or analysis to the time when everyone has read the text: “After the reading, say, of *Middlemarch*, this interpretive effort may continue more explicitly in, for example, the testing of different psychological concepts or schema to explain a character’s behavior” (1998: 888). For someone who acknowledges that reading as a process involves several stages, it is unusual that she would cling to the traditional pattern of having students read hundreds of pages on their own without giving them a chance to respond to the text. The “felt meaning that constitutes the experienced work” (1998: 888), which is the echo of the first evocation, has to be a strange abstraction, as “[l]arge-scale texts such as novels or epics cannot be continually ‘present’ to the reader with an identical degree of intensity” (Iser 1980: 16). Therefore, my intention for this chapter is to draw more attention to the early stages of reading that can be equally organised and guided. When students read chapters at home, it may not be possible to make their immediate aesthetic responses available for classroom work, which is much easier with poetry, but one can get a lot closer to the original evocation of novels and work with aesthetic responses that mirror the phases of reading through which students pass.

Nünning and Surkamp approach staging through the widely established pattern of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities (cf. 2010: 71–82), which correspond to a certain extent to framing, evocation and interpretation.

Although these authors offer a plethora of useful ideas and activities, they acknowledge that this model is better suited for short texts that are read together in the classroom, while longer narratives may require a more differentiated approach (cf. 2010: 74). In the case of novels, the reading process may stretch over several lessons, may go back and forth between intensive and extensive reading, and may involve very different social forms and activities, such as several pre-reading and post-reading tasks within the context of the while-reading stage. In the introductory chapters of their book, Nünning and Surkamp treat literature as a collective term, before they distinguish between poetry, drama, prose, film, and radio plays. When looking at the chapter on prose, the suggested while-reading activities could be for mini-sagas or *Middlemarch*. This explains why some of them are more suitable for lessons that accompany a longer while-reading stage, while others seem more appropriate for short stories. The intended broad applicability of the book also produces a typology of activities that caters to very different interests and tastes: traditional reading comprehension, language work, aesthetic & creative responses (e.g. drama techniques), keeping reading/response journals, narratological analysis, summary writing, reconstructing texts from fragments, gap-filling activities, reconstructing the timeline, analysing scenes and characters etc. (cf. 2010: 74–6). When dealing with longer narrative texts, the logic of the three stages is hard to maintain: after reading the first chapter of a book, students engage in activities that are ‘post’ in relation to chapter one, ‘while’ in view of the entire narrative and ‘pre’ in terms of anticipating chapter 2. Therefore, a staged approach for longer texts has to assign some of these activities more specific slots and functions within a sequence of lessons.

In his own book on how to teach literature Delanoy criticises Bredella and other proponents of aesthetic reading in the classroom that they do not offer sufficient support for teachers who are interested in turning these ideas into more manageable concepts (cf. 2002: 6). He finds a more suitable model in Benton and Fox’s four phases of reading: feeling like reading; getting into the story; being lost in the book; and having an increasing sense of an ending (cf. Benton & Fox 1985: 11–12; see also Benton 1992: 33–5). While the first mirrors Nünning and Surkamp’s pre-reading phase (cf. Delanoy 2002: 71), with a focus on framing the narrative, working with predictions and the students’ expectations, while finding the necessary motivation, the second phase is an important addition: this is the first encounter with the narrative, when the readers are “invited to play a game devised by the author. The rules are given in the first few pages” (Benton & Fox 1985: 12) and the readers have to find their orientation and decide whether they are willing to play along. This is close to David Bordwell’s concept that a “film cues the spectator to execute a definable variety of *operations*” (1985: 29) by

making “the initial portions of a text crucial for the establishment of hypotheses” (1985: 38). Thus, “[e]very film trains its spectator” (1985: 45), as he later proclaims. This experience can be quite overwhelming, as so many things are introduced at the same time that readers may find it quite challenging to cope with this flood of information. With authentic texts the language alone may pose unique challenges. This stage is called ‘getting into the story’, so it is essential that students do. That is why Delanoy sees a necessity to offer support and guidance at this early point, a few pages or a chapter into the narrative (cf. 2015: 35; 2002: 72). Some of the difficulties can be addressed during the previous stage (framing/lead-in) and partly remedied by alert teachers, but the crucial point is to give students an opportunity to voice some of their concerns early on.

In contrast to Nünning and Surkamp’s while-reading phase Benton and Fox’s ‘being lost in a book’ is exclusively concerned with aesthetic reading and thus personal responses to a text. The misleading phrasing of ‘being lost in a book’ suggests a random affair, but the authors differentiate between four stages – picturing, anticipating and retrospectively, interacting, and evaluating (cf. 1985: 12–16), which should be actively encouraged, guided and accompanied through specific tasks (cf. 1985: 119). The first process has to do with mental world-building, the second with Iser’s theme and horizon structure, the third with positioning oneself in relation to the text, and the fourth with the development of a moral attitude towards the characters and the overall narrative. In each case, the readers are supposed to be transported into and thus living inside the secondary world into which they have projected themselves. Benton and Fox encourage active interventions on part of the teacher in that “activities have to be found to sustain interest and revive involvement on the journey through the book” (1985: 118). They also introduce the idea of so-called “response points”, which are “pre-determined points” in the narrative at which students are asked to engage in an “introspective recall” (1985: 6). They take notes on what has just occurred, what is likely to happen, how they feel about these developments and where they see themselves in relation to the narrative. This activity is still very popular, for example in the form of Judith Dodge’s “Interactive Bookmarks” (2005: 34, 41–2), for which Dodge lists several activities.

Due to the close ties Benton and Fox have to reader-response criticism, they suggest activities that encourage the “twin processes of anticipation and retrospection” (Benton & Fox 1985: 14). This is also related to Meir Sternberg’s concept of “the bi-directional processing of information” by which he means “the play of expectation and hypothesis, retrospective revision of patterns, shifts of ambiguity, and progressive reconstitution in general” (1978: 98; see also Benton & Fox 1985: 14; Dewey 2005: 189). While the first type – anticipation – is widely

established in teaching in the form of making predictions, especially during the pre-reading stage, the rereading and reinterpreting of previous sections should be equally important. Sternberg speaks of the possibility of “unexpected retroactive illumination” (1978: 100), e.g. in the case of detective novels (cf. Benton & Fox 1985: 14) or narratives with a twist at the end that completely changes our perspective on everything that has transpired. Iser calls the meaning-making process in reverse the “retroactive effect” (1980: 111; see also 114, 115, 155; Rosenblatt 1994: 10, 57–8, 60–1, 85, 134) through which our memories become transformed: what we thought we knew about a character or situation is reshaped through new evidence that has come to light. Unfortunately, in their chapter on “Teaching the class novel” (1985: 115–34), though Benton and Fox ask students to document their reading progress through journals, logs, wall charts, time lines, maps, family trees, and notes (cf. 1985: 121–5), they do not pay a lot of attention to activities that specifically ask for a re-evaluation of what has already happened. Joanne Collie and Stephen Slater, who borrow quite a few of these documentary formats for their own *Literature in the Language Classroom* (1987), finally do, as we shall see shortly. The fourth stage, ‘having an increasing sense of an ending’, does not refer to readers’ awareness that there are only a few pages left to read, but rather to their ability to conclude the narrative for themselves in a meaningful way, which corresponds to Iser’s progress from open to closing gestalten.

There are two significant disadvantages to this model. The first is that the while-reading stage (‘getting lost in a book’) is again undifferentiated. Although Benton and Fox offer several promising ideas how this process could be conceptualised, they say little about the stages in between. Secondly, there is no post-reading stage at all. Benton & Fox are so dedicated to the idea of aesthetic reading that they do not address other aspects that may play a role in a TEFL setting. Therefore, Delanoy redefines their ‘sense of an ending’ by shifting the focus to ‘getting out of the text’ (cf. 2002: 74–5) to compensate for this limitation. Even though he stresses the necessity to build a bridge between reading and interpretation and acknowledges the possibility of encouraging reflection and interpretation *while* reading, he clearly prefers a separate sequence of lessons that focuses on interpretation *afterwards* (cf. 2002: 75).

It is Collie and Slater who finally address the problem that the while-reading stage has to be fully segmented to make it work (cf. 1988: 36). This was anticipated by Benton and Fox, as we have seen, but it is much further developed here, especially for reading prose fiction. Although contemporary methodology has absorbed most of the activities that are collected in *Literature in the Language Classroom: A Resource Book of Ideas and Activities* (cf. Nünning & Surkamp

2010: 71–6), the segmental approach, for which they were designed, has become one option among others and is largely kept alive in Engelbert Thaler's books *Teaching English Literature* (cf. 2008: 105–7) and *Teaching English with Films* (cf. 2014: 134–42). Collie and Slater address the crucial point that certain activities only make sense during specific stages of the reading process, such as “Reassessing” or “Continuing predictions” (1988: 53–4). We have seen this already with the pre-reading stage or Benton and Fox's ‘getting into the story’, but they add several more steps that are unavoidable when tackling longer reading texts together. For such lessons, which now contain proper pre-, while- and post-reading activities within the suprasegmental phase of while-reading, they offer a tentative lesson plan (cf. 1988: 37). Instead of their preferred option of reading a new segment with the students as the main focus of each lesson, I am more in favour of the second: “At other times, class time is used to introduce a new aspect or theme, using a passage students have read at home, with the aim of deepening their insight into the book's literary features” (1988: 37). Although the entire first session and the beginning of each consecutive one should be dedicated to students' responses and specific interests, rereading becomes increasingly important to find evidence in the text and gradually shift the focus towards interpretation and analysis.

Collie and Slater's teaching sequence on William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (cf. 1988: 93–162) is split into twelve sections, which correspond to the twelve chapters of the novel, and contains activities for every single stage of the entire procedure. This arrangement promises a substantial advantage over the mix-and-match approach, since all tasks gain importance due to their strategic placement in the overall design. Like all meaningful tasks, they help to train important competences, but they also interconnect with each other within and across lessons by continuing or building on previous activities during key stages of the process.

However, the authors only partially realise the potential of such a set-up. As the subtitle of the publication reveals, Collie and Slater try to cater to various audiences, which means that they mix types of activities whose reasons for existence range from pure entertainment to absolute necessities in terms of British curricula at the time. They cover everything from basic reading comprehension via substantial language work to highly personal responses, from traditional product-orientation via group discussions to creative responses, and from essentialist and formalist notions of plot and characterisation via explorations of different readings to idiosyncratic judgements. At the same time, they never sufficiently explain why and in which specific contexts these activities are more or less suitable. The only exceptions are practical

considerations, such as time constraints, the potential fun to be had or the workload of the teacher. In short, these activities are motivated by very different aims, sometimes mutually exclusive ones. What Collie and Slater do tackle is retrospective reading. They rely substantially on Benton and Fox's approach and the different forms of documenting the reading process, repeatedly asking students to retrace their steps (cf. 1988: 37, 53–4, 85–6). This is finally a methodology that attempts to accompany the reading process of prose fiction itself and does not rely on what Rosenblatt calls "the recollected evocation" (1988: 887).

