UNWITTING INTERPRETERS: SOME COGNITIVE STRATEGIES USED BY READERS OF FICTION

ABSTRACT: This article surveys four cognitive strategies readers unwittingly use as they “concretize” the fictional worlds they encounter in fictional texts. The strategies are: the application of the “principle of minimal departure”; the use of “scripts”; the use of generic literary conventions; and the use of “theory of mind.” The article demonstrates that these strategies are “interpretive” in that they entail the use of various kinds of knowledge from outside the fictional text in order to enable the reader’s immersion in the fictional world. Most interestingly, the reader carries out these strategies entirely unawares. The latter part of this article focuses on the peculiarities of reader response that make such a phenomenology not only possible, but necessary.

KEYWORDS: Reader Response, Indeterminancy, Script, Schema, Cognitive Poetics, Theory of Mind

0. INTRODUCTION

There is a parable in Vedic lore about the illusory nature of worldly experience. A dog chews on a hard, dry bone. As the hungry dog perseveres, its gums begin to bleed. But this only causes the dog to bite even harder. Little does the dog realize that the savour it derives from the bone has come from its own mouth.

The lesson is clear enough: much of what we receive from the world is what we have ourselves put into it. This parable about real-world experience, interestingly, holds a grain of truth about the nature of fictional-world experience as well: the dog is the reader, the bone is the fictional text, and the savoury ooze is the reader's interpretive activity. In this article I attempt to describe the ooze. I identify and survey a set of cognitive strategies that we as readers deploy as we read fictional texts. I also show why these cognitive operations are of an unwitting nature. The consequence of such a phenomenology is that we end up
experiencing fictional worlds as worlds that are construed rather than constructed. In other words, even though a large number of the facts about a fictional world are generated through the interpretive activity of the reader, the reader herself remains unaware of her interpretive contributions.

Whether we happen to be conscious of it or not, we constantly make use of knowledge from outside fictional texts in order to be able to comprehend them. An important reason for this is a feature of fictional texts that the phenomenologist Roman Ingarden has termed “indeterminacy.” A fictional text is composed of a finite set of sentences and for this reason can never specify (or “determine”) everything about the world it purports to represent. For Ingarden, the represented objects of fiction differ from real objects in an important way. Real objects are unequivocally and universally determined. That is to say, either A or non-A can be determined to be true of a real object. Moreover, real objects are available for the determination of any claim that is made about their properties. In contrast, represented objects lack the properties of either unequivocal or universal determinacy. For example, the answer to the famous question: “how many children had Lady Macbeth?” cannot be determined even after the most thorough analysis of the fictional text of *Macbeth*. The represented Lady Macbeth is only partially determined in her fictional world. Even though Shakespeare’s text is quite successful in bestowing upon Lady Macbeth the “character of reality,” it falls well short of determining everything about her. Ingarden asserts that it is in the nature of represented spaces to be “pocked with gaps” and of represented objects to be riddled with “spots of indeterminacy” (Ingarden 1973:224, 246).

Every fictional text therefore depends on the reader to fill in the spots of indeterminacy and thereby to “concretize” its represented world. The reader does this automatically, drawing upon the knowledge she already possesses of the real world and of literary conventions. It is only through the reader’s act of concretization that the fictional world emerges as a uniform, well-defined ontic sphere akin to the real world. When, for example, in G. E. Lessing’s *Emilia Galotti*, a prince is described as attending to various petitions in his study, the reader implicitly concretizes
a whole world surrounding the foregrounded fictional space: “What is represented does not stop at the walls of the study but extends further, into the other rooms of the palace, into the town, etc., even though none of this is directly given to us” (Ingarden 1973:219). Ingarden has just given us an instance of one kind of cognitive operation the reader’s mind performs in order to resolve indeterminacy in represented spaces. I shall identify in this article, four distinct strategies readers employ as they concretize fictional worlds. These are: the application of the “principle of minimal departure”; the use of “scripts”; the use of generic literary conventions; and the use of “theory of mind.” Using the vocabulary of discourse analysis, one could say that the first two strategies constitute the reader’s application of “general knowledge”; the third involves the reader’s knowledge of narrative genres; and the fourth involves the use of sociocognitive inferences. This is by no means an exhaustive list of interpretive strategies; yet my selection is motivated by a certain logic. I leave out of the scope of this discussion the use of “text-specific” knowledge—that is to say, the use of knowledge available within the text itself. These include, for instance, the resolution of anaphora to antecedent nouns, or, say, the recall of information provided earlier in the text to infer a character’s current location. I also leave out high-level critical interpretation—involving the use of frameworks such as Marxism, feminism, or psychoanalysis—which deployment is optional and dependent on the orientations of individual readers.¹ My focus here is on the kinds of interpretive strategies every immersed reader, regardless of cultural location or individual disposition, reflexively (and unwittingly) employs as she goes about the business of comprehending a narrative text. Through this discussion, I seek to demonstrate the specific ways in which narrative comprehension necessarily involves interpretation, that is to say, the application of knowledge from outside the text.

