Facilitating Reading Engagement in Shared Reading

Mette Steenberg
Aarhus University

Charlotte Christiansen
Aarhus University

Anne Line Dalsgård
Aarhus University

Anne Maria Stagis
Læseforeningen

Liv Moeslund Ahlgren
Aarhus University

Tine Lykkegaard Nielsen
Aarhus University

Nicolai Ladegaard
Aarhus University Hospital

Abstract   This article responds to this special issue's overarching interest in the relation between modes of reading and the experiences of actual readers by analyzing how the specific practice of shared reading facilitates readers' engagement in literary reading. The article responds both to an under-investigated dimension of the practice of shared reading, that of the role of facilitation, and to a pressing articulated and educational need to develop additional and better methodologies

for fostering literary reading engagement, as existing results from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have demonstrated the importance of reading engagement for both academic achievement and social mobility. By linking the notion of engagement within the PISA framework with phenomenologically oriented empirical research on expressive reading and the notion of emergent thinking in existing shared reading research, the article argues for the role of the reader leader in facilitating literary engagement. These connections may inspire literary scholars to consider the link between literary analysis and the didactics of literary reading.

1. Background

For dedicated readers of literature, the joy and pleasure of being engaged in a book seem natural and effortless. But in Maryanne Wolf's catchy opening phrase to her 2008 book, *Proust and the Squid*, we were "never born to read." Most readers remember the person or the situation that inculcated in them the love of reading, whether it was a parent, a grandparent, a teacher reading aloud, or a librarian pointing to books that made all the difference. In other words, for most readers, reading engagement begins not when they become literate but when someone makes them realize that books, stories, and the written word are to be engaged with and enjoyed.

But these readers constitute a minority. Most people, and in fact most readers, do not read literary fiction and have seldom, some never, made the leap into a literary world and experienced the joy of reading to be found in the very act itself.[1] It is this group of people that we concern ourselves with as we explore how shared reading, and in particular, the role of the reader leader, facilitates engagement in a literary text. This is also the reason that we relate our article to quantitative data and findings on reading engagement by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECD). While it may seem obvious to literary scholars that reading great literature is a rewarding activity, numbers and "hard facts" are often necessary to affect policy making and change.

While this article should primarily be read as an addition to the growing field of research on shared reading and, more broadly, reading liter-

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1. Our point of reference is the Danish society. Kulturvaneundersøgelsen (2012) documents that only 23 percent of the Danish population read literature on a daily basis, 34 percent read monthly or less, and 21 percent never read literature. Among adults twenty to twenty-nine years of age, as few as 10 percent read on a daily basis, 45 percent read monthly or less, and 25 percent never read, compared to reading rates of 29, 29, and 19 percent, respectively, of sixty- to sixty-nine-year-olds.

ature as a social practice, its debt to literary theory and literary research should not be overlooked. Our theoretical framework is phenomenologically oriented empirical reader response theory, and we believe that scholars working within that field may be particularly interested in our findings. Essentially, shared reading is a live manifestation of the dialogue between text and reader that enables meaning to be made from letters printed on a page. In shared reading groups, Wolfgang Iser's (1974) narrative "gaps" are fruitful places for participants to explore and create meaning in a dialogue not only between text and reader but also among text, reader, and fellow readers.

2. An Introduction to Shared Reading

Shared reading, as defined by the award-winning British charity The Reader Organization, is the practice of reading aloud together and sharing individual responses to what is considered "serious literature" in a group setting (Dowrick et al. 2012). A trained "reader leader" selects the literature, usually a combination of prose and poetry, and group members engage in a live reading by taking turns reading aloud.[2] The reader leader is responsible for facilitating an in situ reading of the text by pausing, directing attention to text passages, and allowing for an exploration of the reading group participants' personal or collective responses to the literature. Groups consisting of anywhere between three and ten participants meet every week for sixty to ninety minutes in public settings such as libraries or community centers. Additionally, The Reader Organization is particularly known for bringing literature to hard-to-reach settings such as prisons, mental health institutions, hospitals, and drug habilitation units and to people who, as founder Jane Davis says, "need them the most" (The Reader 2017).

Over the last decade, The Reader Organization has collaborated with the Centre for Research into Reading, Literature, and Society at Liverpool University, and together they have documented the mental health benefits of participation in shared reading groups.[3] Shared reading, however, was never intended as therapy, and it remains a credo within the ethos of the organization that therapeutic benefits happen as "unintended consequences" of literary engagement. In this regard, shared reading sets

2. For a detailed description of the practice and its elements, see Dowrick et al. 2012.
3. The research on shared reading has recently been gathered in Billington 2019, which both documents and reflects on the practice of shared reading and relates shared reading to broader concerns on the relation between literary reading and mental health.