The last model I discuss before presenting my own staged approach is Michael Benton's "Reading and responding to poems – a flexible methodology" (1992: 89). In a very short chapter, "Poetry in the classroom" (1992: 87–95) Benton offers a framework that is closely tied to Rosenblatt's theory and relies on a "reader-response-centred methodology", for which "a phased procedure for individual work as a lead-in to group activity is fundamental" (1992: 87–8). To guarantee a "shift from individual apprehension of the poem through successful activities towards a fuller comprehension" (1992: 88) Benton suggests specific steps in a predetermined sequence. Though he includes "multiple exit points" to introduce the "flexibility that poetry-teaching needs", his framework is far from coincidental and "attempts to honour the principles" (1992: 88) of Rosenblatt's legacy. In general, there are three main stages: an individual transaction with the text that leads into pair or group work, which, in turn, is followed by more formalised responses. For the individual transaction, which he associates with apprehension (in contrast to comprehension later on), he suggests a "preparatory lead-in", an initial reading that is accompanied by "[e]nabling tasks" that lead to the articulation of and reflection on personal responses. Although the written notes can be rudimentary, Benton believes in the medium of language: "Using writing to think with in the form of jottings helps extend the time we give, it helps to keep the aesthetic experience central and enables meanings to be evoked, and it helps us to take possession of the works of art and make them our own" (1992: 118). Benton closely follows Dewey's model of aesthetic reading here in which "direct and unreasoned impression comes first" (2005: 151), which is nourished and cultivated so that it leads over into discrimination. "The phase of reflection in the rhythm of esthetic appreciation is criticism in germ and the most elaborate and conscious criticism is but its reasoned expansion" (2005: 152). There is a direct line here from immediate personal response via articulation and reflection to intersubjective communication. For Dewey, but also for Delanoy, as we have seen, this process has a political dimension: "an audience that is itself habituated to being told, rather than schooled in thoughtful inquiry, likes to

be told” (2005: 312). However, this ‘schooling in thoughtful inquiry’ has to be implemented by teachers and has to start with individual students’ awareness of and reflection upon their own – sometimes confused – responses. Benton argues that “we need to facilitate pupils in this procedure which, through self-monitoring, enables readers to represent to themselves what they think, through reflecting enables them to hold and refine their ideas, and through expressing these ideas enables them to assess their own reactions against those of their peers” (1992: 88).

This step is also important for the subsequent phases of Benton’s framework, when students plan to share their insights in pairs and groups and co-construct the meaning of the text. Such a step is essential in Benton’s approach as a gradual transition into comprehension, which requires a testing of one’s own premises, argumentations among peers, shared detective work to argue in favour or against different readings etc. This is then followed by performances and other creative activities, until more formalised responses become a possibility. These are usually based on the accumulated work of the groups (cf. 1992: 90). The most striking aspect of Benton’s procedure is that he completely refrains from whole-class discussions till the very end. What this model proposes is a more focused and logical progression in smaller steps that establishes clear priorities in terms of transactions: student – text, student – students, students – teacher. Group work and peer feedback are the important in-between steps that lead the individual from first impressions to a more considerate and better articulated interpretation of a text. This serves to avoid an early confrontation between the individual student’s un(in)formed thoughts and the teacher’s potentially unrealistic expectations:

In many cases there is an unbridged gulf between anything the student might actually feel about the book and what the teacher, from the point of view of accepted critical attitudes and his adult sense of life, thinks the pupil should notice. This often leads the student to consider literature something academic, remote from his own present concerns and needs. (Rosenblatt 1995: 59)

In pairs and groups, students can test their preliminary hypotheses and ideas, pursue and argue certain claims, but also return to the literary text for confirmation, *before* they are asked to share their thoughts with the whole class. While classrooms may blur the lines between public and private settings, especially when teachers and students have known each other for a long time, a lockstep discussion is still the most public forum within this community.

The context for the following framework is an attempt to find a middle way between extensive reading at home, using a reading response journal, and

intensive reading in the classroom that is more typical of shorter texts. It relies on a distinction between largely aesthetic reading, which takes place at home, and a gradual introduction of efferent/factual/analytical reading that takes place in school and carries over into mini-assignments that are completed at home and presented as postings on a gated online discussion forum. One key concept of Collie and Slater's model is always valid in such a context:

It is most important that the parts of a book which are to be read by students on their own should be related to the ongoing pattern of activities in the classroom. Follow-up tasks can be used that depend upon prior home reading, or some aspect of the passage read can be incorporated into the next classroom activity [. . .]. What is essential is to link class and home work, to help maintain an overview of the whole book as we go through it. (1988: 12)

Like most teachers, Rosenblatt argues that "in any actual class the different phases will not be so sharply separate. The creation of a setting for personal response is basic, as is a situation in which students stimulate one another to organise their diffuse responses and formulate their views" (1995: 74). Following Michael Benton's lead, I also believe that the various stages can be defined in more precise terms without turning the framework into a straight-jacket. On the contrary, it is intended to open up spaces for an ongoing dialogue that has room for students' personal responses, but also the pursuit of a single concern over several lessons.

Stage 1: Framing

The first and the last stage frame the engagement with a literary text in a double sense. The former carefully leads into the narrative by establishing links to the context(s), into which the reading is embedded, but it also establishes the framework within which the text will be read and discussed. The final stage summarises the sequence of lessons and leads out of it by highlighting its importance for present as well as future contexts and purposes. Eva Burwitz-Melzer associates the beginning and the end of a class reading with increased teacher activity (cf. Bredella & Burwitz-Melzer 2004: 225–8). Importantly, she singles out the planning stage, which has to precede the contextualisation of a book in the classroom. If the teacher's role as a facilitator is meant to become a reality, elaborate interventions during the long suprasegmental while-reading phase should be reduced as much as possible, which requires extensive pre-planning during the early stages. Since the dominant role of the teacher is going to be significantly reduced, the roles of the students have to expand accordingly. Thus, it is indispensable to establish a work environment that is conducive to open discussions

and the exploration of different interpretations, but also to learner autonomy and a pro-active engagement with texts. During the final stages, after many individual transactions with the text, the necessity to compare results and to find some form of closure requires an increasingly stronger presence of the teacher.

The choice of texts has to reflect the students' stage of development and their interests: "If the high school student reads the *Odyssey* or the Book of Job or *Romeo and Juliet*, it should be primarily because at this point in his life this particular work offers a significant and enjoyable experience for him, an experience that involves him personally and that he can assimilate into his ongoing intellectual and emotional development" (Rosenblatt 1960: 307). Although the canon of literary texts for the classroom has been significantly widened in TEFL (cf. e.g. Thaler 2008: 16–21; Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 7; Lütge 2012: 200), even carefully chosen and age-appropriate texts are not automatically transparent and still require substantial work. When a graphic novel, like John Lewis, Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell's *March: Book One*, is supposed to introduce students to the language of comics, the genre of auto/biography, the African-American Civil Rights Movement in the United States and its historical context, but also to important intertextual links to the Fellowship of Reconciliation's *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* (1957) or Lewis's own prose autobiography *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, it should become obvious that all of these aspects cannot be addressed during a single reading. This foregrounds the importance of a syllabus, which has to ensure that previous engagements with texts can help to prepare for this particular reading.

Regarding *March: Book One*, my segmentation for two university courses led to the following subdivision: pp. 5–35 (frame narrative & chickens), pp. 36–62 (racial segregation & school), pp. 63–88 (Martin Luther King & non-violence), and pp. 89–121 (lunch counter sit-ins, prison & SNCC). With only four sessions – excluding framing (stage 1) – this sequence is significantly shorter than a segmented approach in film-based language learning, which may require six to twelve lessons, according to Thaler, with segments of around 15 minutes each (cf. Thaler 2014: 134–6). In this case, students were asked to read the four parts at home and we had 90 minutes to discuss each of them in class. At university, the contextualisation or framing of a text is often determined by the title of the course: for "Comics in the EFL Classroom" my focus was on how comics narrate; for a cultural studies course the text served as a first introduction to the Civil Rights Movement. Since it is impossible to cover all relevant aspects, choices have to be made early on how exactly students can benefit from the text at all, which context should be foregrounded and how the neglected dimensions of the text could be addressed if students become interested in them.

Especially in secondary school it is unlikely that the narrative is treated as a literary text in its own right, but 'exploited' (e.g. Collie & Slater 1988: 14, 57, 123) for specific purposes, which means that a compromise has to be found. A framework that provides the sequence with a strong purpose and clear aims is preferable to choosing random activities that are somehow useful or 'fun'. Yet, these intentions have to be made explicit during framing, including the narrative's role in this procedure. At the same time, personal responses have to be accepted as the starting point for any engagement with the literary text. Thus, the transition from first impressions to a more coordinated engagement with the work of art has to be actively organised, e.g. in the form of activities that encourage a negotiation of meaning. Since all approaches to literature are concerned with readers' responses in more or less direct ways, it is possible to reformulate a number of academic and technical concerns (e.g. focalisation) as questions that invite readers to look at the same phenomena from a different angle (e.g. empathy) – at least during the early stages of reading. This facilitates a transition from a holistic and aesthetic reading of a text to a deeper personal understanding that is generated through an ongoing dialogue with other perspectives – including theoretical approaches.

Framing a narrative is a delicate business, as a teacher's contextualisation is going to affect students' reading in significant ways (cf. Bredella & Delaney 1996: xi; Wolf 2006; 2014). They become primed to look out for predetermined textual signals, which corresponds to Rosenblatt's "concept of selective attention" (1994: 43). This, in turn, influences their first encounter with the literary text. Should teachers raise the wrong expectations, the mismatch between the framing and the actual reading experience can discourage students from reading on. Collie and Slater offer a complementary introduction to framing from the students' point of view:

For students about to explore the unknown territory of a new literary work, the first encounter with it may well be crucial. First impressions can colour their feelings about the whole enterprise they find themselves engaged in. They are likely to be approaching the experience with a mixture of curiosity, excitement and apprehension. [...] students need to be convinced that the task ahead is not an impossible one; that, even if there are difficult passages to negotiate, it can be done with success and tangible rewards. Many learners fail to persevere with a book because they find the initial encounter simply too daunting. It may be that the first page is bristling with difficult words; or perhaps the territory they have wandered into seems so totally different from their own surroundings that they never quite succeed in identifying with it. That is why it seems to us well worth spending extra time on orientation and warmup sessions, either before the book is begun or along with the first reading period. (1988: 16)

‘Getting into the story’ is very important. It can be prepared for through framing, but also through pre-reading activities (cf. Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 71–4), which are more concerned with the readers’ first encounter with the book. In the case of visual narratives, posters (film) and covers (picture books, comics) are ideal starting points, as they usually offer a glimpse at the visual style, the genre, the main characters, the setting, potential conflicts and/or themes. In addition to that, posters and covers contain a large number of short verbal texts, most importantly the title, which add further bits of information. Some readers’ potential negative experiences with the first part can be mitigated at the beginning of the next lesson, provided that the while-reading stage is segmented.

