

READERS' RESPONSES TO NARRATIVE:

Evaluating, Relating, Anticipating

David S. MIALL *

It is argued that empirical studies of readers' responses to literary texts are required, which would test current theoretical models of response. The present paper proposes that literary texts possess an intrinsic structure, which can be demonstrated in readers' responses. A study is reported in which response data from readers was obtained while they read a Virginia Woolf story phrase by phrase. Two of the protocols are analysed in detail, showing a commonality of response in three areas: in phrases requiring interpretation, in relationships between phrases, and in anticipations of passages or themes that occur later in the story. At the same time, the individual interpretations of readers differ, sometimes incompatibly: readers bring different experiences and values to bear on the text, which endow it with personal significance. Further studies are required which would map the boundary between the common and the individual aspects of response to literary texts.

1. Introduction

Reader response theories have by now enjoyed a long and influential history, rivalling linguistic, phenomenological, intentionalist, cultural, and other accounts of literary texts. In studies of narrative, in particular, the ways in which various textual features structure the response of the reader have been intensively studied in a range of seminal texts, from Booth (1961) to Iser (1978). Important though this work has been in developing a set of critical tools for analysis, the reader as such has remained a primarily hypothetical construct. The interests and experiences of actual readers have largely been overlooked in the attempt to establish general principles for analysing the features of narrative. Only recently have detailed empirical studies of readers begun to appear, partly, one feels, because most literary theorists have lacked understanding of, or sympathy with, empirical methods. Others have explicitly declared their indifference to such investigations (eg. Culler (1975: 123; 1981: 129)).

In the meantime widely differing and often quite incompatible views about the nature of literary texts have been (and continue to be) proposed. Text

* Author's address: Department of English, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T6G 2E5.

meaning is said by some authorities to be indeterminate (e.g., Barthes, Derrida); for others it is established once and for all by the author's intention (Hirsch); alternatively, it is determined by the conventions that rule the reader's interpretative community (Fish). No check on the validity of such views is proposed (there is no way in which all can be correct), which would involve research on the behaviour of actual readers. Of course, some of the epistemological positions which lie behind literary theory also lie beyond any empirical verification; but a study of readers is likely to make certain views appear more credible than others. But few theorists are willing to put their claims to the test by subjecting them to the possibility of empirical disconfirmation.

A different view of reader response is proposed here, which falls outside any of the positions mentioned above. I argue that a text possesses an intrinsic structure, perceptible through certain distinctive features of the reading process. In previous papers (Miall (1988a,b, 1989)) I have examined some of the interpretive strategies of readers, particularly in relation to the role of affect (I summarize this work below). In the present paper I test other aspects of the hypothesis by a detailed examination of the reading process of a group of readers. Comments that readers made as they read a short passage from a story by Virginia Woolf were collected and analysed. The main focus of the present study centres on three components apparent in the protocols of these readers: (1) the process of evaluation, (2) the relational structure within a reading, and (3) the evidence for anticipation. Apart from evaluation (described first below), these components of the reading process have not previously been studied in detail with actual readers. As I will suggest, there is reason to believe that each of these aspects will show a degree of commonality across a group of responses to the same text.

2. Evaluations

There are several different reasons for reading, depending on our purpose or inclination as we approach a literary text. Vipond and Hunt (1984) distinguish three orientations towards the act of reading: *point-driven*, where the reader is concerned to find out what the intended significance of the text is; *story-driven*, where the reader is primarily interested in the events described in the text and how the story will turn out; and *information-driven*, in which the text is being surveyed for its informational content. Point-driven describes the type of reading most appropriate for literary texts: the significance of such texts is not self-evident but must be construed by the reader. At the centre of this activity is a 'sharing and comparing of values and beliefs', or acts of evaluation (Vipond and Hunt (1984: 263)). In other words, the reader expects that the story will enable some value of cultural significance to be identified: the primary activity in 'point-driven' reading is to discover what this is.

Looking at a narrative in detail, Hunt and Vipond (1986) showed that specific words and phrases could be identified which required evaluative effort of the reader. Three main types of evaluations are described by these authors: discourse evaluations (stylistic features which are 'incongruous with respect to the local norm of the text' (p. 58)), story evaluations (an incongruous or unpredictable element in relation to the story), and telling evaluations (the mentioning of an event which seems unnecessary, or meta-narrative comments made from outside the story). The studies of Hunt and Vipond suggest that all readers tend to recognize, and are sensitive to, words and phrases in a narrative requiring such evaluations. If this is the case, then a literary narrative can be said to exhibit an intrinsic structure which directs the reading process in specific ways: evaluative responses are required from all readers at the same points.