itself apart from bibliotherapeutic interventions, defined as "the guided use of reading, always with a therapeutic outcome in mind" (Katz and Watt 1992). This distinction may be due to the history and development of shared reading. As a practice, it grew out of an adult education learning community at the University of Liverpool, created with the intention of teaching university students to understand and relate to canonized works within Western literary history. The Reader Organization, in turn, was founded on the belief that everyone, regardless of their social background or education, can come to enjoy engaging with literary works of fiction and that this engagement may improve mental well-being.[4] The reader leader functions not as a therapist but as someone who facilitates text-reader inter-action and helps people "get into reading," as the pioneering shared read-ing program was named (Davis 2009: 714). The Reader Organization has achieved international outreach, including in Belgium, Australia, and the Scandinavian countries. The data presented in this article were obtained in a Danish shared reading context.[5]

3. The Engagement Hypothesis

> Reading literacy is understanding, using, reflecting on and *engaging* with written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society.
> OECD, *PISA Assessment Framework*

Over the past two decades, the OECD's Programme for International Stu-dent Assessment (PISA) has established compelling evidence for the cor-relation between reading achievement and social mobility, making reading engagement a shared concern for both policy makers and educators. In fact, the OECD's findings from the first PISA examination led to the con-clusions that being a frequent reader is more of an advantage than having

4. This has since been confirmed by various academic research; see, e.g., Billington 2019 or Billington et al. 2010.
5. The study is funded by the HUMpraxis program (veluxfoundations.dk/en/research /humanities-and-practice), which has as an explicit aim to promote collaboration between humanities and social interventions. This specific project brings together three academic disciplines—literature and linguistics (Mette Steenberg, Anne Maria Stagis, Liv Moeslund Ahlgren, and Tine Lykkegaard Nielsen), anthropology (Anne Line Dalsgård and Charlotte Christiansen), and psychology (Nicolai Ladegaard)—with the Danish Reading Society in an effort to develop and document aesthetic engagement and empowerment processes in shared reading. For more information, visit projects.au.dk/thirdspace/from-participant -to-reader-leader/. See also Dalsgård and Christiansen, forthcoming, for a further explo-ration of the social dimensions of reading engagement, and see Christiansen 2020 for a description of the project and the concept of vulnerability.

well-educated parents[6] and that finding ways to engage students in reading may be one of the most effective ways to produce social change (OECD 2002: 3). The evidence was so compelling that it has led to the development of the field of didactics of reading engagement and literacy (headed by John T. Guthrie and Allan Wigfield 2000 and onwards). This field, however, has received little interest from literary scholars. We hope this article generates such interest.

The most noticeable correlation across OECD countries is found between test scores and individual time spent reading for pleasure. Highest PISA scores are seen in those spending from half an hour to two hours a day reading. However, the greatest difference in scores was found between those who never read on their own account for pleasure and those who read for half an hour. Thus, Astrid Roe and Karin Taube (2012: 45) concluded, "to read or not to read—that is the question." This finding has led many public schools in Denmark to implement a daily twenty-minute reading time routine (*læsebånd*) at the beginning of the day for readers of all ages, during which readers choose their own materials. In the United Kingdom, the finding has led to a similar educational policy of twenty minutes of obligatory reading a day, creating the paradoxical situation that reading for pleasure (defined as a self-motivated activity) has become an activity that pupils engage in by external demand. Numerous studies within the self-determination theory framework point to the importance of internal motivation in producing positive learning outcomes (summarized in Ryan and Deci 2020). According to Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci (2000), human beings share an innate psychological need for "competence, autonomy and relatedness." The hypothesis is that, when teaching manages to bring those needs into the learning process, learning becomes intrinsic and self-determined, which results in not only better performance but also the student's ability to fulfill those basic needs and thus gain better mental health.

Taking into account the importance of motivation and personal involvement, we define reading engagement as the reader becoming actively and visibly and/or audibly invested in the text. *Reading engagement* and *engaged reading* are widely used terms in research on didactics, literacy, and learning. In "Engagement and Motivation in Reading," Guthrie and Wigfield (2000: 404) sum up what they believe to be the common ground for most of the definitions of reading engagement: "The reader has wants and inten-

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6. Engagement in reading had the highest median correlation with achievement in all countries, and the correlation was stronger than between reading achievement and socio-economic status (OECD 2002: 46).

tions that enable reading processes to occur. That is, a person reads a word or comprehends a text not only because she can do it, but because she is motivated to do it."

The didactic concern that we like to raise here, for practitioners in education and organizations working to promote literary reading, is in continuation to the insights from the field of reading engagement, which is not concerned with literary reading per se: how to facilitate literary reading engagement in a way that makes literary reading something that individuals want to do of their own accord. And for literary scholars the question is, What is the role of literature in creating reading engagement? Within the educational system there is often a gap between how literary analysis is practiced at university levels of literary studies and the teaching of literature that takes place in other educational settings, insofar as the latter involves didactic concerns of how to get students into reading, a teaching situation that literary studies seldom explicitly prepares their students for. What we are aiming for by bringing the notion of engagement to the forefront of literary studies is to contribute to closing this gap so that theories of literature take into account theories on how to read literature and reading practices.[7] A long-standing hypothesis and principle for practitioners of shared reading is that reading great literature is how shared reading can improve social and mental well-being. Literary scholars are invited to test this hypothesis, as well as to examine what literary quality is, not per se but within a particular practice of social reading.