Depending on the complexity of the sequence, framing can take place at the end of the previous lesson or take up a whole period. There are also practical matters that have to be kept in mind throughout the planning stage and that need to be addressed in class: access to the text, segmentation, schedule, guiding questions/worksheets and the introduction to the online discussion forum, which is used for the rest of the sequence.

Stage 2: Reading

Stage 2 covers Michael Benton’s three steps of first encounter, articulating one’s immediate responses (e.g. by answering questions on a worksheet) and reflecting on them: “Indeed, the informality of this procedure seemed a benefit rather than a problem to the students: using writing to think with to make purposeful yet provisional comments on a text is quite different from producing ‘final draft’ writing” (1996: 38). Bredella also argues that for “the pedagogical significance of aesthetic experience it is crucial that we encourage students to articulate what they feel while they are reading” (1996: 12; see also 18–19). These may be mere notes jotted down for one’s own benefit, but they ask students to capture/formulate a thought in a few words. This is an important first step, as Jerome Bruner states in reference to Lev Vygotsky’s *Thought and Language* (1996): “Language is (in Vygotsky’s sense as in Dewey’s) a way of sorting out one’s thoughts about things. Thought is a mode of organizing perception and action” (1986: 72).

This stage ends with a post on an online discussion forum. Students can decide which of their jottings is worth sharing with the whole group, but they are also invited to comment on other students’ contributions. The first time around this can take the form of free associations. Here is the unedited post of a Ukrainian exchange student responding to the first part of *March: Book One*. She did not study English, but joined our group out of an interest in comics.

Just finished reading the passage and I wish he tell more stories about his childhood:-). With this “chicken story” I am totally retreated into my childhood memories. How come I am not a leader of any Civil Rights Movement yet?!?!:-) The page number 30 really impressed me because I did almost the same thing with the birds when I was in my ‘teens. With my friends we found a place where we did “an official” graveyard for the dead sparrows, which we found dead somewhere in the surroundings from time to time. And yes, we also put a hand-made cross on each grave. I even found out that I missed one thing in my childhood adventures - to baptise animals:-)

Poor boy. . . I understand his protest against chicken on the dinner table as I had exactly the same thing with my favourite rabbit. And i still can't understand how does my mother dare to break our geese neck with her hands as each time I see her feeding them, she is so kind to this animals. It is a great pleasure for me to remind my childhood though these pictures and images. I am really curious about the story and looking forward until I can read it all.

P. S. and I still speak with my canary bird at home. Luckily I got married recently and now I can speak with my husband instead))) (12 October 2015)

This response may be unusual, but it illustrates a few important points. This student attempts to understand the text by relating it to her own experiences. She can ‘feel’ what this episode means without understanding how it relates to the entire narrative in several significant ways. Her reading is far from trivial and provides several opportunities to relate her own experiences to thematic concerns that become more transparent in later parts of the narrative. There is also empathy without a confusion of identities. But most importantly of all, she has not been retrained to ignore her own responses in favour of standardised answers or a narratological approach. Aidan Chambers, who tries to promote reading literature with younger learners as close to real life as possible, believes that students should be “encouraged to gossip informally to each other and to their teachers about their reading” (1996: 3), as this is what they would do with narratives they encounter in a private setting. He goes on to argue that, in everyday life, people “retell the story and talk about what they liked and didn’t like” and “delay discussion of meaning (interpretation and significance) till they have heard what their friends have to say. In other words, the meaning of a story *for that group of readers* emerges from the conversation” (1996: 8). In this sense, the discussion forum offers an opportunity to collectively find orientation and work towards a first tentative understanding of the text before this process is intensified during the next stage. Concerning the types of responses, one can observe certain recurring phenomena, e.g. that the first posts influence the ones that come later or that students occasionally react to narratives in extreme terms, just as they do in real life (love/hate). However, there are two measures in place that regulate contributions to a certain extent. Despite the fact that the forum is closed to the general public

and thus offers a protected environment, it is still accessible to everyone within the group, including the teacher, which requires at least some consideration what is worth sharing with others. Secondly, guiding questions can point out what is worth recording in the first place, which may then serve the development of one of these responses into a post.

In their section on reading response journals Nünning and Surkamp offer a list of prompts that ask students to relate to the text on a personal level (cf. 2010: 54): jotting down thoughts and feelings, associating the text with personal experiences, making a list of questions or unresolved issues, noting down first impressions of characters, thinking of similar texts, making predictions about the following chapters, remembering the most striking element/scene etc. There are just a few modifications I would suggest: a first encounter with literary characters can be ambivalent, so I would not ask for love (“really liking”) or hate (“really loathing”) reactions, but have students focus on aspects of the characters’ lives that they (1) can easily relate to; (2) can somewhat relate to; (3) cannot relate to. Questions of this type encourage a broader spectrum of responses. Although some questions can ask for negative reactions, the overall purpose of the initial encounter should be to motivate students and get them interested in the text. Still, it may be prudent to offer students an opportunity to voice their concerns, either as part of the guiding questions or during the initial discussion in class.

In some cases it makes sense to work with so-called “response points” (Benton & Fox 1985: 6; see also Dodge 2005: 34, 41–2). The two most obvious ones are right before the reading starts and immediately afterwards. In the first case, one has to be careful of self-fulfilling prophecies, as questions can be very suggestive (Do you generally like romantic comedies?) and strongly influence the reading. In between, there are turning points, chapter endings, cliff-hangers, surprise revelations etc. that may warrant a look backwards, an evaluation of the present situation and/or some anticipation of what is to come. Although these activities involve an artificial interruption of the reading flow and some form of preliminary analysis, they are not too intrusive and can be useful as early forms of minding and noticing, helping students to connect with the narrative.

As stated above, students then choose *one* of their answers on the worksheet and post it on the discussion forum. Feedback shows that some students find this step already quite challenging and spend a lot of time thinking about which point to choose and how to present it. This is exactly what Benton has in mind for this step, which is to encourage a transition from first impressions towards the formulation of an idea in writing. It invites students to reflect upon their answers, make sense of what they have noted down and rephrase a bullet point until it becomes a meaningful contribution to a group discussion. At the same

time, they are asked to comment on one of the other posts, which requires an active engagement with other perspectives. Some students are brave and go first, others only read, comment and then post. There is no need for teachers to be constantly present and comment on every single idea, especially not the first time around, but during the next meeting they have to refer to the state of the discussion online and organise pair or group work that reflects the points already raised. Otherwise the students' responses would become detached from class work and relegated to a separate, 'unofficial' network. Two important advantages of these online posts are that they provide teachers with a first orientation how students have responded to the text and students, who are reluctant to speak up in class, with an opportunity to contribute to the ongoing co-construction of meaning.

Stage 2 remains the vital link between home reading and in-class discussions throughout the sequence of lessons. New perspectives and insights feed into the next round of questions for home study, which, in turn, set up the next session. What changes throughout is the balance between aesthetic and efferent reading in favour of the second. While the first set of guiding questions is almost exclusively dedicated to personal responses, the second begins to ask students to actively trace new and ongoing developments they have noticed. When reflections on the first part did not contain any efferent reading, this is an opportunity to revisit scenes from previous chapters and approach them from a different angle, e.g. in view of new revelations.

There are at least seven types of activities that work well for the forum: personal responses and emotions (e.g. likes & dislikes; favourite line/panel/scene; strongest emotional response; biggest question mark); posting passages/panels/stills and commenting on them (e.g. social tensions & conflicts; turning points; an interesting use of colour); imaginative and creative explorations and transformations (e.g. adding characters' thoughts to a panel or still); value judgements and ethical considerations (e.g. taking sides, pros & cons); presenting the results of online research (e.g. cultural references, intertextuality); comments on other students' posts (negotiation of meaning); or the recommendation of websites or YouTube clips (e.g. background information). Concerning the comments on other students' posts, it may seem superfluous that they congratulate each other on what they have found out or that they are surprised by how they have responded to the literary text in a strikingly similar fashion, sometimes even elaborating on a point or providing additional examples, but in each of these cases something important is happening. They are testing their own ideas to see which of them are widely or partly shared or do not find a lot of support. More often than not – especially at

university – some students are courageous enough to defend a minority view, especially when they do not like a text. All these perspectives provide excellent starting points for further discussions.

With some groups it is possible to develop a sense of discovery, that there are things to be found within the text and online that can be shared and appreciated. Students can post quotations/paragraphs (prose), lines (poetry), stills (film) or panels/pages (comics) that they find intriguing; that illustrate/contain a strong view or emotion; that represent a turning point; that remind them of previous situations/scenes; or that showcase an interesting use of language/style. Bredella repeatedly argues that “understanding literary texts activates our cognitive, affective and evaluative competencies” (2010: 47; see also 6, 18, 33; see also Bredella & Burwitz-Melzer 2004: 42, 44–9), so these should be catered to and then further developed in class discussions.

Collie and Slater offer a whole range of ‘snowball’ activities that are designed to keep track of what is happening in the narrative on a macrostructural level (cf. 1988: 51–6). While some of them revolve around simple summaries of chapters, others are more intriguing, such as “Reassessing” (1988: 53). Here students are asked to do the same activity again, such as judging the main character’s current situation and predicaments. This automatically invites comparisons to the previous iteration and students learn in a very visible way how dramatically characters, situations and relationships can change. It makes sense to work with a portfolio in such a context (cf. Benton & Fox 1985: 122; Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 55) to keep track of the different activities and collect learner texts and ideas for later, more efferent and product-oriented stages of the reading process.

The essentialism of character portraits and constellations seems odd for entire narratives, but they make sense in this strongly contextualised, process-oriented format, precisely because they help to trace and visualise change. Alan Palmer comments that “we tend to overestimate the importance of a person’s character in finding an explanation for the way in which they behave in a particular situation and underestimate the importance of the situation that they are in” (2004: 245). Evidently, Collie and Slater hold on to such an essentialist notion of character (cf. 1988: 81, 112), which they believe is gradually revealed as a fixed set of traits that can be neatly combined into a complete picture at the end of the reading. For obvious reasons, this is incompatible with the basic idea of character development and the progressive nature of the reading process. Palmer has a point in that scenes do not communicate objective information about isolated story constituents, but reveal the particular entanglement of characters with each other and the story world. Our ‘knowledge’ of characters is not grounded in facts (age, nationality, religion, siblings, hobbies etc.), but in our experience of

their responses to other characters and situations. We get a feeling of who these characters are in specific contexts and learn more about them by comparing their reactions and relationships across time.

