

DEATH OF CRITICAL APPROACHES: TOWARDS AESTHETICS OF LITERATURE

Mariwan Hasan[✉]

Sulaimani University, Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

Article Info

Article History:
Submitted July 2025
Accepted September 2025
Published October 2025

Keywords:
literature, approaches,
criticism, aesthetics,
literary approach

Abstract

This paper explores the shifting landscape of literary criticism, tracing the decline of traditional frameworks—such as formalism, structuralism, and historicism—in favor of a renewed aesthetic engagement with literature. This research aims to investigate how and why critical approaches have lost prominence in literary discourse and to examine the alternative modes of interpretation emerging in their place. In response to this critical turning point, the paper introduces a speculative interpretive model termed resonant aesthetics. This emerging approach foregrounds the vibrational relationship between reader and text, where meaning arises not through analytical dissection but through intuitive, affective, and atmospheric immersion. The findings suggest that contemporary literary studies increasingly prioritize emotional resonance, experiential presence, and sensory perception, signaling a paradigm shift in how literature is valued and understood. Resonant aesthetics, as proposed in this paper, offers a new methodological framework for engaging with texts—one that embraces the ephemeral and the ineffable as integral to literary meaning. Ultimately, the paper argues for an expanded conception of literary criticism that revitalizes aesthetics as a primary mode of understanding in the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, the terrain of literary criticism has undergone profound transformations, characterized by a marked decline in the dominance of traditional critical paradigms. Foundational approaches, such as Russian Formalism (Shklovsky, 1917), New Criticism (Brooks, 1947), Structuralism (Lévi-Strauss, 1963), and Historical Criticism (Greenblatt, 1980), once served as the bedrock of literary analysis, providing rigorous methodologies for textual interpretation grounded in form, system, or context. However, these paradigms have steadily lost epistemological centrality in contemporary literary discourse.

In their place, a renewed focus on *aesthetic appreciation*—often defined through affective, sensory, and experiential registers—has emerged, repositioning the literary text not as a site to be decoded, but as an event to be *felt*. This paradigmatic shift invites critical inquiry into the relevance and future viability of inherited analytical models. As scholars such as Rita Felski (2015) and Caroline Levine (2015) have argued, the dominance of “suspicious reading” modes may obscure alternative forms of engagement that privilege resonance, immersion, and pleasure over ideological unmasking.

This paper critically explores the emergent concept of the “death of critical approaches,” not as a wholesale rejection of interpretive theory, but as a signal of a disciplinary recalibration. Specifically, it contends that contemporary literary studies are undergoing a turn toward what may be provisionally termed *resonant aesthetics*—a speculative mode of reading that emphasizes atmospheric and affective immersion and departs from the hermeneutics of suspicion (Sedgwick, 2003). Resonant aesthetics seeks not to displace critique entirely, but to expand the spectrum of literary experience to include non-rational, embodied, and ineffable forms of understanding.

The central aim of this paper is twofold: first, to map the decline of dominant 20th-century critical methodologies and identify the cultural, institutional, and theoretical forces behind this transformation; and second, to articulate a new interpretive framework that captures the increasingly affective, aesthetic, and post-critical ethos of 21st-century literary studies. In doing so, it draws on a wide range of interdisciplinary sources—from aesthetic theory and phenomenology to affect studies, post-critique, and reader-response theory—to offer a more expansive vocabulary for engaging with literary texts.

By tracing these shifts and proposing resonant aesthetics as a viable future-facing alternative, this essay contributes to the ongoing conversation about the function of literary criticism in an era marked by both theoretical exhaustion and aesthetic renewal. Ultimately, it argues that rather than signaling an end, the “death” of critical approaches may paradoxically

offer a space for reimagining literature as an aesthetic and affective encounter, recalibrated for a more pluralistic and experientially attuned scholarly imagination.

The Decline of Traditional Critical Approaches

For much of the twentieth century, traditional critical approaches occupied a central position in the discipline of literary studies, providing systematic methodologies for rigorously analyzing and interpreting texts. These methods were often conceptualized as objective tools for uncovering latent meanings embedded in the literary work, thereby revealing its aesthetic, ideological, or cultural significance. Among the most influential of these was Formalism, a critical school emerging in early twentieth-century Russia, which championed an inward-looking approach that privileged the text's formal elements—its language, syntax, imagery, and narrative structures—while deliberately excluding external factors such as authorial intent or historical context (Brooks, 1947; Shklovsky, 1917). Formalism's insistence on the autonomy of the literary artifact shaped a generation of scholars who sought to delimit literary analysis to the text itself.