In contrast, within the PISA framework, literature has been categorized as just one of many genres and has not until recently been singled out as an isolated element for reading engagement and achievement, in relation to literacy. However, a recent study has found a significant "fiction effect" in the domain of reading literacy (Jerrim and Moss 2019): students that achieve the highest scores in PISA tests are those that not just read self-selected materials of any genre but choose to read literature. At the same time, Wolf (2008) has made a compelling argument for the impact of literature on the ability to engage in deep reading, which she sees as crucial for the kind of reflective thinking and civic engagement in society that the OECD as an organization is concerned with. More recent studies in the United Kingdom on how to generate reading for pleasure in educational settings point to the importance of both the role of the teacher as an

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7. This is not to say that the link between literary theory and and the practice of reading literature isn't already a manifest concern for many literary scholars; see, e.g., Rainsford 2020 for an instructive dialogue between the two.

engaged fellow reader and the role of building communities of readers to sustain personal engagement in literary reading (Cremin et al. 2008, 2014).

4. The Qualia of Engagement

This section addresses the qualitative dimensions of engagement in shared reading before analyzing the role of the reader leader in facilitating such engagement. In the critical literature on shared reading, the concept of emergent thinking comes up at various points. Eleanor Longden et al. (2015: 3) consider emergent thinking as synonymous with what they call "creative inarticulacy," which they define as one of the five intrinsic value elements of shared reading (the others are "liveness, creative inarticulacy, the emotional, and the personal and the group"). Creative inarticulacy is seen as a quality, a fruitful struggle, where for the readers "a sense of uncertainty/tentativeness in discussing texts was generally not a hindrance, more often a channel or prelude to enterprising and stimulating breakthroughs in ideas" (3).

However, the notion of emergence constitutes the backbone of a theory of literary reading as a way of "coming into being" through literary language and thinking. Josie Billington and Philip Davis (2019: 203) hypothesized that the transformative potential of processes of literary emergence is "the result of the process of unpredictability or not knowing in advance which ends here in a transcendence of reductive, habitual or depressed frameworks of understanding."[8] To some extent, the concept of emergent thinking within the shared reading literature is akin to the notion of expressive enactment, a mode of reading that invokes feelings in the reader and implicates the reader's self during reading (Sikora, Kuiken, and Miall 2011).[9] As a mode of reading, it is characterized by attention toward both

8. For an in-depth analysis of such processes of emergence as a "coming into existence" through literary language and thinking, see Davis 2013, as well as Davis 2020, which comprises a series of reader case studies. The present work relies heavily on Davis's notion of emergence and should be seen as a further unfolding of the role of the reader leader in facilitating emergence.

9. Expressive enactment has been identified through a phenomenologically oriented empirical reader-response framework develop by Don Kuiken and David S. Miall from the early 1980s onward. The results of this work have been analyzed within a comprehensive theoretical framework presented in Kuiken's theory of expressive reading (Zyngier et al. 2008: 49–68) and recently reformulated in Billington and Davis 2019: 345–58, where Kuiken also inscribes his influence from Eugene Gendlin's work and thinking. Miall and Kuiken's work on literary reading can be seen as a continuation of Louise Rosenblatt's ([1938] 1995, 1978) pioneering work aimed at an empirical grounding of yet more distinctive categories for kinds of literary reading engagement. Using the numerically oriented paradigm

the text (narrative, wording, sensory imagery, metaphors) and the self (feelings, autobiographical memories), creating a personal sense of engagement between the text and the reader during reading. Shelley Sikora, Don Kuiken, and David S. Miall (2011: 267) characterize expressive reading as "a self-implicating though not self-absorbed" form of reading and relate its potential self-transformative effects to this aspect.

To demonstrate how readers embark on the process of emergent thinking in a shared reading group, we analyzed the following transcript at some length.[10] In this session, five young adults reads "Emma Zunz" ([1949] 1999) by Jorge Luis Borges, a "detective" story about a young lady who, upon learning of her father's suicide, carries out a plan involving a real intercourse and a false rape in order to victimize the person whom Emma sees as the cause of her father's misery, and, by misrepresenting a few points in time and "one or two proper names" (Borges 1949 [1999]: 219), to gain revenge.

4.1. Example A

Reader leader (RL). But what do you think of—about that, whether it's even (cites the short story) "One characteristic of hell is its unreality" . . . (10.0)
RL. I'm not sure I understand it
Karoline. No . . .
RL. Well—because—well I could understand it if it was something about them saying that . . . like—. . . if you do something horrible. That then it feels unreal afterwards. But actually I'd think it would feel more sort of, <u>too</u> real.
Hannah. Hmm (contemplatively)
RL. But I don't know.
Mathilde. (seemingly re-reading part of the short story, leaning forward, her hand placed contemplatively on her mouth)
Mathilde. (removes her hand from her mouth, looks at the RL) You know, I think—actually I can <u>imagine</u> well that if you . . . if—that if you do something that's . . . like, sufficiently . . . or like, horrible . . . that welllll, uhhh . . . —that then

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(Kuiken and Miall 2001), Kuiken and his team identified "expressive enactment" (Sikora, Kuiken, and Miall 2011).