Depending on how much time teachers have to treat the narrative in class, more analytical questions concerning the main focus of the sequence can be added to the guiding questions for the second reading at home and then be pursued with greater intensity. This is always a balancing act, as students should still be given the opportunity to relate the findings to their own interests and experiences. Rosenblatt does not tire of warning teachers of an abrupt transition from aesthetic to efferent reading tasks: “Out of misguided zeal, the student is hurried into thinking or writing that removes him abruptly and often definitely from what he himself has lived through in reading the work. It therefore becomes essential to scrutinise all practices to make sure that they provide the opportunity for an initial crystallization of a personal sense of the work” (1995: 66–7; see also 268; Benton 1992: 88). Her attitude is mirrored in Benton and Fox’s credo “to honour the validity and importance of the individual’s response” (1985: 7). At the same time, Rosenblatt is concerned with “stock responses” and “stereotyped, superficial, and unshaded reactions” (1995: 98; see also 95), which suggests that an exchange of ideas is necessary to overcome superficial or narrow views.

Stage 3: Think-Tank

The online part of stage 2 has the added benefit of functioning as a teaser. The students are offered glimpses into other readings and may be curious to find out more about how others have responded:

Learning what others have made of a text can greatly increase such insight into one’s own relationship with it. A reader who has been moved or disturbed by a text often manifests an urge to talk about it, to clarify and crystallize his sense of the work. He likes to hear others’ views. Through such interchange he can discover how people bringing different temperaments, different literary and life experiences, to the text have engaged in very different transactions with it. (Rosenblatt 1994: 146; see also Pike 2003: 64, 69–70)

Bredella repeatedly stresses the importance of speaking about reading experiences (cf. Bredella & Burwitz-Melzer 2004: xiii), of intersubjectivity as defined by Jürgen Habermas (cf. 2010: 9–10) and of the negotiation of meaning as a central aspect of individual meaning-making (cf. 2010: 62). Both Dewey and Rosenblatt single out the appreciation of art as a communal activity that is especially conducive to the negotiation of shared beliefs and meanings: “For it is by activities that are shared and by language and other means of intercourse that qualities and

values become common to the experience of a group of mankind. Now art is the most effective mode of communication that exists” (Dewey 2005: 298; see also Eldridge 2010: 254; Rosenblatt 1998: 911; Benton 1986: 34–47).

Rosenblatt, who can be quite pessimistic about readers’ first impressions of a text, sees this next step as a necessary corrective: “He [The reader] needs to become aware of the points at which his own concerns have led to excessively emotional or biased reactions, or his lack of experience and knowledge have prevented adequate participation in the work. He needs to scrutinize his response to the various aspects of the work, in order to achieve a more unified patterning of it” (1960: 309; see also 1995: 267). Chambers is more sympathetic in this regard: “An understanding of meaning isn’t arrived at straightaway and all at once. It is discovered, negotiated, made, arrived at organically as more specific and practical questions [...] are discussed” (1996: 43; see also Benton & Fox 1985: 126, 147).

To preserve an openness of interpretation, a free exchange of ideas and “a refinement of each reader’s unique experience” (Benton & Fox 1985: 102), it is essential to organise the third stage in the form of pair or group work and reduce the role of the teacher to that of a facilitator of independent learning. Although referring to the reading of poetry, Benton and Fox stress a number of points that show the importance of pair and group work to the students’ engagement with the text.

The sort of benefits that accrue in pair and group discussions of poems and which are much harder to achieve in all-class discussions are: the willingness to tolerate uncertainty, misunderstanding and ignorance; the sense that whatever they make of the poem it will be uniquely theirs; the awareness that, since they are in control of the talking, they can return to parts of the poem when they like and so fit their sense of the details into a growing appreciation of the whole. (1985: 30)

This provides students with the opportunity to test and refine their readings in small circles of peers before going into a lockstep discussion of the narrative. Some may still hesitate what to make of the text and may need more input before making up their own minds. This is Chambers’s main argument who likes to call this stage the “think-tank” (1996: 16):

The private motivation here of joining in discussion is a conscious attempt to sort out with other people matters we recognize as too difficult and complex for anyone to sort out alone. The public effect of this conscious pooling of thought is that we come to a “reading” – a knowledge, understanding, appreciation – of a book that far exceeds what any one member of the group could have achieved alone. Each member knows some part of it, but no one knows it all. (1996: 17)

It is not hard to see a link to Lev Vygotsky's approach to learning through social interaction and scaffolding in particular (cf. 1966: 103–4, 107; Bruner 1986: 73–4), but here it is the group that provides the necessary guidance.

Since emotional and intellectual responses are intertwined in the students' evocation of the narrative, Rosenblatt believes that the "discussion of literary experiences makes possible rehearsals of the struggle to clarify emotion and make it the basis of intelligent and informed thinking" (1995: 226), which means that students can learn "to develop the ability to *think rationally within an emotionally colored context*" (1995: 217). Collie and Slater offer a very helpful summary of these points:

Pair and group work are now well established as a means both of increasing learners' confidence within the foreign language and also of personalising their contact with it. Although it may seem paradoxical we have found that shared activity can be especially fruitful in helping the learner find a way into what is usually an intensely personal and private experience, that of coming to terms with and inhabiting an author's universe. In the creative endeavour of interpreting this new universe, a group with its various sets of life experiences can act as a rich marshalling device to enhance the individual's awareness both of his or her own responses and of the world created by the literary work. On a more practical level, working with a group can lessen the difficulties presented by the number of unknowns on a page of literary text. Very often someone else in a group will be able to supply the missing link or fill in an appropriate meaning of a crucial word, or if not, the task of doing so will become a shared one. Shifting attention away from the text itself to such shared activity is often conducive to the creation of a risk-taking atmosphere. With the group's support and control, the individual has greater freedom to explore his or her own reactions and interpretations. Above all, we hope that the group will stimulate learners to reread and ponder the text on their own. (1988: 9)

This "*sharing of responses*" (Delanoy 2002: 87) feeds into the rereading of texts *while* the group is still working on the book. Thus, a return to the narrative is a natural part of group work. When students disagree on a point or cannot remember the scene in detail, they go back to the text and attempt to find evidence. This ties in with Benton's general conceptualisation of the reading process: "'Detective imagination' is still the best précis I can find to describe the author-reader relationship" (1992: 44). In contrast to prose fiction, where it can be hard to find a particular scene without any previous mark-ups, comics are much easier to navigate. Panels or even whole pages can be read at the same time and directly discussed, especially when the verbal text is strongly reduced. These spontaneous forms of rereading do occur regularly with university students, but may require some encouragement with students in secondary education. Collie and Slater also see benefits for fast readers who rush through the text – either because they are transfixed or want to get through it as quickly as possible: "Group activities or

task sheets also make the ‘rapid’ student reread, sometimes with a new focus of attention, and this is usually very beneficial from both a linguistic and a literary point of view” (1988: 13). Rosenblatt is convinced that rereading is an essential part of the students’ communication about the text:

We are used to thinking of the text as the medium of communication between author and reader [. . .]. Perhaps we should consider the text as an even more general medium of communication among readers. As we exchange experiences, we point to those elements of the text that best illustrate or support our interpretations. We may help one another to attend to words, phrases, images, scenes, that we have overlooked or slighted. We may be led to reread the text and revise our own interpretation. Sometimes we may be strengthened in our own sense of having “done justice to” the text, without denying its potentialities for other interpretations. Sometimes the give-and-take may lead to a general increase in insight and even to consensus. (1994: 146; see also 1995: 272)

Contrary to a situation in which students have to guess what teachers want to hear, they get a chance to learn something from and about each other (cf. Delanoy 2002: 157). More importantly, “in respect of story-reading, we have no idea where our pupils are unless we begin from some description of reader-response” (Benton 1992: 34; see also Delanoy 2002: 86, 157), which, in this case, is provided in the form of online posts, in-class discussions and short group presentations, which is the last step of stage 3 and carries over into stage 4. The latter are essential to inform the whole class about the progress of the individual groups, which may have worked on different topics. Depending on how much time the class has to study the text, a stage 3 discussion can be very free, like a book club session, or more organised by deciding which aspects the groups should focus on. These can be based on the questions listed on the first worksheet.

Stage 4: Lockstep

When teachers take over for the duration of this stage, a lot of important things have already occurred. They have witnessed three consecutive steps of the students’ engagement with the narrative – online posts, group discussions and the short presentations of results – and they are keenly aware of how everyone has responded to the text. There are six significant differences to walking into a class discussion unaware of the students’ first responses: (1) experienced teachers do not have to test students on whether they have read the text; this is fairly obvious from looking at the personal responses, which are relatively difficult to fake. (2) All students have been actively involved in some capacity – even the quiet ones. Ideally, they have found some orientation and are able to verbalise their first, or already their refined responses to the narrative. (3) Leaving

aside the initial framing, teachers' own readings have not affected the views of the students yet; diverse interpretations are still actively pursued. (4) There is no need to start a discussion of the narrative from scratch. One can quickly enter an ongoing debate that is already meaningful to the students and directly refer to online posts, group discussions and preliminary results. (5) While reading and listening to the students' responses teachers have had an opportunity to compare the students' concerns with their own plans for the sequence and adapt the strategy accordingly. (6) It is much easier to address potential difficulties the whole group or single students have had with the text. Especially during the first iteration of stage 4 it is necessary to address misreadings, points of criticism or an outright rejection.

When we started to discuss the adaptation of John Green's YA novel *The Fault in Our Stars* in a course on film in the EFL classroom (2015), I invited students to be honest and post their first reactions online. This is how a male student responded to his first viewing:

So I watched the movie without knowing really anything about it, apart from it being a love story with two sick teenagers in the main roles. I also knew that it has been regarded highly by many people so I felt that I would have a good idea about how the movie would play out. Unfortunately, I was right. I don't want to say that it is a bad movie but I fail to see how it offers anything new or special. I really liked the supportive cast and also the first half of the movie, it has a good sense of humor and the interaction between Hazel and Gus is fun to watch. However, the movie keeps following this pattern in the second half of the movie where obvious "plottwists" decide the dynamic of the movie and alot of the good aspects from before fail to transit and adopt to the new situation. (11 October 2015)

I addressed this point in class and we used the advantages of the think-tank to collect criteria for the selection of films, to discuss the idea of teaching one's personal favourites, to list arguments for and against *The Fault in Our Stars*, and to look for strategies to handle negative reactions. The fourth group worked on the premise that the overall aim of language teaching should be communicative competence, so it was important to them to find means – meaning text types – that let students express their negative responses in a meaningful way: honest debates in the classroom, negative reviews or a parody of the film. We also asked the student if he had a better idea which film to choose and he suggested *50/50* (2011) with Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Seth Rogen, directed by Jonathan Levine and written by Will Reiser, who based the script on his own experiences with cancer. He argued that it had a very similar premise, but was not that melodramatic and avoided a tear-jerking ending, which he did not like. The rest of us were not familiar with the film, but I used it for the class on illness narratives

instead of *The Fault in Our Stars* a few months later (2016). The following week the same student wrote a new post for the forum.