3. Commonality: Features and relationships

Nevertheless, it is clear that readers will often arrive at quite different conclusions about the significance of a story. Although readers may be evaluating the same points, they are not making the same evaluations. This is obvious from a survey of the critical literature on any important text. A notable example is the dispute over the significance of the ghosts in James's *The Turn of the Screw*, where some critics accept the supernatural at face value, others see the ghosts as hallucinations of the governess, and others again regard the undecidability of the ghosts' reality as itself the point of the story. While critics are responding to the same points in James's text, the values they place on them lead to opposite or incompatible conclusions. Thus it could also be argued that the narrative features identified by Hunt and Vipond are both determinate, in constraining what must be the points of departure for the reader's evaluative effort, but indeterminate in that they do not constrain the particular value which the reader will assign to them.

There is another sense, however, in which texts constrain response. A previous study (Miall (1988a)) indicated that readers tend to relate the same groups of features across a text. That is, given three features in a text (three sentences or scenes at different locations) the value a reader places on feature *a* will determine the value she subsequently places on features *b* and *c*. Although the value will vary from one reader to another, the same three features are related in the responses of all readers. Texts thus exhibit a set of relational constraints on response. In Miall (1988b) this was examined by asking readers to make free groupings of extracts from a short story and to provide their reasons for forming groups, then asking for ratings of each extract on ten criteria devised by the readers. It was found that the groupings and ratings data contained a high level of between-subject agreement, al-

though the reasons given for relating extracts showed considerable variation from one reader to the next.

Such research leads to the proposition that a literary text possesses an intrinsic structure to which all readers will respond, which arises from, but is independent of, the evaluative response which the reader makes. Texts are thus neither wholly indeterminate (subject to the free-play of the language system) nor wholly determined (dependent for their significance on authorial intention or on Fish's (1980) interpretive community). The question then arises, what is the process of response, given that the reader is evidently bringing her own system of values to bear on understanding the text? Leaving aside for the moment the question of the origin and ultimate significance of the reader's values (which will surely require a cultural theory about the situation of the reader somewhat different from the assumptions underlying Fish's well-known view), how do a reader's values interact with and help to construe the text?

4. Anticipation

As the comments on evaluation will have suggested, the response to indeterminate features of the text involves an affective component. In this light affect is anticipatory: it proposes a significance for the text during reading in advance of reaching the end. In other words we don't wait until the conclusion of the narrative before making up our mind what it is 'about'. Our feeling for the developing significance of the text is likely to guide further response, priming the system to notice evidence that will confirm or disconfirm our feelings. Thus evaluations, through the work of affect, also have a systematic role to play in constructing a scheme for the text as a whole. Since affect, as I will suggest below, brings into play the reader's experience and beliefs about the self, differing construals of the significance of a text can be expected from different readers. One important task of empirical research will be to establish the boundary between the commonalities and differences among groups of readers responding to the same text.

5. Empirical study of the reading process

Studies of the actual process of reading literary texts are rare (as opposed to elements of the process, or the after-effects of reading). Until recently it appears that there was only one: Kintgen's (1983) book-length study of readers of poetry. In chapter 1 of his book Kintgen himself points out that there were no such studies until his own. Studies that have appeared since Kintgen, however, include Dias and Hayhoe (1988) and Benton et al. (1988). Certain studies that appear to set out to examine reader response empirically

turn out to be studies of readers' verbal recollections of response, or of protocols written subsequent to the act of reading itself (Holland, Bleich). Other reader response studies have dealt only with putative or theoretical readers (Iser, Culler, Fish). By contrast Kintgen studied the transcripts of readers who verbalized their thoughts on tape as they read and studied a given poem. He concluded that the requirement to verbalize had not unduly distorted the process of response, and that the transcripts thus provided valid data about the process of response as it developed from the reader's first encounter with the poem to closure on a final interpretation.