10. This and the following transcripts make use of basic conversational analysis symbols, with a few modifications. For ease of reading, the level of detail is kept to a minimum, with underlining marking emphasis, and comments in ordinary, singular parentheses explaining tone or other events when necessary. The symbols > and < surrounding utterances signify that the speech is faster than normal pace, and utterances in quotation marks are citations from the text the group is reading. Numbers in parentheses indicates a silent pause in seconds. The data have been extracted from either audio or video files, and for the sake of the participants' anonymity, we are using pseudonyms. "RL" indicates the reader leader who happens to be a woman and is thus referred to as "she."

your brain sort of . . . (eagerly gesturing, shaking her head, strong facial expres-
sions) like—forgets it. Welllllll. . . .

RL. (nodding) Mmmm.

Mathilde. That you—well like—well if it's b—bad enough that then it just sup-
presses it. And welllll, you know, it also says here that uhm. . . . (searching in the
short story, cites it) "which might be thought to mitigate" . . . (citation cont.) "hell's
terrors but perhaps makes them all the worse," >and you know, that makes a lot
of sense that it just makes it even worse that you won't own up to it in a way, like,
and you can't apologize for it, for example.<

RL. Mmmm! (comprehending)

Mathilde. But, but . . . (gesturing, expressive face)

RL. (at the same time as Mathilde) Ooooooh, right!

Mathilde (at the same time as the RL). >Well actually I guess it could—or I think
that—< I can <u>imagine</u> it happening. That uh . . . well,—like . . . if you've done
something very horrible that then you <u>can't</u> (gesturing, grimacing expressively,
shaking her head) like you almost just <u>cannot</u> face it because if you have to face
it then . . . then maybe you'd die—well because you—it w—because you just
<u>can't</u>, or like

RL. (overlapping) Mmm. Yeah

Mathilde. And then it's just like your body or your brain just can't . . . (waves
her hand from side to side) (laughter in her voice) No matter how many people
tell you (gesturing adamantly with her fist in front of her) like "can't you tell" or
"don't you see," you uh . . . just (shaking her head, smiling, leaning back) I don't
know, I can imagine that.

RL. Yeah . . .

In this example, we see how Mathilde, faced with a concept she has not
encountered before—"hell as unreality"—arrives at an understanding by
imagining what "hellish unreality" might feel like: "Like you almost just
cannot face it because if you have to face it then . . . then maybe you'd
die—well because you—it w—because you just *can't*, or like. . . ." Several
aspects of Mathilde's journey from wonder to realization are interesting.
For one, she is clearly adamant about understanding the concept properly.
Having initially arrived at the psychological term *suppression*, she returns to
the text, finding a quote that she is able to link to her current understand-
ing of the term ("and you know, that makes a lot of sense," she says about
the quote). She is not done, however. The rest of the extract is essentially
a monologue consisting of Mathilde trying to narrow down and explain
how the consequences of this psychological suppression mean that you are
unable to face this horrible thing you have done, even if other people are
trying to get through to you and make you see. Additionally, we notice an
array of linguistic cues that may be highlighted as specific, linguistic traits
of emergent thinking. The cues are both verbal and nonverbal:

- *Faster-paced speech.* Mathilde speaks faster when she seems to realize something (realization is linguistically evident through phrases such as *you know* and *well actually*, both of which Mathilde use in fast paced utterances).
- *Increased gesturing and more expressive facial expressions.* Obviously, the amount of gesturing or using facial expressions varies from person to person. All the same, Mathilde shows a sudden increase in gesturing and facial expressions during this part of the reading group session. It seems that her gesturing is especially useful to her when she is unable to find the right words—note how she uses body language before resuming her utterance, slightly rephrasing the part before she cut off: "Then you *can't* (gesturing, grimacing expressively, shaking her head) like you almost just *cannot* face it" and "like your body or your brain just can't . . . (waves her hand from side to side) (laughter in her voice) No matter how many people tell you."
- *Use of the collective* "you." We elaborate on what this word choice means in a shared reading context in section 6 (see Amy L. Eva-Wood 2004). For now, we highlight Mathilde's use of the collective, second person *you* as a way of creating a sort of middle ground between the text's third-person singular *she* and Mathilde's/the reader's inner world, self, or point of view (the first person *I*).
- *Frequent linguistic reparations.* Mathilde interrupts herself and rephrases what she is saying. Mathilde's speech is notably more abrupt while she is trying to express her thoughts on what "hellish unreality" might be like.

These verbal and nonverbal linguistic cues we name *fumbling speech*. Fumbling speech, which may lend itself to other verbal and nonverbal cues not present in the analyzed sample, is the linguistic embodiment of creative inarticulacy or emergent thinking. It is this fumbling speech that allows both researchers and reader leaders to become aware of, and thus facilitate, an emergent thought process.