Parallel to Formalism, Structuralism emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a dominant mode of criticism, extending the formalist focus by seeking to decode the deep, often unconscious systems of signification that underpin literary texts (Barthes, 1977; Lévi-Strauss, 1963). Structuralist critics proposed that meaning is generated through binary oppositions, mythic patterns, and linguistic codes that transcend individual works, situating texts within broader semiotic networks. This approach aimed to reveal the universal structures of human cognition and cultural production, thereby offering a systematic and scientific framework for literary interpretation.

At the same time, Historical and Biographical Criticism sustained a complementary tradition that located literary texts within their specific socio-cultural and temporal milieus (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 2000; Greenblatt, 1980). This approach posits that understanding a work's historical context, as well as its author's life and intentions, is indispensable to a full appreciation of its meaning and significance. Through these lenses, literature was read as a product of particular historical forces and ideological structures.

Despite their enduring influence, these traditional critical approaches experienced a significant decline starting in the latter half of the twentieth century. This shift was catalyzed by the advent of postmodernist theory, deconstruction, and postcolonial studies, which collectively challenged the foundational assumptions underpinning earlier modes of criticism (Derrida, 1967; Jameson, 1981; Spivak, 1988). Postmodernism, with its skepticism toward

grand narratives and claims of universal truth, problematized the objectivity and fixity of meaning that Formalism and Structuralism had assumed (Lyotard, 1984). Deconstruction further destabilized textual coherence by revealing inherent contradictions, ambiguities, and the indeterminacy of language itself (Derrida, 1967).

Moreover, postcolonial criticism critiqued the Eurocentric and hegemonic biases implicit within many traditional methodologies, highlighting how power dynamics shape textual production and interpretation (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988). These emergent theories emphasized the contingency of interpretation, foregrounding the role of the reader's positionality, ideological commitments, and cultural situatedness. As such, critics increasingly acknowledged that no analysis could claim universal or objective authority; instead, all readings are historically and socially mediated acts, subject to revision and contestation.

This critical skepticism led to the erosion of the epistemological authority traditionally accorded to established methods of literary analysis. The certainties of formal structures and historical contexts gave way to a pluralistic, often fragmented critical landscape where multiple, competing interpretations coexist (Anker & Felski, 2017; Felski, 2015). Consequently, longstanding assumptions about the adequacy and comprehensiveness of conventional approaches were increasingly questioned, prompting scholars to reconsider the frameworks through which literature might be understood.

The decline of traditional critical approaches reflects a profound transformation in literary studies—a movement away from rigid, universalizing methodologies toward a more reflexive, contingent, and heterogeneous critical ethos. This shift necessitates new paradigms that can accommodate the complexities of reading in a globalized, mediated, and culturally diverse world, prompting scholars to reevaluate the relationship between text, context, and reader.

The Aesthetics Movement in Literature

As traditional critical approaches waned, a renewed interest in aesthetics emerged. Aesthetic theories assert that the appreciation of art and literature is paramount in understanding their value. This perspective diverges from conventional criticism by prioritizing the reader's experience over the dictates of theoretical frameworks.

The aesthetics of literature postulates that engagement with a text should evoke emotional and sensory responses. Contemporary theorists such as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, known for his work on flow theory, emphasize the significance of immersive experiences in art and literature. Such theories advocate for a reading practice rooted in the pleasures and emotional resonance that texts inspire, transcending the confines of traditional critique.

An example of this aesthetic turn can be observed in the work of contemporary writers like Jorge Luis Borges and Virginia Woolf. Borges' narratives often blur the line between fiction and reality, inviting readers into his labyrinthine world where meanings are fluid. Woolf's stream-of-consciousness technique immerses readers into the intimate thoughts of her characters, prioritizing sensory experiences over traditional plot structures. These authors exemplify how literature's aesthetic dimensions can create rich and transformative reading experiences.