Hello everyone, so I spent some time thinking about what we talked about last week and what my point of view on the movie is/was. I am usually more focused on the plot of a movie and this is what I mainly talked about earlier. Also, for me, if I were to show a movie in class would be along the lines of recommending a movie and I usually only recommend movies that I highly regard, if I wanted to deal with a certain topic, I'd make sure to use the best choice of material as far as I know and since I honestly believe that there are better love/teenage/cancer movies out there, I opted against using it in a classroom situation. However, I have come to realize that for a classroom situation and for a movie there is more than the acting and the plot development, whether I focus on them or not. (19 October 2015)

He added two of the arguments we discussed in class – one being the interest of the students, the other some points his colleagues raised that he had not thought of, such as the comparison between the novel and the film, the possibility to discuss generic differences between novel and adaptation and voice his concerns in this context.

The point here is not that we convinced him in the end that my choice of film was not that bad after all. Rather, had I promoted the advantages of using *The Fault in Our Stars* in the classroom without an open debate first, he may have never said anything. I believe that the same logic applies to literature in the classroom. Students should not be taught to ignore their personal responses and concerns, a point that Chambers raises frequently in relation to younger learners:

Dismissing what children “really think” leads to their disaffection from school-based reading. Or they play the game “Guess what’s in teacher’s head”: they report as their own the kind of responses they sense the teacher wants to hear. This reduces literary study to a kind of multiple-choice comprehension exercise with the teacher as the only person in the room whose observations about a text are acceptable. To be praised or given credit, everyone else must pretend to have understood the book in the same way the teacher has. As a result pupils learn to distrust their own experience of a text and, because they become skilled at saying things they have not thought and felt, they are corrupted by deceit. (1996: 38)

This is not just problematic in terms of their development as human beings, but also in terms of finding a genuine purpose for communication in the language classroom. This student’s concern over the movie triggered a very productive debate in the classroom and a longish statement on the forum that was not part of any assignment. The other students were more willing to contribute to class when they could work on issues that they had identified as important to the

group or to help a peer to sort through his concerns. The resulting discussion did not match what I had planned for that meeting, but it was not too far removed from some central questions we were going to address later in the term.

However, if teachers finally want to discuss their own understanding of the text during stage 4, this approach offers a far better chance of preparing students for classroom activities, as they have already passed through several stages of active engagement with the text and of negotiating their preliminary readings. It is also possible that individuals, groups or the whole class struggled with the text much more than anticipated, that they got side-tracked by a longish debate over what turns out to be minor details or blindly followed the lead of those who posted the first comments or dominated group work. In some cases it may be necessary to actively guide stage 3 by turning unusual or wrong claims on the forum into the subjects of discussions or clarifying them directly during stage 4. Another advantage of this staged approach is that we are only 20–30 minutes into the first lesson, assuming that the initial pair or group discussion took about ten minutes and the reporting back another 10–20 minutes. To clarify some of the issues that have been raised, it makes sense to follow up on the posts, discussions and group reports. This may take any number of forms, such as continuing with the discussion in lockstep, returning to the text to find evidence for unusual claims or introducing an interesting counterargument that has been overlooked so far – ideally gleaned from one of the students' own contributions.

While stage 3 asks for students' personal and active engagement, co-creating and re-shaping the meaning of the text, stage 4 introduces the idea of rereading and playing text detectives. Ideally, as stated above, the starting point should be students' own interests, but it may also be necessary to draw their attention to something they do not see yet. Instead of telling them straight away, all of these activities should work with different hypotheses that concern the meaning of the text (cf. Bredella & Burwitz-Melzer 2004: 9) and involve students in active investigation. There is enough guidance and control through task design, which means that stage 4 discussions can evolve directly into stage 5 group work which enables students to find out for themselves. This way, it is more likely that a greater number is actively involved and it gives teachers another opportunity to witness first-hand how students are progressing and what they still find difficult. After group presentations, teachers can still add elements that have been overlooked or note down a point that needs to be addressed during one of the next activities.

There should be an ongoing dialogue in several configurations that goes back and forth between individual meaning-making, shared responses in pairs and groups and lockstep discussions, so that one stage feeds into the next.

Throughout the sequence students produce several learner texts, of which their notes and online posts are just the beginning. All of these steps prepare them for the more efferent, complex and product-oriented text types that may have been planned for stage 6: “Note-making and informal discussion along these lines [anticipating, retrospecting, picturing, interacting, and evaluating] build upon the reading experience, take the pupils back inside the story, indicate to them that their individual responses are both valid and valued and provide a sound basis for a more considered response, perhaps in essay form, when this is required” (Benton 1992: 35; see also 51). Michael K. Legutke argues that teachers need what he calls “process competence” (1996: 102) to organise activities in a meaningful way and skilfully adapt the pre-planned structure depending on how students’ discussions of the text are progressing.

There is also a chance to (partially) revise the prepared handout for the next chapter(s) to integrate an investigation that students would like to conduct, that now seems necessary in light of how the debate has been progressing. While the first handout was largely about first impressions and personal responses, the second can introduce more efferent reading tasks, if teachers are hard-pressed for time. A compromise between the two would be to indicate to students what to look out for, but letting them find their own examples and explanations. Guiding questions should also invite rereading by encouraging comparisons between the present and previous chapters. Students usually begin to understand the centrality of the chicken episode to the overall design of *March: Book One* only retrospectively:

I chose this panel – event though it’s from the first section – because I’d like to hear your opinion about a ‘theory’: What if the chicken story and Lewis’ attitude is not just a story, but an analogy to the situation of black people in the US? It has already been discussed a bit further down, as Sophie and I had the same impression, but Mario thought it might be too far fetched. What do you think? Do you see a parallel or do you think it is just an ordinary story about chickens? (20 October 2015)

Since reading has a lot to do with pattern recognition, finding similarities and differences between characters, scenes, or between protagonist and reader, synopsis in the sense of seeing things together as an interpretative strategy should be encouraged, especially with visual narrative media such as comics.

Stage 4 has to occur in every single lesson to get everyone on the same page and see where the discussion is going. This usually involves letting students present ideas, clarifying problems that students have had, connecting different lines of the debate and organising the next steps. Teachers should actively tie knots in the textual web that is the joint reading of the text, but the strands to work with

have to come from the students in equal measure. Autonomous learning means to let students find out for themselves, even if they need substantial guidance. In most cases this requires a return to the text. Should the end of a class discussion coincide with the end of a lesson, students go back to stage 2, which means that they read the next section, work on their personal responses, but also focus on questions that have been newly introduced. The organisational path is that of a spiral. While the steps are repeated, adding 5, 6 and 7 during the next three lessons, everything is taking place on a higher level of awareness.

Stage 5: Rereading

There are several reasons why a return to the text is indispensable. First of all, this framework relies on a specific sequence that initially promotes extensive aesthetic reading at home, but then requires more intensive reading in the classroom. Secondly, students are still operating with first impressions and half-formed ideas at this point. In fact, they have just started reading the narrative. Collie and Slater observe that “[y]ou can never really ‘finish’ a book, except on a superficial level. Rereading always produces new insight, new perceptions, a deepened response” (1988: 94). Cognitive psychologists, such as David Groome, argue that “the retention of a memory trace will depend on the depth to which it has been processed during the encoding stage” (2014b: 166), so students have to return to a more intense study of the text.

Throughout the whole process students *are reading* the text as long as they are engaged with it. The segmented approach reminds everyone that reading is an ongoing process and that the narrative should be the centre of attention. Accordingly, the only meaningful way to solve a problem with contradictory readings is a return to the text, not a debate on what may or may not have occurred. Students should be encouraged to become text-detectives (cf. Benton 1992: 44), who, in contrast to first impressions, now operate with a hunch or a working theory that has to be substantiated. Accordingly, they reread certain sections to check whether their impressions and theories are defensible (cf. Legutke 1996: 97), which may happen naturally during stage 3, but has to become the central concern of stage 5. Chambers states that, “to take us beyond statements of the obvious, to reach thoughtful interpretations and develop understanding, we need to discover what it was that caused us to think, feel, notice, remember, reason as we did. We need to think about how we know the things that occurred to us” (1996: 50–1; see also Rosenblatt 1995: 107; Smith 2004: 42; Benton & Fox 1985: 108). This search for evidence can and should be organised by teachers who guide students through the process, help to decide

which tasks to set for the pairs or groups and who suggest appropriate forms in which the results can be presented. Pair and group work may seem an odd suggestion at this point, but the co-construction of meaning should carry over into as many activities in the classroom as possible. There is enough time for individual meaning-making during the following stage 2 reading assignment. Comics have the added benefit that scenes are easier to find in a book and that a joint reading becomes productive more quickly, as there is less text to be read and pictures can be analysed together reasonably well.

Thirdly, this framework encourages the (re)exploration of key scenes and the entanglement of characters in specific circumstances, instead of summaries and character ‘fact files’. These engagements with the text can and should take on a more systematic and analytical form, based on “thinking that is a *consequence* of reading, that might transpire in concurrent or subsequent reflection” (Smith 2004: 27). Rereading parts of the narrative always leads to new insights and inferences. As Rosenblatt observes (cf. 1994: 48), aesthetic and efferent readings are not always easy to distinguish, and here they are likely to blend into each other. For language learners in an EFL context, the execution of a meaningful task and a deeper understanding of the text are likely to go hand in hand. There is still a significant difference between getting into a scene and judging the same occurrence retrospectively in view of its place in the overall structure of the text.

When Collie and Slater offer their recommendations on how to teach successful summary writing, their comments provide a perfect illustration of the contrast between scene and text, reading and ‘having read’, the aesthetic and the efferent stance, as well as teaching literature and teaching language:

Discussion about why one summary is preferable to the other can be followed by the group task of rewriting one to provide a more satisfactory summary, more complete, without irrelevant details, etc. This activity is useful in helping basic comprehension of the events and themes in the chapter. It also focusses attention on stylistic matters, and it aims to develop the reading and writing skills which are traditionally thought to be fostered by *précis* work: the ability to identify and extract key concepts in a lengthy prose passage, distinguish between essential points and illustrative or supportive material, and finally, express ideas concisely. The activity may therefore be appropriate to more advanced levels. (1988: 112)

Asking students to separate the wheat from the chaff, to glean the ‘essential points’ from the ‘lengthy prose passage’, with its distracting ‘illustrative or supportive material’, sounds almost offensive to a teacher of literature, but this is the logic of summary writing. Collie and Slater correctly state that it works best with ‘more advanced levels’, because it is counterintuitive and a pure form of efferent reading. Naturally, younger and less experienced readers are inclined to

report on what they find interesting and relatable, but summary writing would require them to disentangle themselves from the narrative experience as much as possible.