In terms of the role of the reader leader in relation to emergence, here the reader leader explicitly questions and "unknows" the answer, which sets forth the reader's felt exploration into what "hellish unreality" might be like. Obviously, it can be argued that without the literary conceptualization of such an otherwise nonexisting yet phenomenologically recognizable state, there would have been nothing to set the exploratory and imaginative thought process going, and we certainly are not downplaying the role of the literary text. In fact, the example is a clear demonstration of how it is the exact wording of the text—to which the reader pays close attention, returning to and rereading the words aloud—that fosters the imaginative and expressive process of exploring how the unreality that characterizes hell might feel. What we would like to point out is the role of the reader leader in facilitating an exploration of the experiential grounding of this concept. This process of facilitation involves three steps. First,

the reader leader pauses over what she finds a significant place in the text. Second, she rereads aloud the passage toward which she wants to direct the participants' attention. Third, she admits to not understanding the passage, and when no one reacts to her claim, other than Karoline saying "no," she explains her noncomprehension, ending with "but I don't know," to signal that her reading might be just one of many potential readings. Then Mathilde launches in to her musings.

The reader leader's "unknowing" of the answer and her gently facilitated search for its felt substrate is also at stake in the following example, the difference being that the process here goes from knowing to the unknown, from meaning to feeling or, rather, to a new way of knowing based on the bodily knowing of what "freedom" might feel like.

4.2. Example B
Poem: "Fuglen kan dø" ("The Bird May Die"), by Forough Farrokzhad (1962)

RL. What do the rest of you think? (2.0) (paraphrasing the text) If "the bird may die"?

(5.4)

Anders. Uh. Risk. By freedom. If we . . . If we stay on this thing about flying, and the bird is . . . is some sort of metaphor for freedom. Then there's a risk attached to it. To freedom, too. I mean, that's what I thought at first, I believe. That . . . that there's a risk in doing everything freely, or by making free choices. Or a consequence.

(2.8)

RL. Making free choices?

(2.5)

Anders. I don't know . . . I I believe perhaps there's a couple . . . quite a few, uh . . . like offhand, uh . . . there's a kind of melancholy or a . . . uhm . . . I've learnt from something. Heartbreak. "My heart is sad." Uh, and now I'm standing here, on the porch, and thinking . . .

(2.3)

RL. "Rubbing my cold fingers on the sleek shell of the silent night."

(3.0)

Anders. Exactly.

In the first instance, the reader leader repeats a phrase expressed by a single member of the group, thereby bringing its content to the attention of the other members. In the second instance, she leaves a long pause, allowing for members to reflect on the question. When a group member eventually answers, the language is characterized by fumbling speech, as described above, which indicates the speaker is in the process of making meaning of something that is new and/or still strange to the speaker. In

this case, and in contrast to the previous example, the thought process goes from greater to less coherence, or toward more fumbling; from the usage of the affirmative "I think" to "I believe" and to "I believe perhaps," ending in an attempt to describe the qualia of the concepts of freedom, risk, and choice in terms of "melancholy," "heartbreak," and a "sad heart." This process or movement from the wordings of a concept, freedom, even when this means "freedom of death," to its felt quality is supported very gently by the reader leader repeating, in the form of a question, what the person has just said. This repetition is taken as an open invitation to leap into the unknown, a condition of uncertainty that requires the participant to search for what the "ultimate freedom" feels like in order to understand and express it. Eventually, the right wording for such a feeling is found in the words of the text: "Rubbing my cold fingers on the sleek shell of the silent night."

Our argument is therefore this: even though meaning emerges when readers embark on an exploration of the literary text and its existential substance, it is the reader leader who facilitates an entry route toward that substance.

5. The Role of the Text in Literary Engagement

In reader-response methodologies used to study reading engagement in both shared and individual reading, there is a tendency to focus on the literary text as the prompt for reading engagement (see, e.g., Billington and Davis 2019: 193–94). Ever since the publication of the earliest articles on shared reading research, the claim has been that when shared reading has therapeutic effect due to the work of literature, insofar as "great literature . . . offers a model of, and language for, human thinking and feeling with the potential to 'find' and alleviate personal trouble and thus to produce therapeutic benefits" (Dowrick et al. 2012: 16). In this phrasing, literature is conceptualized as an agent that reaches out and produces an effect in the reader. The same understanding comes across in Billington and Davis's (2019) investigation of how to study the live experience of shared reading. In a salient example, Billington and Davis (2019: 195) analyze identification with the "repetition of an act [with] no definite purpose, which can hardly be understood, except by those who have undergone a bewildering separation from a supremely loved object":

> The literary text is experienced—these accounts suggest—pre-cognitively, creating the ground for affective responses which happen live and in the moment, as a kind of surprise or awakening. Reading, at such moments is a form of

immediate doing, actively and dynamically in the moment. The starting-point for thus "doing reading," was a felt inner experience, implicitly registered in response to the text. (195)

While the examples analyzed here fully support the importance of the role of the text, our analysis adds to existing research by demonstrating that, besides the literary conceptualization of human embodied experiences that set forth such live thought processes, the presence of a facilitator who questions or points something out to readers constitutes an equally important and crucial element in enabling emergence of readers' thought. In other words, we point to the often overlooked fact in the research on shared reading that for emergence to happen it takes a learning process and a facilitator of such processes. That is, to become someone who knows that texts are there to "find" us—to know that texts pose human questions to us—"Do you know what this is like?" "Do you feel it?" "Can you imagine it?"—requires teaching, as "we were never born to read."