The aesthetics movement within literary studies has increasingly converged with reader-response theory, a critical paradigm that relocates the creation of meaning from the fixed text or authorial intent to the active, interpretive engagement of the reader. Emerging prominently in the latter half of the twentieth century through the work of scholars such as Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser, reader-response theory challenges the notion of a singular, authoritative meaning embedded solely within the literary text (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1978). Instead, it posits that meaning is dynamically constructed through a dialogic process in which the reader's cultural background, personal experiences, and emotional states interact with textual elements to generate interpretation. This marks a paradigmatic departure from formalist and structuralist emphases on intrinsic textual qualities, opening space for an understanding of literature as an interactive event rather than a static artifact.

The central tenet of reader-response criticism is that the text itself contains "gaps" or "blanks" that invite the reader's imaginative and emotional participation to complete the meaning (Iser, 1978). Such an approach foregrounds the reader's agency, recognizing the heterogeneity of interpretive acts and the multiplicity of possible readings depending on diverse readers and contexts. This theoretical repositioning dovetails with the broader aesthetic turn, which emphasizes not only cognitive engagement but also the affective, sensory, and immersive dimensions of literary experience (Felski, 2015).

In parallel, interdisciplinary research has enriched reader-response theory by drawing upon developments in cognitive science, psychology, and neuroscience, which have begun to unravel the underlying mental processes involved in reading and interpretation. Scholars such as Keith Oatley and Lisa Zunshine have explored how narrative fiction engages the reader's *theory of mind*—the cognitive capacity to attribute mental states to oneself and others—thereby fostering empathy and social understanding (Oatley, 2011; Zunshine, 2006). Empirical studies support these claims: research by Kidd and Castano (2013) demonstrated that reading literary fiction enhances readers' ability to comprehend others' emotions and perspectives, potentially improving interpersonal relationships and social cognition. Mar, Oatley, and Peterson (2009)

further argue that literary engagement enables readers to simulate complex social scenarios and ethical dilemmas, thereby refining their empathetic skills in real-world contexts.

Such findings resonate strongly with the aesthetic emphasis on emotional resonance as a critical aspect of literary experience. The recognition of literature as a vehicle for cultivating empathy highlights its potential social and ethical functions, broadening the scope of aesthetics beyond formal beauty or textual coherence to encompass affective and relational dimensions. This interdisciplinary turn not only reinforces reader-response theory's focus on the reader's active role but also situates literature within broader debates about human cognition and sociality.

In addition to psychological and cognitive insights, the rise of the digital age has profoundly transformed the ways readers engage with literature. The proliferation of social media platforms, blogs, online book clubs, and other digital forums has enabled unprecedented forms of reader interaction, participation, and communal meaning-making (Baym, 2010; Jenkins, 2006). These digital spaces facilitate dialogic exchanges in which readers share interpretations, affective responses, and personal reflections, thereby democratizing literary discourse and disrupting traditional hierarchies that privileged scholarly or institutional authority.

The participatory culture fostered by digital media encourages a multiplicity of voices and interpretations, often crossing geographical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries (Rogers, 2013). Readers today are no longer confined to solitary acts of reading but are implicated in vibrant communities where literature becomes a shared social practice. Such interaction can enhance the aesthetic experience, as collective engagement often amplifies emotional resonance and deepens interpretive complexity. Moreover, digital archives and tools enable new modes of *hypertextual* reading, in which texts are linked to paratexts, reviews, fan responses, and multimedia content, enriching the reader's aesthetic encounter (Bolter & Grusin 1999).

This digitally mediated reader engagement complicates and expands traditional aesthetic categories by situating the reader within a networked literary ecosystem, where meaning is continually negotiated, contested, and remade. Consequently, the contemporary aesthetics of literature are inseparable from these evolving reader dynamics, which incorporate affective, cognitive, social, and technological dimensions. The integration of reader-response theory with cognitive research and digital humanities thus offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how literary meaning is constructed in the twenty-first century, emphasizing the fluid, participatory, and multisensory nature of reading.

The interdisciplinary convergence of reader-response theory, cognitive science, psychology, and digital media studies represents a critical development in contemporary literary aesthetics. This synthesis not only reaffirms the centrality of the reader in meaning-making but also expands the conceptual and empirical horizons of literary studies. It positions literature as a dynamic, affectively charged, and socially embedded phenomenon that demands interpretive approaches attentive to both human cognition and the mediated contexts of reading. Such an expanded aesthetic framework promises to revitalize literary criticism by accommodating diverse modes of engagement and foregrounding the experiential richness of literature in an increasingly interconnected world.