No matter what activities have been chosen for stage 5 – drama techniques, creative writing tasks, narrative analysis or gender studies, all require an exploration of a scene as their basis. Teachers may be tempted to forego rereading and directly introduce the activity they have in mind, but this is bound to produce superficial results. If students are supposed to develop and showcase a deeper understanding of a scene, they have to be granted enough time to look at it closely. This is especially important in the context of a semiotic analysis, as there is a real danger of separating form and function. Benton suggests a blending of the two in what he calls “narratology in action” (1992: 51), which introduces and trains various competences by working directly with the literary text. Nünning and Surkamp raise a similar point by stating that a semiotic reading of narratives has to be motivated by a functional analysis of these signs in view of the larger picture (cf. 2010: 37, 232; see also Bredella 2010: 33). A semiotic reading, in this sense, does not ask students to interpret isolated signs or collect all instances of a certain type, but to approach the text with a hypothesis, ideally their own understanding of the sequence, and then find evidence in favour of or against it. When Nünning and Surkamp praise the rationality and teachability of formal analysis and the advantages of mastering a more systematic approach to literature (cf. 2010: 66), this still has to be seen as serving a better understanding of the text, as the meaning of signs cannot be determined outside of the specific contexts in which they appear. Since there is no “*form-to-function mapping*” (Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 37), signs have to be explained in terms of their semiotic habitat: they ‘live’ and ‘breathe’ in particular places and reading should not be confused with textual autopsy. Lothar Bredella promotes the idea that a reading approach in terms of top-down processes and larger sense units (global understanding) should be strengthened, as the importance of single signs can only be determined in view of a projected larger context (cf. 2010: 29, 255; Bredella & Burwitz-Melzer 2004: 2, 7, 15).

A fourth argument in favour of rereading can be made in terms of the theoretical frameworks that were introduced in part 1 of this thesis. Sternberg’s “unexpected retrospective illumination” (1978: 100) or Iser’s ongoing “retroactive effect” (1980: 111) highlight the readers’ constant revisitation of previous scenes that now appear in a different light. This bidirectionality of the reading process can be integrated into educational tasks. In Iser’s model we frequently change our expectations of what is to come, but also our memories of what has already occurred. Even if we do not reread these sections deliberately, we revise

our understanding of them. In his essay on the impact of Dewey and Rosenblatt on pedagogy, Mark Faust draws the conclusion that “their work cries out for an emphasis on rereading as a crucial aspect of literary aesthetic experience” (Faust 2001: 41):

readers who sustain their engagement with a text long enough to make something more substantial than a mere gathering of impressions and reactions, have begun to realize the aesthetic potential inherent in all lived-through experiences with language. It ought to be obvious that such a view of aesthetic reading almost requires either full-scale rereading or more likely some form of (re)reading for its fullest realization. [...] attentive reading itself requires a constant process of reenvisioning what we remember having read in light of what is presently before our eyes. (2001: 46)

This last sentence is revealing, as it emphasises Iser’s idea of simultaneously holding two themes – the present one and a previous one retrieved from the horizon – in mind for mutual illumination. It also captures the autobiographer’s work very well, as it sheds light on the past, but, in turn, undergoes a continuous process of reenvisioning the present in view of what has transpired. I would like to quote Dewey’s observation on cathedrals again, as it perfectly illustrates the necessity of revisiting a work of art to have an experience in the first place:

One must move about, within and without, and through repeated visits let the structure gradually yield itself to him [the visitor] in various lights and in connection with changing moods. [...] An instantaneous experience is an impossibility, biologically and psychologically. An experience is a product, one might almost say a by-product, of continuous and cumulative interaction of an organic self with the world. (2005: 229; see also 311)

It is very likely that the first, fleeting impressions that students have of a text are not sufficient for an experience, by which Dewey means a profound and lasting impact on an individual’s self. The prerequisite for such a response is at least a personal connection, a getting-to-know. It may be a tired cliché to compare books to friends, but one aspect of the analogy is certainly true: you build friendships over time and not based on first impressions.

Stage 6: Conclusions

Stage 6 begins when students have finished the book and completed the last reading assignment during stage 2. Despite a seemingly circular structure, this model resembles a spiral, which means that students reach a higher level of awareness with every completed loop. The final part of a narrative – the ending – may have special significance and usually deserves a discussion on its own terms before turning students’ attention to so-called post-reading activities that

encourage a greater detachment from the reading process itself and favour a retrospective look at the narrative in its entirety. This could also be conceptualised as the transition from a 'sense of an ending' to Delany's 'getting out of the text' (cf. 2002: 74–5). There are narratives that stage a satisfying conclusion, often by employing highly conventionalised tropes, but that does not mean that students gain a better understanding of the text. A final twist of the tale could lead to Sternberg's "unexpected retrospective illumination" (1978: 100) and make readers question and revise some or all of their conclusions, but even a far less dramatic open ending can leave readers puzzled. The idea of perfect closure is neither realistic nor compatible with the transactional approach: "Coming to the end of a literary work is really only a staging point, a temporary distancing from a continuing process of appreciation and understanding" (Collie & Slater 1988: 79). This raises the interesting question what students are supposed to do then, considering that many traditional post-reading activities have already been completed in relation to the individual parts. The reproduction of the public meaning of the literary text in the form of highly generic formats is questionable, especially since students have worked on a detailed understanding of specific contexts, rather than on gathering facts.

These preliminary readings and insights have been documented across a substantial number of learner texts, which may already represent blends of previous class work. They exist in the form of memories, annotated texts, notes and lists, online postings, drawings and maps, photos and collages, collections of quotations, weblinks & other sources, worksheets, protocols etc. These may seem like pieces of a puzzle, which they are in a way, but students should be able to see larger patterns by now, provided that the activities were designed to build on and relate to each other. These material anchors (cf. Hutchins 2005) help students to verbalise their own understanding of the text in more formal and elaborate ways. At the same time, a conscientious teacher has pursued a specific focus or approach throughout the sequence, which can now be summarised, discussed and reviewed in relation to the entire narrative.

Some of the most popular tasks and activities for the post-reading stage have to be scrutinised to determine which ideas about reading they implicitly propagate and what purpose they ultimately serve. They often come in long lists (cf. Collie & Slater 1988: 79–92; Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 78–80), which suggests that they are somehow all equal and that there is a free choice between them. However, they have to serve the overall design of the teaching sequence. Some of them may seem highly appealing, but they could still be inappropriate in a specific context. If these activities are just added on as an opportunity to train random language skills, students may feel cheated, especially when a connection

to their own reading is lost or the previous activities do not lead up to a meaningful conclusion. It may not always be clear whether the activity serves a better understanding of the literary text, or whether the work of art is exploited to train some competence that is not related to reading at all. Many of the tasks also ask for advanced productive skills and/or require substantial generic competence that has to be trained beforehand (cf. Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 241; Hallet 2011: 5).

The review, which the CEFR explicitly lists as a text type that teachers should work on with their students (Modern Languages Division 2011: 62), is a hybrid genre halfway between a personal reading and a more rationalised and formalised expression of one's thoughts. In this sense, it is fully compatible with Rosenblatt's progression from aesthetic reading to criticism, which she conceives of as a continuous process of development:

As the reader savors the experienced evocation, registers its quality, first during, then after the reading event, it becomes possible to reflect on the experience and to look at the text to see what unique combinations of signs, what juxtapositions, might have contributed to the experienced ideas and blended feelings. Thus, the reader becomes a critic, and the professional critic begins as a reader, embracing all such activities, putting them into a larger context, and communicating these experiences and reflections to others. (1998: 888; see also Dewey 2005: 321–2; Chambers 1996: 22)

The review is very close to the kind of work taking place in the literature classroom, as we find the same movement from first impressions to a more considerate and refined reading that includes examples from the text to illustrate and support the argument. Most importantly, reviewers are expected to find their own angle, which they develop throughout the text, but there is no need to compete with academic essays or repeat what every reader familiar with the narrative already knows. Reviews come in very different shapes and sizes, from fan videos and semi-professional critics on YouTube via pop-culture magazines and tabloids to quality newspapers and magazines on to scholars at the other end of the spectrum. The internet offers numerous examples for free, which can be used for classroom discussions or as models to be criticised or emulated. As a more formal conclusion to a personal reading within the context of such a teaching sequence, they are better suited than most other formats.

Stage 7: Closure

Especially in the case of elaborate stage 6 activities there is a need to mark the ending of a longer sequence that is drawing to a close. It would be unfortunate to end with a rushed presentation of group work and leave no room for discussions

or a final closing remark, pointing out what students have achieved, what they have learned so far, or how this work relates to larger contexts and interests. Everyone involved should share a moment of accomplishment, such as appreciating the learner texts and lively discussions. Some questions that have been left unanswered can be acknowledged, as much as those that were discussed at great length. This closes the frame that was opened by stage 1.

This is not meant as a prescriptive model, as teaching situations can significantly vary. At university, there is a fixed rhythm of weekly in-class meetings, providing students with plenty of time for reading and posting. The sequence of English lessons in a secondary school is usually more irregular, sometimes with just a day in between, which makes extensive reading a problem, let alone completing worksheets and posting comments online. The underlying principles, I believe, are still relevant.

This framework presents a compromise between aesthetic and efferent reading with a gradual shift towards the latter. In Anglophone traditions based on Rosenblatt's transactional theory there is a strong tendency to defend aesthetic reading at all costs against the exploitation of literature for other purposes. This may be more feasible in a native-speaker context, but the reality of the EFL classroom is usually a lack of time that requires teachers to compromise (cf. Legutke 1996: 101). Thus, guiding questions and a discussion forum are soft interventions that gradually direct students from the first impressions of the early stages to more reflected and substantial readings. The online forum has a number of advantages: (1) it is easy to set up, use and keep track of; (2) it has a positive effect on the social interaction within the group, especially at university, where students only meet once a week; (3) it adds a stage of reflection and negotiation outside of the classroom, which is informal enough to propose and test ideas in a safe environment; (4) it (pre)structures first impressions for classroom discussions and thus builds a bridge between personal notes and the collective co-construction of meaning; (5) it provides scaffolding and models for students who are struggling with the text and/or the task; (6) it asks for everyone to become involved; (7) it keeps a record of students' responses that are closer to the initial reading than many text types that are produced much later in more standardised formats; (8) it provides teachers with an excellent summary of first impressions and the students' further discoveries throughout the whole sequence, which, in turn, (9) allows them to plan lessons that cater to the students' interests; and, finally, (10) this documentation may serve for further research into readers' responses and learner texts.