At the heart of this understanding lies an insight from the core of reception theories: a literary work is not "alive"—in fact, does not exist other than as a material entity—until it is read. Thus, literature requires, and is in many ways synonymous with, literary engagement. Again, we are not arguing against the importance of the materiality of texts or denying that literary texts possess stylistic or formal qualities by which their "ontology" might be defined. But our focus here is on how facilitation is instructive when a text is realized by a reader.[11] "Doing reading" is not a new concept. It was formulated in its earliest conception by Louise Rosenblatt as the interactional theory presented in her book *Literature as Exploration* ([1938] 1995), later formulated as a theory of transaction (Rosenblatt 1978). Rosenblatt is relevant here for our concern with the role of facilitation. Coming from the field of didactics in literature, she is concerned not only with describing literary reading as a particular qualitative form of aesthetic engagement but also with investigating the role of the teacher in facilitating such engagement. As stipulated within Rosenblatt's transactional theory, literary reading is a performance, and the purpose of teaching is "helping our students learn to perform in response to a text" (Rosenblatt 1966: 1000). Thus, literature is not an object out there in the world but "a demanding kind of activity," something that "happens when we focus our attention on what we are sensing, thinking, feeling, structuring, in the act of response to the particular words in their particular order" (1000).

11. This is a question we do not answer but hope inspires interest in literary scholars: what are the features of literary texts that most significantly play a role for creating literary engagement?

6. The Role of the Reader Leader in Creating Engagement

One of the ways we learn to become literary readers, that is, readers with a sense of enhanced personal engagement, is by learning to question the text. Tanja Janssen (2002: 95) has reviewed studies in the field of self-questioning in education and found that, although "questioning the text" is "a natural response to literature" and a strategy that readers frequently apply to make sense of stories, instruction significantly alters outcome in terms of comprehension and recall of written texts. What matters in literary reading is "to encourage questions about anything students find puzzling or captures their interest" so that questions are "authentic, knowledge seeking questions" (96). This questioning becomes all the more important in literary reading, where personal engagement is a crucial outcome in and of itself. The importance of self-questioning for engagement and outcome is supported by Sarah Levine and William S. Horton (2013, 2015) in their studies demonstrating that students who are taught to use "affective appraisal," identifying valence-laden aspects of the text, go beyond recall to inference and literary interpretation. An earlier study by Amy L. Eva-Wood (2004) demonstrated that eleventh-grade students who are instructed to "read-and-feel-aloud" as compared to "read-and-think-aloud" when reading poetry not only do better on analysis (forming longer and more cohesive written responses) but also feel greater sympathy and empathy toward fictional characters in literature. Such readers favor the collective use of the pronoun *you*, which obscures the referent and creates a blurred distinction between the self and the fictional characters, evidence of such readers' expressive engagement. The same finding was replicated by Olivia Fialho, Sonia Zyngier, and David Miall (2011), who demonstrated that when students were instructed to respond at a feeling level, as opposed to a meaning level, they participated more freely and were more personally engaged in classroom discussions.

In the same vein, one might argue that it is the very paradigm used by Kuiken and colleagues to identify expressive reading that creates the expressiveness. In the "evocative and striking passages" paradigm developed on the basis of Steen F. Larsen and Uffe Seilmann's (1989) study on personal remindings in literary reading, the solitary reader is instructed to underline and make written comments on those passages in a literary text that evoke feelings and strike the reader as particularly interesting while reading. It can thus be argued that it is the very instruction that directs the reader's attention and facilitates an expressive engagement.[12]

12. The same has been argued in relation to the use of elicitation techniques in Petitmengin 2006 both as a research and facilitation methodology and in the use of shared reading

As an example of how the reader leader's normative way of questioning hinders emergent thinking among the participants, we analyze an excerpt in which the reading group is reading "Convenience Store Woman" (2018) by Sayaka Murata. We define normative questioning as questions that presuppose a certain knowledge of or a specific meaning for concepts that might very well have different meanings for different people. Often, normative questions will invite a yes/no or true/untrue answer, where the participants end up being invited to either agree or disagree with the idea the reader leader proposes within the question, rather than to explore their own ideas and thoughts about the text. "Convenience Store Woman" is a modern Japanese short story about a young, single woman in her midthirties whose life is limited to the drugstore where she has been working and living for the past eighteen years, trying to escape the normative expectations of her family yet fulfilling the Japanese ideals of work as a structuring element of individual identity. In this example we note what happens when the reader leader makes presumptions or asks questions that can be answered in either the affirmative or the negative.

6.1. Example C

(reading aloud finishes)
    (7.8)
RL. So they're also a bit worried, Poul?
Poul. (laughs)
Rie. (laughs)
(everyone laughs)
    (16.5)
(some are looking in their papers, some are looking about in the room)
RL. (addressing the group) Do you think it's like, a happy family (1.2) or?
    (4.3)
Frida. I don't think it seems like dysfunctional
Rie. mh
Frida. like not very, I mean.
    (1.1)
Frida. No I just think they have some standards and like want to be a certain way, maybe, the parents. Fit in, like you said, heh. (1.5) But it, well it seems like they want to help her. (2.2) Well yes they do, they're like trying to take her to a psychologist. (3.4) Yeah

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by Steenberg 2019. Using the micro-phenomenological interview, Mette Steenberg (2019) demonstrates how this questioning technique, based on the usage of reiterative "Eriksonian" language, is a methodology not only to obtain data on the qualitative dimensions of the reading experience but also to facilitate enhanced reading engagement.