1. THE PRINCIPLE OF MINIMAL DEPARTURE

The principle of minimal departure was proposed by the literary theorist

¹ See Emmott (1997:21-73) for an overview of the various kinds of knowledge that are attributed to the reader in text-processing research.
Marie-Laure Ryan. It identifies the basic heuristic that readers employ as they flesh out the beings that inhabit fictional worlds. As we have seen, fictional worlds are ontologically incomplete: no fictional text can comprehensively specify all the facts about the world it purports to represent. For example, nowhere in *Madame Bovary* is it specified that Emma’s husband has two legs. Yet, most readers would, if challenged, insist that the statement “Charles Bovary is one-legged” is false. This is because, Ryan contends, *Madame Bovary* presents Charles Bovary as a human being, and, “the normal number of legs for a human being is two.” What readers do, in effect, is to make suitable assumptions drawn from their knowledge of reality whenever any aspect of a fictional world has been left unspecified:

> We will project upon these worlds everything we know about reality, and we will make only the adjustments dictated by the text. When someone says “If horses had wings they would be able to fly,” we reconstrue an animal presenting all the properties of real horses, except for the presence of wings and the ability to fly. (Ryan 1991:51)

In other words, our default presupposition is that the fictional world departs minimally from the real world. Ryan’s principle highlights the phenomenological fact that we never imagine fictional worlds *ab ovo*. We begin with an already filled-out world (based on the real world), and then make the necessary fictional “corrections” to it. For Ryan, employing the principle of minimal departure means, “starting from a preconceived image of a full universe, and amending it or adding to its population according to textual directions” (Ryan 1991:52-53). Thus, our imaginings are substantially aided by the images, assumptions, and knowledge we possess about the real world. For example, we imagine a winged horse or a fictional Napoleon primarily on the basis of what we already know about real horses and the historical Napoleon. Even if the fictional text does not explicitly state that these fictional beings possess hearts, kidneys, and intestines, we automatically assume that they do. Ryan’s principle—even though it was initially proposed to solve ontological issues in possible-worlds literary theory—identifies an important cognitive strategy through which readers resolve indeterminacies in fictional worlds.
2. SCRIPT THEORY

Script theory was the result of a collaboration in the 1970s between the artificial intelligence researcher Roger C. Schank and the social psychologist Robert P. Abelson. Schank and Abelson theorized that we employ memory structures called “scripts” in order to make sense of scenarios that recur in our everyday lives. A script is a “predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation” (Schank and Abelson 1977:41). We make use of scripts when we are at a restaurant, a football game, a movie theatre, or a birthday party. When we enter a restaurant, for example, we are not bewildered by the situation that confronts us. This is because we have a very good idea of the sequence of events that will subsequently unfold, as well as of the role we will be expected to play during that sequence of events. Our “restaurant script”—which has been formed as a result of numerous previous encounters with restaurants—tells us, for example, that we will first be seated at a table; then, a person assigned to our table (a “waiter”) will give us a printed list of the available food-items (a “menu”); next, we will place an “order” for some selected items—which will then be served to us by the waiter; we will thereafter eat our meal and remain seated, waiting for a “bill” to be presented; we will pay for our meal—remembering to leave a “tip” for the waiter; finally, we will leave the restaurant. Knowing the restaurant script also means that we will be able to comprehend seemingly cryptic expressions such as “table for two,” “today’s special” and “à la carte.” The script hypothesis explains our ability to comprehend and cope with situations even when we have very little explicit information to go by. We are able to do so only because we possess a tremendous amount of background knowledge about the typical scenarios of quotidian life. This background knowledge is deployed even when we encounter fictional situations.