In many ways these posts are similar to a reading diary or a log (cf. Nünning & Surkamp 2010: 53–5; Benton & Fox 1985: 42, 121–2; Benton 1992: 35–6, 94),

but there are also significant differences: they are selected and represent a more developed form in comparison to mere jottings. Social media add an interactive element by allowing students to comment on each other's ideas and provide feedback. Since there are always in-class activities in between and students become more competent readers of the text *while* they are reading it, they are automatically primed to look out for themes or other aspects discussed in class and can respond to more complex guiding questions during the second, third or fourth iteration of stage 2. The system works like a spiral: not only do the stages have different functions, but the next iteration of the same stage already takes place at a higher level and is embedded in a different context than the previous one. With a reading diary or log that is kept in private, there may also be some progress, but students work on their own without substantial input from their peers.

There are, of course, also problems and pitfalls. From the students' perspective this is still work and, with few exceptions, the forum is kept alive by having the posts count as active contributions to class and, thus, the final mark. Students are fully aware of the fact that peers and teachers are going to read their statements. They may be influenced by what others have already shared, by what they believe teachers want to read or by their wish to present themselves in a particular way. Accordingly, these learner texts are not pure expressions of readers' responses and only provide circumstantial evidence. In the best case, groups embrace the opportunity to share their thoughts and discoveries through this channel. There is a natural curiosity to learn what the others have posted, so the quality of these contributions influences the overall acceptance and usefulness. In the worst case, students have to be reminded of assignments, which they reluctantly and drudgingly complete. If teachers abuse the system by increasing the workload or pushing for purely analytical tasks, the students' motivation is likely to dwindle.

A teacher's presence on the forum requires a delicate balance between, on the one hand, showing presence, such as reading, acknowledging and commenting on contributions, and, on the other hand, letting students be among themselves. This works better when teachers understand their role as being readers in the group and not the language police scrutinising and evaluating every single comment. In rare cases it is necessary to intervene and correct statements that are factually not true and may negatively influence future work on the text. The workload of teachers can be reduced by limiting one's own contributions, but the students' statements have to be read in preparation for class, as the stages are interlinked. Their order is important, as students should get a chance to make up their minds and test their ideas in progressive steps before they are asked to verbalise their reading in a lockstep discussion. This means that teachers may

only reach stage 4 during the first lesson, which is fine. The worst case scenario would be to proceed from a stage 2 aesthetic reading without any guidance or while-reading activities to a stage 6 lockstep discussion of the public meaning of a literary text.

The age and language level of the students have a significant influence, of course. While younger, more inexperienced readers need longer stage 3 and 4 sequences, older learners may be able to handle more complex analytical tasks with less preparation time. In this case, going back and forth between stages 4 and 5 resembles a task cycle. Still, there should always be a progression from aesthetic to efferent reading, from subjectivity to intersubjectivity, from learner texts to more formal text types, and from more experiential to more analytical activities. The same applies to university students, where the situation might seem different as they *do* have to learn how to write academic essays and engage in highly specialised forms of analysis. However, following these steps at the beginning of introductory courses, at least with the first text, makes a difference as students need to be trained how to read and this system provides a lot of feedback.

Due to the segmentation of the narrative, the seven stages and a return to certain activities and concerns in a spiral fashion, activities have to be carefully chosen for the specific steps and their place in the overall design. If we take a book's cultural context as an example, such as the African-American Civil Rights Movement in the case of *March: Book One*, it becomes relevant to ask how much of it has to be addressed during framing (stage 1), to create curiosity and contextualise the narrative. Yet, it may also feature in a stage 2 task, when students pick one aspect of the narrative that they do not understand, engage in some online research and post their findings. It could also play a role in a stage 3 discussion, as students suddenly realise that they require more information, which could be provided as a short informational input by the teacher or a video clip during stage 4. The cultural context can become the main motivation for a stage 5 rereading task, e.g. by having students look at the specific way certain social groups are depicted in the narrative, or it may provide the topic for a more elaborate stage 6 activity that critically looks at the long-term development of a farm boy into a political activist and member of the SNCC. Task design and the distribution of information cannot be incidental in this case, since the cultural context is likely to be a teacher's main focus for the sequence. Instead of tying these considerations to *March* in particular, this staged approach can help to clarify what tasks should be selected for specific positions in the sequence.

2.4 Learner Texts & Activities

It has already been clarified how this framework relies on learner texts that are produced during stages 2 to 5, in contrast to more formalised text types, such as a review, which become relevant as late as stage 6. In an article subtitled “Learner Texts and the Teaching of Literature in the EFL Classroom” Michael K. Legutke describes the concept in the following manner:

In an attempt to make sense of a text, i.e. to make it coherent, the student-reader needs to mobilize prior knowledge, reflect on the appropriateness of his/her frames of reference, predict events, hypothesize outcomes, compare and re-adjust assumptions and expectations. The student-reader will have to respond to areas of indeterminacy by filling gaps and articulating the text's silences with his/her imagination. In short, making sense depends on the reader's productive and creative efforts, on his or her co-authorship, so to speak. Under classroom conditions such co-authorship is not only influenced by the structure of the text but also by the activities of the other readers: the teacher and, of course, fellow students. Learner texts grow out of these special conditions of literature teaching. They are, if you like, materializations of individual and collective readings. (1996: 93)

To guarantee a progression from first jottings to more elaborate responses, teachers need to “think about work for individuals and groups to do *during* the reading of texts – of novels particularly – which might develop, in all our pupils, the processes which characterize a skilled reader” (Benton & Fox 1985: 109). Legutke conceptualises such a reader as an “active and creative learner who is seen in a dynamic relationship with the target text, the tasks, fellow learners and the teacher” (1996: 92). Since this framework includes steps that are to be completed at home, there is a certain danger of doubling the workload by assigning the reading itself and then a number of tasks that accompany it. Legutke's concept of learner texts has the advantage of treating notes, comments and jottings as auxiliary texts that do not take a lot of time to create and help to keep the focus on the reading itself. Still, they provide a valuable documentation of the various encounters with the narrative and the progress that learners make from one stage to the next. Most importantly, they are not meant for assessment:

In the traditional transmission classroom texts produced by learners are generally seen as ways of assessing the success or failure of the learner to master the input. They are produced essentially for the teacher. There is a vital difference between those texts produced for the teacher and the ones mentioned above. What distinguishes them is that they enjoy a different status. Conceived and produced by learners for their own benefit to communicate their own meaning, they are not principally targets for the teacher's need to assess progress but are seen as valid contributions to a mutual process of creating meaning and making sense of the world. (1996: 100)

Representing a first step in the transition from experience to the verbalisation of ideas in standardised form(at)s *and* in the foreign language, learners are faced with the challenge of having to find out *what* they want to say, but also *how* they can express their ideas. Legutke makes an important distinction between established text genres, such as plot summary, essay or review, as strongly regulated forms that are created *after* the reading, and learner texts that are produced *during* the reading process, that are less formal and serve individual and collaborative processes of meaning-making (cf. 1996: 100). This raises the question which text types may serve as learner texts. Legutke identifies three broad categories: “unstructured and structured reading responses (codified in response protocols or reading diaries)”, “more or less elaborate inter- and extra-textual variations” and “more or less elaborate reflections on the reading process, the public process of negotiating meaning, but also on the private and collective process of text production” (1996: 93–4). Looking at Legutke’s classification it becomes clear that he conceptualises learner texts in purely aesthetic terms. The first category covers all the reactions to literature that occur during stages 2 and 3, the second category includes the whole range of creative responses which belong mostly to stages 5 and 6 in my framework, and the third type may occur during stage 2 as a comment on someone else’s post or in the form of notes taken during a stage 3 discussion. Legutke seems to dismiss learner texts that are produced as responses to more analytical tasks during stage 5. These ask learners to return to the text and find evidence for their own readings of the narrative or in relation to the overall focus of the sequence. Strictly speaking, this is efferent reading, but I would still count them as learner texts.

Legutke’s essay raises important questions concerning how learner texts turn into more elaborate and formalised genres, but also how to classify various responses in a meaningful way. Rosenblatt tends to distinguish between activities that encourage aesthetic and efferent reading, so Legutke associates the former with personal notes and preliminary jottings, the latter with traditional written responses. However, this would reduce the spectrum of meaningful production tasks to stages 2 and 6 without any intermediary steps. What is missing are those transitional activities during stages 3–5 that are dedicated to the co-construction of meaning. Accordingly, a third category is needed that involves the analytical skills of efferent reading, but retains the personal interest and informal responses of aesthetic reading. An early stage 5 rereading task fulfils these requirements, as it demands a more systematic analysis of the text based on the subjective experiences and the global understanding of readers. However, due to a reoccurrence of stages across several lessons, the depth of engagement can be adjusted as needed. While the first stage 5 activity usually requires students to study a

specific scene again in greater detail, a later stage 5 may encourage a comparison with a related scene, leading over to a discussion of larger narrative patterns. This raises the question whether the efficiency of certain task types should not be measured according to their placement within and facilitation of specific educational steps within a larger framework.

Daniela Caspari begins her discussion of creative activities for the literary classroom with the ambition to classify a bewildering plethora of tasks that are often enumerated in long lists without any meaningful indication of the learner level, the required language skills, the complexity, estimated duration, aim or scope of the activity (cf. 1994: 15–16). She lists six criteria that she deems essential for any consideration of creative activities (cf. 1994: 164): the exact location within a sequence of activities; the type of interaction (e.g. a short mental reflection vs. a written essay); the focus (e.g. process, product, personality of students); the extent of learner autonomy; the learner's stance and type of involvement (e.g. playful, analytical); and the task's suitability to train language competences. There are three factors that limit the book's usefulness for the model presented above. First of all, a substantial part of the classificatory system is more concerned with experimental writing and creative responses to literary texts rather than reader-response theory in a narrower sense (cf. 1994: 167–200). Secondly, the important chapter on the role of creativity during the reading process discusses and criticises too many existing theories without providing sufficient orientation (cf. 1994: 200–14). And, thirdly, the functional integration of a task in a sequence of activities becomes again tied to the traditional pre-, while- and post-reading stages (cf. 1994: 214–25). While the book offers a treasure trove of activities and a broad range of perspectives on creativity in the classroom, it does not address the logical sequence and interdependence of tasks in a systematic fashion.