RL. Yes but still, it's also, well what I really noticed was "that my father drove
me to a faraway city."
(everyone laughs)
Frida. Yeah you can tell what their priorities are, yes like
Rie. Yeah
Frida. They do >want to help< but uh, just as long as nobody else knows.
Pou. Yes
Rie. Mh mh.

The reader leader asks a specific question directed at a specific person
in the group. Poul laughs and demonstrates the unease caused by such a
direct question. This question is akin to traditional teacher-student con-
versations, where the teacher often has the authority to choose the order
of speakers and assess whether the answer is correct (Gardner 2012). Since
a specific participant is addressed, it becomes difficult for the other partic-
ipants to join the conversation. After the entire group laughing, a sixteen-
second silent pause follows. Conversation analysis shows that the norm
in traditional turn taking is a maximum pause of one second between
turns (Jefferson 1983; Ingram and Elliott 2014). If the pause is longer, the
interlocutors will start to do "repairs," such as laughing or other forms of
hedging. However, we have observed that within shared reading longer
pauses—sometimes up to ten seconds or more—are not unusual and do
not necessarily announce discomfort. The only way to assert whether the
pause is productive or not is by looking at the responses after such a pause.

   In the present case no one responds, a clear indicator of a nonproduc-
tive pause, and the reader leader poses a new question: "Do you think it's
like, a happy family (1.2) or?" This question is somewhat more open as it
allows for responses from all group members; however, again the question's
specific formulation presupposes a yes/no answer, implying a normative
understanding of "happy family." It does not invite an exploration of what
it might feel like to be part of this family. This either-or formulation is in
striking contrast to the following example, in which the reading group
reads a poem by Danish author Jens August Schade that conceptualizes
love as a "spring storm." Apart from an initial question: "Are there any
sentences you're noticing or . . . a mood or," the reader leader comes in
only once more in the middle of the conversation, adding her own obser-
vations to the wording of "spring storm," but otherwise does nothing other
than encourage the continuous exploration of the qualitative dimensions
of spring love by affirmative *mh*s, *rights*, and *yeses*.

6.2. Example D
Poem: "Forårsstormen suser i telefontrådene" ("The Spring Storm Soughs in the Phone Wires"), by Jens August Schade (1949). The excerpt read aloud by the reader leader has been translated for the occasion by Anne Maria Stagis.

01:16:44.7

RL. (reading the final part of the text out loud) "We can ring the phone bells in each other's bodies, so that we become fascinated by each other and must talk to each other's souls and enjoy feeling these electrical currents in our bodies, which lead us to each other and connect us."

Eva. Yeah—wha. Yeah isn't it called springtime lo—what's the word for something like that?

RL. Right (laughs).

(utterances overlap)

Eva. Spring uh . . . .

RL. Yeah I'm sure you can say that.

Eva. —friskiness or something.

RL. Unless you—meant like . . . infatuation.

(end of overlap of utterances)

Eva. Yes.

 (4.5)

Freja. I kind of notice . . . this "We can ring the phone bells in each other's bodies"

RL. Mh.

Freja. It's very like where . . . where's that bell or

RL. (laughs) Yeah.

Freja. yeah . . . kind of like . . . if there is, there's definitely . . . something <u>wrong</u> or something, there's something that sort of, wha—what's, is it there . . . the phone bells?

 (2.0)

RL. Did it make you curious?

Freja. Yes.

RL. Mh.

Freja. I can't really . . . define it.

 (2.0)

Tina. I'm thinking like . . . butterflies in the stomach-ish.

RL. Mh.

 (2.2)

RL. What makes you think that . . . it's like that?

Tina. Like, trembling.

RL. Yes that word tremble.

Tina. Yes . . . sort of, electrical currents.

RL. Mh.

 (5.0)

In contrast to the "normative" reading above, the participants and the reader leader are focused on the experiential, sensuous dimensions of spring storm, such as "the electrical currents in the body" and "butterflies in the stomachish," but also on finding "the word for something like that," resulting in the creative invention of new terminology—"friskiness or something"—in order to find a concept that matches the felt sense of "electrical currents." Notice also how the explorative mood is mirrored in the usage of *like* and *kind of* to indicate that the different sensuous aspects brought into consideration all linger at the edge of the conceptualization they are aiming at, acknowledging, as one participant does, that "I can't really define it." Eventually the definition of what it feels like when "you're in love" develops from a series of bodily experienced sense perceptions related to "those days when it's been warm, and then it's been raining . . . so . . . so that the asphalt smells of rain . . . ," the particular "scent," kind of "warm," "thunder-like feeling," and "heaviness."