The stylized opening lines of fictional narratives often illustrate how much authors depend on their readers to activate the appropriate script right at the beginning of their stories. In James Joyce’s “The Dead,” we have:

Lily, the caretaker’s daughter, was literally run off her feet. Hardly had she brought one gentleman into the little pantry
behind the office on the ground floor and helped him off with his overcoat, than the wheezy hall-door bell clanged again and she had to scamper along the bare hallway to let in another guest. (Joyce 1956:199)

Reading just these lines we might infer, for example, that the venue of the action is a house (and not an office or a church), that the occasion in question is a party (and not an official function or a funeral), and that the party is being hosted by a relatively well-to-do family (and not by Lily or the caretaker). The informality of the occasion is signalled not only by the breeziness of Joyce’s prose, but also through the little detail that the duty of receiving the guests has been delegated to the caretaker’s young daughter. In addition, we know without the text having to tell us, that the guests are not being robbed of their coats; the coats will be returned once the party is over. We also know that in helping the gentlemen take off their overcoats, Lily is not engaging in a spontaneous show of affection; she is mechanically performing a role expected of her, given her social station and the cultural mores of the day. We are able to make these inferences only because we have activated scripts that are apposite to the kinds of action being described, as well as to the era in which the story is set. The script renders intelligible the narrated action as well as the social relations between the featured characters.

Scripts are a species of general knowledge or “schemata” that we make use of in order to comprehend everyday situations and scenarios. Interestingly, concepts such as scripts and schemata offer a means of assimilating the insights of sociology and cultural theory into cognitive-science accounts of reader response.2 Erwin M. Segal identifies Script theory as a “structured representation” theory. Such theories are opposed to “meaning extraction” theories in that they go beyond syntax and semantics and acknowledge the necessity of the reader’s activation of

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2 See, for example, Stockwell (2002:75-76); and DiMaggio (1997:263-66). In “Culture and Cognition,” Paul DiMaggio asserts that “[s]chemata are . . . mechanisms that simplify cognition. Highly schematic cognition is the realm of institutionalized culture, of typification, of the habitus, of the cognitive shortcuts that promote efficiency at the expense of synoptic accuracy. . . . In schematic cognition we find the mechanisms by which culture shapes and biases thought” (DiMaggio 1997:269).
particular contexts or “frames” for textual comprehension. In other words, they recognize that “a major data source of the intended message resides in hearers and is not delivered by the text” and that “comprehension cannot be separated from interpretation” (Segal 1995:7-8). Importantly, the knowledge that a reader possesses about stereotypical situations is not inborn, but based on the reader’s exposure to the corresponding kinds of situations within her cultural context. Naturally, therefore, what counts as stereotypical about a situation is liable to vary from reader to reader. For example, Peter Stockwell notes that his “pub script” is based largely on his experiences of pubs in Britain. Consequently, although Stockwell has visited various kinds of pubs within Britain (“cafés, nightclubs, social clubs, working men’s clubs, Labour clubs”) he is occasionally thrown into confusion when he visits pubs outside his country. It should be evident that the kinds of background knowledge referenced by scripts extend well beyond the oft-cited domains of pubs and restaurants, into virtually every aspect of our lives. Understood in its broadest sense, a script is a “socioculturally defined mental protocol for negotiating a situation” (Stockwell 2002:77).

It is worth noting that in order for fictional texts to be at all interesting to readers, they must depart from stereotypical situations and stage the violation of some familiar script. The violation of the script of marital fidelity, for example, has been a staple motivator of narrative action from the *Iliad* onwards. In Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* we encounter a brave and distinguished general violating the scripts—or the codes of honour—that attach to him both as a warrior and as a host. In *Lolita*, we find the scripts for appropriate behaviour between a stepfather and his underage stepdaughter being constantly violated. The schema violations of literature are often effected through innovations in language or text-structure, or in other words, through discourse. The linguist Guy Cook sees such “discourse deviation” as integral to “literariness.” Reprising the Russian Formalists’ notion of “defamiliarization,” Cook asserts that literary discourse differs from non-literary discourse precisely in that it is “schema refreshing” rather than “schema preserving” or “schema reinforcing.” A literary narrative modifies the reader’s schemata: it destroys old schemata, generates new ones, or it establishes new links between pre-existing schemata (Cook 1994:191, 206). These
qualifications notwithstanding, it can be seen that scripts and schemata furnish for us a fund of background presumptions without which we would be unable to make sense of narratives. After all, the protagonists’ actions in *Macbeth*, *Madame Bovary*, and *Lolita* shock and interest us only because we are familiar with the scripts they systematically violate.