Since I promote a staged approach to reading, I turn to Benton and Fox's *Teaching Literature: Nine to Fourteen* as well as Collie and Slater's *Literature in the Language Classroom*. Both of these books prioritise the process of reading and subjugate the choice of activities to their placement within an ongoing engagement with a literary text. As the titles reveal, they are concerned with different educational settings: middle-school students and EFL learners respectively. In chapter 1 ("What happens when we read stories?") Benton and Fox speak of a journey and four different phases (cf. 1985: 11–12), which have already been introduced. The first list of suggested activities appears in the context of genres in chapter 3 (cf. 1985: 33–69) and then again in chapter 6, which is dedicated to "Teaching the class novel" (cf. 1985: 115–34). Here, they first seem to relate back to the four phases (cf. 1985: 119–20), but then abandon the idea and list twenty-one activities for while-reading (cf. 1985: 121–6) and another twenty-eight

for post-reading (cf. 1985: 127–31) – grouped according to social forms: five tasks for solo work and twenty-three for “pairs, groups or the whole class” (1985: 127). Benton and Fox refer to these ideas as “suggestions” or “techniques” (1985: 120). While most of them are really useful and sufficiently described on their own terms, they are not interlinked and pertain to very different categories. In the following, I use the book’s numbering to quickly refer to the suggestions. “*Reading journals or logs*” (1985: 121), for example, are a form of documentation that contain personal responses in the form of “speculations”, “judgements, comparisons with their [students’] own experience, illustrations of characters, reflections on moments or themes from the book, comments on how the author is telling the story and notes about their own experiences prompted by the book” (1985: 121). This is intentionally a free format, but documents very different types of interactions with the text at very different stages of the engagement. Next is a portfolio-type “*extended journal*” (1985: 122) for which we do not get a context of use. 3, 4 and 7 are prediction tasks, but very different in terms of scope. “*Supposing . . .*” (7) asks students to explore the continuation of the narrative through improvisational theatre. 3 and 4 are covered in the journal under ‘speculations’, which shows that we have moved to a completely different set-up: from extended reading at home to in-class activities. 5 asks students to note down genuine questions they have while reading, which fits into the same category of looking ahead. “*Character or theme wallcharts*” (6) are a means of keeping track of what is going on in the narrative and belong to the category of retrospective reading. Returning to chapter 1 we see that Benton and Fox’s second general activity is called “Anticipating and retrospecting” (1985: 14), which clarifies why these activities go together. It is a pity that the list of suggestions in chapter 6 is not explicitly based on the theory and classification offered in chapter 1. Suggestion 8 introduces a new type of activity which asks students to create a speech or thought balloon for a character. Here the emphasis shifts to an exploration of a character’s feelings and thoughts. 9–11 belong to the broader category of keeping track that was introduced in 6 for characters and themes. They are called “*Family tree*”, “*Time lines*” and “*Maps*” and are intended to chart out social relations, temporal progression and locations. “*Thumb-nail sketches*” (12) asks for “lightning sketches of characters, settings or incidents” that can then be used to compare the “pictures in the head” that students have formed of different aspects of the story world. This is again a new context as students are asked to compare their different readings and impressions. 13–16 and 20 continue with the idea of exploring characters through creative tasks, in this case advice, interviews, diaries, letters and impression notes. 17 requires students to record striking thoughts in response to the narrative, which conceptually

belongs to the journal (1). 18 sees the teacher acting as the author and answering questions about the text, which is related to 5. “*Literary consequences*” is another prediction activity and belongs to 3, 4 and 7. The final task, “*Reports*” (21), uses the very formal structure of school reports to work as a template for the description of certain characters.

What can we take away from this analysis? First of all, there are types of activities that belong together, but they are never explicitly declared as groups. The first is about picturing the story world and making sense of what is happening while students are reading (1, 5, 17); this includes, first and foremost, finding out about the thoughts, feelings and motivations of the characters (8, 13–16, 20); the next is about sharing these ideas with others (12, 18) and finding out what they think. A third group of activities traces the development of the plot in terms of anticipation (3, 4, 7, 19) and retrospection (5, 9–11) and a fourth type uses a highly formalised template into which efferent information has to be slotted (21). What this list – like so many others of this type – fails to represent is the temporal sequence, the movement from aesthetic to efferent reading, from first impressions to refined arguments, from learner texts to teacher texts etc. It is also insufficiently linked to the theoretical framework, which means that it describes the activities for what they *are* rather than what they *are for*. In short, despite the announcement of a staged approach, the ‘suggestions’ in Benton and Fox remain unrelated.

Collie and Slater have organised their book according to four stages, which they call “First encounters”, “Maintaining momentum”, “Exploiting highlights” and “Endings” (1988: iii). They dedicate a chapter to each of them, and then demonstrate what happens during these stages when working with a novel in the classroom, in this case William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*. In the section on “Gaining momentum” they introduce “Home reading with worksheets”, for which “a shared feedback or discussion time in class becomes a necessary follow-up” (1988: 38), which corresponds to my stages 2–4. Where they deviate from the framework presented above is their reliance on traditional teaching methods. For example, they promote “question-and-answer worksheets”, as “these are the most familiar of all, and the easiest to prepare” (1988: 38). Students are asked to complete such a worksheet at home or, alternatively, a multiple choice test (cf. 1988: 39–41). The following stage 3 pair work requires students to ask each other the questions on the handout and “monitor the answers given orally by the other student” (1988: 41). This is just the beginning of a whole series of questionable ideas that are incompatible with the reading model propagated by Benton & Fox and with the framework presented in these pages. When Collie and Slater introduce worksheets for the first time, they add a special precaution: “Care must be

used, however, to avoid the kind of situation where the student merely gives what is obviously the desired ‘right’ answer; or questions that simply lead students to a particular point in the text, where the answer is clearly to be found” (1988: 38). Six pages later (cf. 1988: 44) they include a true or false activity based on *The Great Gatsby*, which – by its very definition – requires correct answers.

This is a real pity as the book contains a number of important ideas, such as “snowball activities” (1988: 51–6). They mirror Benton and Fox’s ‘anticipating and retrospecting’ in that they require students to do the same exercise again for different parts of the book to document changes of all kinds. In the context of graphic organisers, the authors suggest to focus on the “[r]epresentations of characters, their introduction into the story, [and] their growing or changing relationship with each other” (1988: 53). In the next chapter on post-reading activities, however, they introduce “*Sculpting*”, for which a student arranges actors/characters in such a way that their poses express their fixed traits and relationships:

The sculptor chooses a ‘character’ and asks him or her to stand, sit, or take up any position or expression which seems appropriate to that character’s essential personality traits. A cleared area of the classroom is the sculpting arena. Another ‘character’ is now asked to come forward and the sculptor places him or her in an appropriate position relative to the first character, that is, near if the sculptor sees them as close, or far apart if they have little connection with each other. (1988: 81)

The problem is that both observations cannot be true at the same time. Either characters have changing relationships and develop along a particular trajectory, which is called a character arc, or they have essential personality traits and unchanging relationships, which may only apply to sitcoms, formulaic genre fiction and some children’s stories. ‘Sculpting’ only makes sense as a stage 5 activity based on one particular scene, but it becomes problematic during stage 6, as do character constellations and portraits that try to capture essences. These should be stage 2 or stage 5 ‘snowball activities’ that have to be repeated a number of times to demonstrate to students that characters change, along with their relationships. For their discussion of *Lord of the Flies* Collie and Slater suddenly claim that “Sculpting [. . .] can also be used in the middle of the novel” (1988: 139). Their reason is the following: “In this chapter [VII: Shadows and Tall Trees], there is a subtle but definite shift in the relationships between several of the characters. [. . .] This makes it a particularly appropriate point for sculpting” (1988: 139–40). Together with uninspiring reading comprehension tasks and a lot of language work for its own sake, these contradictions are harmful to an otherwise excellent book. They undermine the very purpose of having a structured

approach in the first place, which would require a selection of activities with specific functions within the overall design.

Britta Freitag-Hild provides such a rationalisation for both her typology of activities for inter/transcultural learning (cf. 2010: 110–21) and their configurations for specific teaching sequences (cf. 2010: 166–8, 204–5, 268–71), which is a major advantage over lists of suggestions that tend to promote heterogeneous goals. She even presents staged approaches to Ken Loach's *Ae Fond Kiss* (cf. 2010: 159–96) and Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* (cf. 2010: 197–253). However, this remarkable efficiency comes at a price: students have to keep pace with a strongly pre-programmed and teacher-centred pursuit of specific goals. In the case of *Ae Fond Kiss*, the first lesson offers an open exchange of ideas about the trailer (2010: 384), but then there seems to be an overreliance on stage 4 discussions (cf. 2010: 384–7) without sufficient opportunities for students to work on their own responses. For *The Black Album* both the framing in form of pre-reading activities (cf. 2010: 388) and the guiding questions that accompany the first encounter with the text (cf. 2010: 204) leave little room for personal reactions that do not correspond to the chosen approach. This foregrounding of one particular reading may not be necessary, as the texts manage to speak for themselves. There is much more variety in the task design in the middle part of the sequence, compared to *Ae Fond Kiss*, but the activities continue a trend of eliciting specific responses. While most books lack a clear progression based on careful pre-planning, Freitag-Hild demonstrates how this can be achieved. At the same time, aesthetic reading may lose its importance as a starting point of literary encounters, if efferent reading dominates the sequence of lessons.

Acknowledging the fact that teachers have to combine aesthetic reading with other, more analytical pursuits, the seven stages allow for a gradual shift from personal responses to more efferent concerns. This is possible by combining extensive reading at home (stage 2) with intensive rereading in the classroom (stage 5). Posts on the online forum and a stage 3 discussion at the beginning of every lesson encourage students to pursue their own lines of inquiry, which lead to stage 4 group presentations and lockstep discussions. These, in turn, can set the agenda for more analytical tasks during stage 5 and the following lessons. A teacher's initial framing (stage 1) and the choice of text alone usually provide sufficient guidance to guarantee discoveries that are also conducive to a teacher's ulterior plans. Students are more than likely to transition from first reactions to a more systematic inquiry under the influence of the dialogic reading process in class and online. Instead of taking centre stage, a facilitator should organise classroom interactions in such a way that students work on their own as much as possible. Important questions that need to be addressed can

often be transformed into stage 2 detective work or a stage 5 task. Every lesson primes students to look for indications in the text that may validate readings that have been discussed in class. Going through several iterations, stages do not repeat themselves, but become more focused in service of a collective process of meaning-making. Stages 2 and 5 serve as the main engines that accommodate a gradual shift from personal responses to the analysis of scenes as contextual frames to more synthetic tasks that begin to prepare for stage 6. In between (stage 4), teachers always get a chance to steer the ship by coordinating activities, summarising results, announcing further steps, adding points to the discussion in different forms and keeping track of the larger goals.