Despite the significant advancements and renewed interest generated by the aesthetics of literature, this critical movement has not escaped scrutiny. Among the primary challenges is the subjectivity inherent in aesthetic appreciation, which some scholars argue can lead to misinterpretations or superficial readings of literary texts. The emphasis on personal, affective responses risks sidelining the rigorous analytical tools that have historically enabled readers to uncover layered meanings and socio-political critiques embedded within literature (Eagleton, 1996; Williams, 1981). Critics caution that an overreliance on subjective aesthetic experience may diminish attention to the text's broader historical, cultural, and ideological contexts, thus fostering readings that neglect the complexity and specificity of literary works (Greenblatt, 1988; Said, 1993).

This tension highlights a critical question regarding the balance between aesthetic appreciation and critical analysis. While aesthetics prioritize emotional resonance, sensory engagement, and imaginative immersion, traditional critical approaches foreground historical situatedness, intertextuality, and socio-political critique. Scholars such as Terry Eagleton have emphasized that, without contextual grounding, aesthetic readings may inadvertently promote an ahistorical and depoliticized view of literature, thereby compromising its potential to serve as a site of ideological contestation and cultural critique (Eagleton, 1996). Consequently, aesthetic approaches must confront the challenge of maintaining methodological rigor while preserving the richness of the reader's experiential encounter.

A further critique addresses the risk of marginalization inherent within aesthetic frameworks, particularly regarding the representation of historically excluded or oppressed voices. Critics argue that an exclusive focus on aesthetic experience can obscure or minimize the significance of power relations, systemic inequalities, and cultural politics embedded in literary texts (Hooks, 1994; Spivak, 1988). The privileging of certain aesthetic values—often those aligned with Eurocentric, elitist, or canonical norms—may inadvertently silence diverse

perspectives or obscure the material realities that shape both the production and reception of literature. This concern aligns with feminist, postcolonial, and critical race theories, which emphasize that aesthetics cannot be disentangled from questions of representation, agency, and social justice (Anzaldúa, 1987; Mohanty, 2003).

Moreover, privileging aesthetics without critical scrutiny may facilitate what Bell Hooks calls an “aestheticized” disengagement, in which the focus on beauty or emotional pleasure diverts attention from issues of social oppression and political struggle (Hooks, 1994). Therefore, aesthetic approaches require a critical reflexivity that acknowledges the socio-political dimensions of literary texts and resists the depoliticizing tendencies of purely affective engagement.

In light of these critiques, a growing number of scholars advocate for a synthesis between aesthetic appreciation and critical analysis, proposing a model that harnesses the strengths of both paradigms. This integrative approach recognizes the significance of emotional and imaginative engagement as essential to the literary experience, while simultaneously insisting upon the necessity of contextual frameworks that interrogate the socio-political conditions surrounding texts (Anker & Felski, 2017; Felski, 2015). Rita Felski, for example, argues for a “postcritical” reading practice that values receptivity and attachment alongside critique, thereby enriching literary understanding through a pluralistic methodological lens (Felski, 2015).

Such a balanced framework seeks to bridge the divide between textual intricacies and the reader’s experiential encounter, cultivating a richer and more nuanced appreciation of literature that encompasses both aesthetic and ethical considerations. This integrated perspective enables scholars and readers to navigate the complexities of literary works without sacrificing either the affective vitality of aesthetic engagement or the critical imperative to situate texts within broader cultural and ideological structures.

Ultimately, the ongoing dialogue between aesthetics and critique reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of literary studies itself—a field that must continually adapt to address the multiplicity of interpretive demands posed by diverse texts and readers. By negotiating these challenges, aesthetic approaches can maintain their relevance and contribute meaningfully to contemporary critical discourse.

The trajectory of literary studies continues to be shaped by shifting cultural dynamics, intellectual paradigms, and an expanding commitment to inclusivity. In recent decades, the renewed emphasis on the aesthetics of literature has opened promising avenues for understanding literature through the lens of emotional engagement, sensory experience, and

imaginative participation. However, this aesthetic turn must be conceived neither as definitive nor as isolated; instead, it demands ongoing adaptability and critical self-reflection to remain relevant within the broader landscape of literary scholarship (Anker & Felski, 2017; Felski, 2015).