### 3. GENERIC CONVENTIONS

The foregoing observations bring us to another strategy of world-concretization: the reader’s use of interpretive conventions appropriate to the literary genre to which the text belongs. Jonathan Culler identifies a few issues that are relevant to how the readers cope with indeterminacies in texts. He observes that literature is a “second-order semiotic system” based on language (Culler 1980:102). For a text to be intelligible, its readers must possess more than bare linguistic competence. They must be familiar with the “grammar” and the conventions of the literary genre to which the text belongs. One reads a detective novel, for example, with the expectation that its plot will trace the movement from an unsolved crime to a solved one. One also expects that the obvious suspect will turn out to be innocent. Likewise, one reads a poem with strong expectations of “significance” and “metaphorical coherence” in mind. These expectations effectively amount to a framework or schema within which the data of the text is assimilated, ordered, and thereby made sense of. Such competence, which Culler terms “literary competence,” is acquired just like language, through repeated exposure to literary texts. Also, as with linguistic competence, the reader need have only an implicit grasp of the grammar; she need not be consciously aware of the rules she applies as she interprets a text (Culler 1980:109). Given that literary texts belong to a semiotic system, it follows that their meanings are not inherent to the texts themselves; but neither are they the purely subjective projections of readers. The meanings of texts are generated when the reader brings to bear a set of literary conventions on the text. These conventions of meaning-making are, as with any semiotic system, *public* conventions. They constitute crucial extra-textual knowledge shared by authors and readers alike. For this reason, authors need not overburden
their texts with copious descriptions of scene, character, or action. They can leave a lot unsaid and depend on readers to apply the relevant literary conventions and arrive at appropriate inferences.

A concept related to the application of literary competence is “naturalization.” Culler notes that when readers encounter texts whose meanings seem strange and unfamiliar, they are apt to simplify or “naturalize” those meanings in terms of known standards of verisimilitude. The process of naturalization is facilitated by the reader’s knowledge of the real-world, of cultural mores, and perhaps more pertinently, of generic conventions and authorial styles. For example, when we read Henry James’s The Turn of the Screw, we ascribe the “uncanny” aspects of the narration either to the psychological instability of the governess or to phenomena that are genuinely supernatural. In one case, we have naturalized the text using explanatory models available within the genre of realism; in the other, we have naturalized it by positing its membership in the genre of the ghost story. According to Culler, “to naturalize a text is to bring it into relation with a type of discourse or model which is already, in some sense, natural and legible” (Culler 1975:138).

4. THEORY OF MIND

“Theory of Mind” (ToM) is a term used by cognitive psychologists to refer to the faculty of the human mind that enables us to explain other people’s behaviour by attributing to them mental states such as thoughts, feelings, and desires. For example, if we notice a person looking at her watch repeatedly during a lecture, we automatically infer that she is bored and that she wishes that the lecture would end soon; if she reaches for a bottle of water, we deduce that she must be feeling thirsty; if we see tears streaming down her cheeks, we surmise that she must be sad for some reason. In other words, we seldom take other people’s behaviour at face value; rather, we constantly engage in acts of “mindreading,” seeking to explain their behaviour in terms of their mental states. Having a theory of mind enables us to comprehend the complex social world we inhabit, and make predictions about how the people around us will behave.
in the future.\textsuperscript{3} In her pioneering work \textit{Why We Read Fiction}, Lisa Zunshine applies the insights of ToM research to literary reader-response, and in the process demonstrates the extraordinary degree to which our appreciation of fiction is indebted to our theory of mind. When, for example, we read the novels of Ernest Hemingway—an author famous for having eschewed the representation of characters’ interiorities—we cannot fail to read into the actions of the characters the thoughts and feelings that must have motivated those actions. The novel, \textit{A Farewell to Arms}, for example, ends almost abruptly, with the first-person narrator Frederic Henry saying: “After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain” (Hemingway 1929:355). Taken at face value, Henry seems to be reporting nothing more than the somewhat puzzling fact that he chose to walk in the rain. Yet, because we read his action with a theory of mind in place, we find it powerfully indicative of the state of mind of a man who has just witnessed the death of his beloved (Zunshine 2006:22-23).