The present study – much more limited in scope – is also based on transcripts of readers' verbalizations during the process of reading. The text was a narrative, a short story by Virginia Woolf. Unlike Kintgen's study, however, in which the readers were given the text of the whole poem at the outset to work over in any way they pleased, I was concerned to examine first responses to each part of the text as it unfolded. Thus readers were presented with the story one phrase at a time. In this way I hoped to identify any differences between response to evaluative and non-evaluative phrases, to look at the sources of readers' evaluations (to the extent that readers showed an awareness of these), and to track the process by which relationships across the text are established. Above all, by comparing the protocols of different readers phrase by phrase it would be possible to check if the text was exerting systematic constraints on the reading process.

In order not to overtax the readers, it was decided to use only the opening section of the chosen story, 'A Summing Up' (Woolf (1944)). In the report that follows the section to be discussed is further restricted to just the opening thirty phrases, since this is enough to demonstrate the characteristic features of the responses obtained (a more extensive discussion would in any case much exceed the confines of the present report). This opening part of the story will now be presented and briefly analysed. In doing so, I draw on my previous studies using the Woolf story (Miall (1988b)), which have indicated some of the points at which an evaluative response might be expected from readers.

6. Two levels of response

The opening section of the story, shown in table 1, provides two types of phrase. The basic situation at the beginning of the story quickly becomes clear to readers: a party is taking place (eg. phrases 1 and 12) in which two characters who know one another go out into a garden (5). Having instantiated this schema, the reader is then likely to be alert for information about a conversation between the characters. This is partly met by phrase 17, but in such a way that the standard or default 'slot' in the schema is challenged. Apparently it is to be a one-sided conversation.

Table 1

Virginia Woolf, opening of 'A Summing Up' (Woolf (1944)).

⟨1⟩ Since it had grown hot and crowded indoors, ⟨2⟩ since there could be no danger on a night like this of damp, ⟨3⟩ since the Chinese lanterns seemed hung red and green fruit ⟨4⟩ in the depths of an enchanted forest, ⟨5⟩ Mr Bertram Pritchard led Mrs Latham into the garden.

⟨6⟩ The open air and the sense of being out of doors ⟨7⟩ bewildered Sasha Latham, ⟨8⟩ the tall, handsome, rather indolent looking lady ⟨9⟩ whose majesty of presence was so great ⟨10⟩ that people never credited her with feeling ⟨11⟩ perfectly inadequate and gauche ⟨12⟩ when she had to say something at a party. ⟨13⟩ But so it was: ⟨14⟩ and she was glad that she was with Bertram, ⟨15⟩ who could be trusted ⟨16⟩ even out of doors ⟨17⟩ to talk without stopping. ⟨18⟩ Written down what he said would be incredible – ⟨19⟩ not only was each thing he said in itself insignificant, ⟨20⟩ but there was no connection between the different remarks. ⟨21⟩ Indeed, if one had taken a pencil ⟨22⟩ and written down his very words – ⟨23⟩ and one night of his talk would have filled a whole book – ⟨24⟩ no one could doubt, reading them, ⟨25⟩ that the poor man was intellectually deficient. ⟨26⟩ This was far from the case, ⟨27⟩ for Mr Pritchard was an esteemed civil servant ⟨28⟩ and a Companion of the Bath; ⟨29⟩ but what was even stranger ⟨30⟩ was that he was almost invariably liked.

Other phrases present problems immediately they are encountered: why is the reader told first of the feelings of Sasha (7) then of her appearance (8, 9)? These are story evaluations, in the terms of Hunt and Vipond, since it is not obvious why Sasha is being described in this way. Then what is the relevance of this information about Sasha to her gladness at being with Bertram (14)? To some extent such questions obtain answers further on in the text (Bertram is a great talker, which saves Sasha from the need to talk), but questions remain about the meaning of the experience for Sasha. So far her motivation remains a blank. And what will be her response to Bertram's presence, given that he is 'invariably liked' (30)? One group of relatively naive readers (Miall (1988b)) tended to believe that the story would turn out to describe the development of a relationship between Sasha and Bertram (which would answer both questions). In fact, as the story develops it becomes clear that Bertram is only a safe background figure, which (at first) enables Sasha to think her own thoughts about the garden and her situation. But in the opening passage given above, there is also another problem in the marked disparity between Bertram's speech (e.g. 19) and his status (27, 28).