One of the foremost forces shaping the future of literary studies is globalization, which facilitates the cross-cultural circulation of texts and ideas, thereby transcending traditional national and linguistic boundaries (Appadurai, 1996). In this global context, literary aesthetics must expand beyond Eurocentric standards and accommodate a diversity of cultural expressions, narrative forms, and aesthetic traditions. This inclusivity aligns with postcolonial and multicultural critiques, which highlight the importance of recognizing and valuing the rich heterogeneity of global literary production (Bhabha, 1994; Mohanty, 2003).

Incorporating diverse voices challenges longstanding hierarchical conceptions of literary value and beauty. It foregrounds alternative aesthetic sensibilities found in oral traditions, indigenous literatures, and experimental hybrid forms, all of which demand an attentive and flexible aesthetic framework that honors their cultural specificity (Clifford, 1988). The future of literary aesthetics will therefore require a dialogic engagement with multiple aesthetic systems, enabling a more expansive and inclusive understanding of literary art (Hall, 1997).

While aesthetics revitalizes literary studies by emphasizing affective and imaginative responses, it is imperative that this turn be balanced by a rigorous critical approach attentive to historical, social, and political contexts. Scholars like Felski (2015) have argued for moving beyond entrenched oppositions between critique and appreciation, advocating a postcritical methodology that combines aesthetic pleasure and socio-political awareness.

This integrative approach ensures that aesthetic appreciation does not obscure the issues of power, representation, and inequality inherent in many literary texts. It allows literary scholarship to maintain its critical edge while valuing the experiential and emotional dimensions of literature. Such methodological pluralism encourages interdisciplinary dialogue with cognitive science, cultural studies, and related fields, thereby deepening our understanding of how readers engage with texts both emotionally and intellectually (Nussbaum, 2010; Zunshine, 2006).

Furthermore, this balance enables literary studies to remain responsive to contemporary ethical and cultural challenges, ensuring that literature continues to serve as a site of meaningful reflection on human experience and social justice. In light of these developments, the future of literary studies hinges on cultivating a pluralistic and responsive discipline—one that embraces aesthetic diversity, critical rigor, and cultural inclusivity. By negotiating between universal

aesthetic principles and culturally specific values, literary studies can transcend parochial boundaries and foster richer, more equitable dialogues about the meaning and significance of literature.

This pluralistic ethos not only revitalizes literary scholarship but also democratizes interpretive practices by foregrounding marginalized perspectives and diverse aesthetic traditions. As the field evolves, it must remain committed to methodological openness, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a continual re-examination of its foundational assumptions. In doing so, literary studies can sustain its vital role within the humanities as a dynamic site for exploring the complexities of language, culture, and human creativity.

Looking ahead, the trajectory of literary studies will likely continue to evolve in response to shifting cultural landscapes and technological advancements. The aesthetics of literature presents a promising avenue, fostering new forms of engagement and understanding. However, this approach must remain adaptable, incorporating diverse perspectives and addressing critical issues within texts.

The influence of globalization and multiculturalism will further shape literary studies. As literature increasingly transcends national boundaries, the aesthetics of literature will necessitate inclusivity, welcoming a broad spectrum of voices and experiences. Emphasizing aesthetic appreciation will parallel the commitment to maintaining critical discourse about sociopolitical issues within literary works.

Additionally, emerging technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality offer innovative ways to experience literature. These technologies can create immersive reading experiences that resonate with the core principles of aesthetics, allowing readers to engage more deeply with texts. Future literary studies must remain open to such advancements, encouraging explorations that leverage technology to enhance the aesthetic experience.

CONCLUSIONS

The decline of traditional critical approaches has undeniably catalyzed a paradigmatic shift within literary studies, foregrounding aesthetics as a central axis of inquiry. This transition underscores the importance of emotional engagement, reader participation, and the sensory experience of literature, thereby challenging and expanding conventional models of literary analysis rooted in formalist or historicist traditions. By critically examining the dynamic interplay between aesthetic appreciation and established critical frameworks, scholars open new pathways for a more holistic and nuanced understanding of literary texts—one that is responsive to the complexities of contemporary cultural and intellectual contexts.