7. The Role of Fellow Readers in Facilitating Reading Engagement

So far, we have addressed the role of the reader leader in facilitating individual reading engagement. In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that not only the facilitator but also fellow readers and the reading context play important roles. A series of studies in the 1980s by Douglas Vipond and Russell A. Hunt (see, e.g., Vipond, Hunt, and Wheeler 1987), formulated with the intention of finding empirical evidence for Rosenblatt's "lived through" reading engagement, demonstrated that literary engagement is both context sensitive and dependent on fellow readers. They found that "dialogical reading" (Hunt and Vipond 1991), referring to readers' conversational engagement with a text's point of view and voice, happens only in social contexts such as discussions among friends or book clubs that encourage an active, personal engagement with the text, not in the laboratory setting in which they started out testing for engagement. This is, although we have not been concerned in this article with the function of the group setting for engagement, we are aware that it has a great impact on individual engagement. In fact, fellow readers, as the following example demonstrates, can often be as important as the reader leader in facilitating engagement.

7.1. Example E
Poem: "Hun siger hun bærer på to navne" ("She Says She Carries Two Names"), by Marianne Larsen (1976).

> Sanne. (while Josefine and Karla are giggling; subdued) I really like it
> RL. Yes? Why do you like it? . . . Or what do you like about it?

(. . .)
Sanne. like, there she's just
Karla. there she's just "Larsen"
Sanne. emptiness, like a number
Several (agreeing) mmmh! (nod)
Sanne. Uh . . .
Karla. yeah, a number that's (inaudible)
Sanne. (partly overlapping) a number in the queue, yeah
Sara. yeah
RL. Yeah, so maybe that could be that (cites from the poem) "men hun har" ("but she's got")
Eva. yeah
Sanne. yeah
RL. you know, that she reminds herself . . .
Sanne. (overlapping) yeah. yeah.
RL. she's not just
Sanne. She's valued
LG. (partly overlapping) that number, right?
Sanne. Yes. She's more than that.
Several (agreeing) mmm.
Josefine. You know, you might say that your first name is also . . . given out of love to you from your parents
RL. (agreeing) mmm
Josefine. You know, it's a name they, like, specifically choose for you whereas the surname is more something you . . .
Sara. yeah
Josefine. just get because that's the name of your lineage . . .
RL. yeah it never just appears out of nowhere
Several right
RL. so then you might discuss how it should be put together or . . .
Josefine. mmmh (nods)
RL. but it's not the same as the first name,
Josefine. no, like, specifically chosen for you
RL. (partly overlapping) (agreeing) no, right . . .
(1:13:20)

As in the previous examples, readers' engagement is facilitated by the reader leader inquiring about what a given reader likes about the poem.[13] Eventually, however, the participants and the reader leader take turns affirming utterances by repeating and mirroring what another group member has just said. Additionally, group members take turns extending

13. Here, it is worth noting that the reader leader quickly dismisses "why" for "what." It is an important aspect of the facilitation technique to encourage explorations rather than explanations.

and adding to or filling in gaps in one another's utterances. This shows that shared reading not only facilitates individual reading engagement, which is then shared, but also creates a reading that is more than the total sum of individual readings. This has been pointed out by Kjell Skjerding-stad and Thor Magnus Tangerås (2019: 5) as well, who argue that shared reading forms a structure or an "affordance nest that provides and encourages embodied reading in a way that is different from solitary reading." In relation to this social rather than solitary form of reading, we would like to point to the usage of the first-person plural *you* (see the reiterative use of *you know, you might* in the example above) as an indicator of what social scientists have named the *we* mode of cognition (Galotti and Frith 2013), a usage that has also been identified by Kuiken, Miall, and Sikora (2004) in expressive literary engagement. Thus, it seems that the "blurredness" of self and text can also happen between the reading selves in a shared reading context and that this constitutes an important element for the process of emergence. Considered from the point of view of facilitation, the role of the reader leader might seem less important in achieving this more collective reading mode. However, we suggest that the reader leader's own engagement as a fellow reader in the explorative co-reading process should be seen as constituting an important facilitating skill in itself.

8. Conclusion

In this article, we have attempted to bridge the notion of reading engagement within OECD's PISA program with research in phenomenologically oriented empirical reader-response studies and research on shared reading through an analysis of the role of the reader leader in facilitating reading engagement. Our central concern has been the following: if reading engagement and literature are related to an individual's ability not only to perform well on tests but also to participate in society, as shown in the OECD's examination of PISA results, then not just educators but also literary scholars need to study how different modes and practices of literary reading facilitate different kinds of engagement. On this basis, we have analyzed reading engagement in shared reading groups with a focus on the role of the reader leader. We have suggested, in line with Rosenblatt's pioneering work, that readers do not become engaged with a literary text simply by encountering it; rather, engagement is a learning process that requires an already experienced reader to demonstrate how thinking and feeling might be kept alive. The experienced reader demonstrates this by continually exploring and questioning the text on the basis of a felt personal relevance. This finding is compatible with research in reading for

pleasure in education, where the importance of teachers as readers and building reading communities was shown to be key in the facilitation of reading engagement. Our research on the role of the facilitator supports these findings, albeit from a different angle, and thus makes a stronger case, we hope, not just for the role of the reader (leader) in facilitating reading engagement in shared reading groups but also for the didactics of literary reading in general.

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