An important aspect of having a theory of mind is the ability to store certain pieces of information as \textit{metarepresentations}. In other words, we store not only the \textit{content} of the representation, but also the \textit{source} (i.e., the mind) from which the representation arose. Tagging a piece of information with its source is especially useful when we have to decide between multiple, mutually contradictory pieces of information. In such cases, until we have conclusive evidence, we treat each piece of information as being “under advisement.” By doing so, we are able to confine the scope and the validity of the information to the source from which it arose. Moreover, when we draw inferences based on scope-limited information, we ensure that our inferences are also source-tagged and held under advisement (Zunshine 2006:47-50). For example, by storing “[Alice says that] global warming is due to human activity” and “[Bob says that] global warming is a natural phenomenon,” I am able to

\textsuperscript{3} The importance of Theory of Mind as a cognitive endowment has been underscored in recent years by the extensive research that has been undertaken in the field of autism. The clinical psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen relates the symptoms of autism to a failure in the development of the Theory of Mind Mechanism (ToMM), a condition he terms “mindblindness.” He endorses the view taken by evolutionary psychologists who see theory of mind as the evolutionary answer to a specific adaptive problem: “the rapid comprehension and prediction of another organism’s behavior” (Baron-Cohen 1995:12).
not only separate my own opinion about global warming (which is, again, a source-tagged representation attributed to myself) from Bob’s and Alice’s, but also track Bob’s and Alice’s future pronouncements on global warming in the light of the beliefs I know them to hold. We can see that without source-tracking, we would find it impossible to cope with worlds that possessed even a minimum degree of social complexity. This is true of fictional worlds as well. The use of source-tracking to revise or invalidate previously held information is enacted in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, where both Elizabeth and Darcy come to revise their initial impressions of each other. In Elizabeth’s case, for example, the source of her prejudice against Darcy was Wickham’s account of Darcy’s mistreatment of him. It is because Elizabeth is able to source-tag her initial impressions that she is able to treat them as provisional truths that are susceptible to revision (Zunshine 2006:61). The game of source-tracking can occur between reader and author as well. This is especially true of novels that feature “unreliable narrators” where we as readers are compelled to hold the entire narration under advisement. Such fictional texts would be incomprehensible unless the reader were able to infer the intentions of the author via the narrator’s self-representations. In Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*, for example, the reader comes to realize that the narrator’s assertions are riddled with contradictions and are not to be trusted. Having source-tagged the narrator’s account, the reader now has a new object of interest: the personality of the narrator who tells a patently untrustworthy story. The author, anticipating this, suitably modulates the flow of information so that the reader is kept on tenterhooks, her suspicions about the narrator being constantly aroused but never definitively confirmed. The reader, for her part, must second-guess everything the narrator says in the hope of arriving at a coherent sense of how the fictional world is actually constituted. Zunshine speculates that our attraction for literary fiction originates in the pleasure we derive in imagining “hidden mental states.” She suggests that through the process of tracking the changing mind-states of numerous fictional characters, and further, through the process of validating our own ToM assessments against what we infer to be the author’s intention, “we deliver a rich stimulation to the cognitive adaptations constituting our Theory of Mind” (Zunshine 2006:25). Thus, for Zunshine, the pleasure of fiction originates in the adaptive cognitive rewards it brings us.
5. THE FICTIONAL ILLUSION

Now, given that the indeterminacy of the text compels each reader to bring in substantial amounts of knowledge from outside the text (i.e., knowledge of the real world, of scripts, of generic conventions, and of “other minds”) in order to concretize the fictional world, it is reasonable for us to suppose that no two readers will imagine a fictional world in exactly the same way. Variations in cultural background and individual temper will ensure that different readers will draw upon different stores of extra-textual knowledge as they resolve the indeterminacies in the text. Yet, paradoxically, this does not undermine for each individual reader the “objectivity” of the facts that constitute the fictional world. The reason for this is that the reader remains entirely unaware of the subjective contributions she makes to the text’s meanings as she goes about resolving its indeterminacies. Ingarden is explicit on this point: “we are not conscious of the spots of indeterminacy.” He observes that “[o]nly a supplementary reflection concerning the constitutive conditions of represented objects” will bring such awareness to the surface of consciousness (Ingarden 1973:252).