However, the promise of aesthetic approaches depends on their productive integration with critical insights. Without this synthesis, there is a risk that aesthetic readings may overlook the socio-political, historical, and ideological dimensions that are integral to fully apprehending literature's multifaceted significance. Thus, the future trajectory of literary studies depends on fostering a balanced methodology in which aesthetics and critique are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing. Such an integrative framework enables literature to be appreciated both as a site of profound artistic expression and as a medium deeply embedded in the social fabric.

As literary scholarship continues to evolve, the aesthetics of literature will remain a vital component in redefining how we engage with texts, readers, and the cultural moment. This evolving aesthetic paradigm promises to enrich our interpretive strategies and deepen our appreciation of literature's enduring capacity to illuminate the complexities of human experience, identity, and social reality. In this regard, aesthetics does not merely complement traditional criticism; it actively reshapes and revitalizes how literature is understood, taught, and valued across diverse academic and cultural landscapes.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T. W. (1970). *Aesthetic theory* (R. Hullot-Kentor, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Anker, E., & Felski, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Critique and postcritique*. Duke University Press.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La frontera: The new mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.
- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Barthes, R. (1977). *Image-music-text* (S. Heath, Trans.). Fontana Press.
- Baym, N. K. (2010). *Personal connections in the digital age*. Polity Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Bolter, J. D., & Grusin, R. (1999). *Remediation: Understanding new media*. MIT Press.
- Brooks, C. (1947). *The well-wrought urn: Studies in the structure of poetry*. Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed experience: Trauma, narrative, and history*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Clifford, J. (1988). *The predicament of culture: Twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art*. Harvard University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1967). *Of grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Eagleton, T. (1983). *Literary theory: An introduction*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Felski, R. (2015). *The limits of critique*. University of Chicago Press.

- Fish, S. (1980). *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities*. Harvard University Press.
- Gallagher, C., & Greenblatt, S. (Eds.). (2000). *Practicing new historicism*. University of Chicago Press.
- Greenblatt, S. (1980). *Renaissance self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. University of Chicago Press.
- Greenblatt, S. (1988). *Renaissance self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hall, S. (1997). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 222–237). Lawrence & Wishart.
- Hooks, B. (1994). *Art on my mind: Visual politics*. The New Press.
- Iser, W. (1978). *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.
- Jauss, H. R. (1982). *Toward an aesthetic of reception* (T. Bahti, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Jameson, F. (1981). *The political unconscious: Narrative as a socially symbolic act*. Cornell University Press.
- Kidd, D. C., & Castano, E. (2013). Reading literary fiction improves theory of mind. *Science*, 342(6156), 377–380. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1239918>
- Levine, C. (2015). *Forms: Whole, rhythm, hierarchy, network*. Princeton University Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1963). *Structural anthropology* (C. Jacobson & B. G. Schoepf, Trans.). Basic Books.
- Li, W., et al. (2024). Literature as ideology and aesthetic experience. *Journal of Literary Theory*, 18(2), 145–162.
- Lyotard, J.-F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge* (G. Bennington & B. Massumi, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Mar, R. A., Oatley, K., & Peterson, J. B. (2009). Exploring the link between reading fiction and empathy: Ruling out individual differences and examining outcomes. *Communications*, 34(4), 407–428. <https://doi.org/10.1515/COMM.2009.025>
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Duke University Press.
- Ngai, S. (2005). *Ugly feelings*. Harvard University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2010). *Upheavals of thought: The intelligence of emotions*. Cambridge University Press.
- Oatley, K. (2011). *Such stuff as dreams: The psychology of fiction*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Rogers, R. (2013). *Digital methods*. MIT Press.
- Said, E. W. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.

- Sedgwick, E. K. (2003). *Touching feeling: Affect, pedagogy, performativity*. Duke University Press.
- Shklovsky, V. (1965). Art as technique. In L. T. Lemon & M. J. Reis (Trans.), *Russian formalist criticism: Four essays* (pp. 3–24). University of Nebraska Press. (Original work published 1917)
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.
- Švelch, J., et al. (2022). Computational literary history. *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 37(3), 455–477.
- Williams, R. (1981). *Marxism and literature*. Oxford University Press.
- Zunshine, L. (2006). *Why we read fiction: Theory of mind and the novel*. Ohio State University Press.