A question may arise as to what happens when readers encounter complex literary texts that are evidently amenable to multiple interpretations. In such cases, wouldn’t the readers be alerted to their own subjective contributions to the meanings of the text? The reader-response theorist Wolfgang Iser provides an explanation for why the illusion of unmediated reception is still preserved. Iser emphasizes the “gestalt” quality of the reader’s cognitions. The key concept Iser adapts from Gestalt psychology is that of “configurative meaning.” When the reader encounters an inconsistency in the text, she automatically draws on all the bits of data that are embedded in perspectives spread across the extent of the text. She then performs the synthesizing operation of “grouping” the data so that it produces a “configurative meaning” that resolves the inconsistency. Iser sees the emergent gestalt as the source of consistency and coherence in interpretation. An essential feature of the reader’s interpretive process is its selectivity. The reader can acquire a configurative meaning only by selecting some data points and excluding others. This selectivity, which depends on the reader’s “individual disposition and experience” (Iser
1978:123) is at the heart of Iser’s reader-response theory; it is what accounts for the subjective element in the interpretation of the literary text. The point is illustrated by E. H. Gombrich as he analyses the duck-rabbit illusion that is often used by philosophers and psychologists to illustrate the seriality and selectivity of human cognition. The image contains sufficient ambiguity to be perceived either as a duck from one perspective, or as a rabbit from another. Significantly, our cognitive mechanisms are such that we can perceive either the duck or the rabbit. No matter how hard we try, we can never perceive both at the same time. Even if we “know” in the back of our minds that there is also a rabbit in the image that we now perceive as a duck, it is impossible for us to let our rabbit-knowledge penetrate our duck-perception:

True, we can switch from one reading to another with increasing rapidity; we will also ‘remember’ the rabbit while we see the duck, but the more closely we watch ourselves, the more certainly will we discover that we cannot experience alternative readings at the same time. Illusion, we will find, is hard to describe or analyse, for though we may be intellectually aware of the fact that any given experience must be an illusion, we cannot, strictly speaking, watch ourselves having an illusion. (Gombrich 1972:5)

The fact that “we cannot experience alternative readings at the same time” is what ensures the singularity of our configurative meanings. The fact that as immersed readers we cannot “watch ourselves having an illusion” is what gives validity to our interpretive closures. Immersed readers of A Passage to India do not attend the trial of Dr. Aziz with multiple hypotheses on the question of whether or not Aziz molested Adela Quested in the Marabar Caves. Notwithstanding the ambiguity in the novel, readers either affirm Aziz’s guilt, or they affirm his innocence, or they remain undecided on the issue. They do not, at any rate, affirm both his guilt and his innocence at the same time. A reader who entertains two mutually exclusive hypotheses about Aziz in effect straddles two different fictional worlds as she attends the trial of Aziz. In each world, her affective engagement with the character of Aziz would be radically different, leading to an unsustainable cognitive dissonance. In other
words, the architecture of our mind is such that even while we may “critically” realize that a text is amenable to the production of a plurality of interpretations, and that many of the text’s meanings have arisen from our own subjective contributions, we remain oblivious of these matters while we are immersed in the fictional world.

That is to say, unless we engage in deliberate acts of metacognition, we will remain under the illusion that fictional worlds do not possess any spots of indeterminacy; that such worlds are composed of facts, not interpretations; and that our process of getting acquainted with those worlds involves acts of discovery, not of invention. Indeed, it is crucial to the phenomenology of immersed fictional experience that the reader imagines herself as a recipient rather than a donor of knowledge about the fictional world. Any inferential or interpretive activity that the reader performs in the process of comprehending the “facts” of the fictional world must remain entirely hidden from her. Fictional experience would be ruined for us should we become aware that we had contributed two legs to Charles Bovary, or that we had placed an oedipal conflict in Hamlet's or Paul Morel’s mind. Immersed fictional experience is thus predicated on the epistemological illusion of pure, unmediated reception.

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