Reading can thus be seen as a two-level process (Iser (1978: 92–93)): first the reader recognizes a situation, one with which they are likely to be familiar and for which an existing schema is available. But various points in the story also challenge the schema or fall outside it, requiring interpretive effort of the reader. How readers respond at the second level appears to depend to a significant degree on their individual experience and personality, since such textual features call for an evaluative response. In this sense Level 2 features of the text are indeterminate: their meaning is not given or obvious. Readers

feel that the text is 'getting at' something, but cannot at first see what this is. In attempting to establish meaning readers focus on the same points in the text and tend to relate the same groups of points, but may place quite different valuations upon them.

Previous work has suggested that, given an indeterminate textual feature where a schema is not available, the affective component of response guides interpretation (Miall (1988b, 1989)). The reader resorts to her feelings about the text at that point: affect provides a route to the reader's own concerns, interests, or experience as a way of evaluating the phrase and endowing it with meaning (cf. Spiro (1982)). Thus the role of affect appears to be of some significance in readers' interpretative strategies. Whether verbal protocols enable this to be shown will be among the issues to be examined below.

7. A study of readers' responses to 'A Summing Up'

The present study allowed an exploration in detail of the types of response being made to the opening of the Woolf story. Talk-aloud data was taped as readers received each phrase of the story. The readers were 12 students enrolled on the second year of a Humanities degree in which their main subject was English literature. The students volunteered to participate.

The text was broken into 81 phrases which were presented on a computer screen. After the first few phrases had been read, the current phrase and the previous nine phrases were displayed at any one time. Readers were instructed to talk aloud as they read each phrase, although it was explained that it was not necessary to make a comment on every phrase. The reader pressed a key to display the next phrase. The reader's comments were recorded on tape. At the end of the session general comments on the story so far were invited, which were also recorded. Readers showed considerable variation in the time taken for the task, ranging from 15 to 45 minutes. None of the readers appeared to find the task unduly distorted the comprehension processes they would normally deploy, although it is obvious that reading is considerably slowed down by the necessity of examining each phrase and talking aloud. Surprisingly, most readers said they enjoyed the experience and had learned something about their own reading strategies by participating.

The data collected varied considerably in the amount and quality of material recorded. The two protocols to be analysed below are those containing the most detail, and are thus the most useful. But several other protocols contain sufficient detail for points in common to be apparent, and these will be noted in the discussion.

In choosing which sections of the data to analyse, I was guided in part by ratings data on the phrases collected during two previous studies (involving different groups of readers). The relevant part of this data can be seen in table

Table 2
 Woolf, 'A Summing Up', mean phrase ratings for affect and importance.

	Aff.	Import.	
#1	2.7	2.87	Since it had grown hot and crowded indoors,
#2	1.9	3.33	since there could be no danger on a night like this of damp.
#3	2.8	1.45	since the Chinese lanterns seemed hung red and green fruit
#4	3.5	1.83	in the depths of an enchanted forest,
#5	1.7	1.76	Mr Bertram Pritchard led Mrs Latham into the garden.
#6	3.0	2.0	The open air and the sense of being out of doors
#7	2.9	2.0	bewildered Sasha Latham,
#8	2.8	1.49	the tall, handsome, rather indolent looking lady
#9	2.9	2.33	whose majesty of presence was so great
#10	2.5	1.73	that people never credited her with feeling
#11	3.1	1.73	perfectly inadequate and gauche
#12	1.9	3.13	when she had to say something at a party.
#13	1.2	4.4	But so it was:
#14	2.7	2.2	and she was glad that she was with Bertram.
#15	2.9	2.6	who could be trusted
#16	2.0	4.47	even out of doors
#17	1.6	2.6	to talk without stopping.
#18	1.9	3.73	Written down what he said would be incredible –
#19	1.7	2.93	not only was each thing he said in itself insignificant,
#20	1.6	3.2	but there was no connection between the different remarks.
#21	1.3	5.07	Indeed, if one had taken a pencil
#22	1.4	4.93	and written down his very words –
#23	^a	3.93	and one night of his talk would have filled a whole book –
#24	1.4	4.47	no one could doubt, reading them,
#25	2.8	2.6	that the poor man was intellectually deficient.
#26	1.7	3.93	This was far from the case,
#27	1.8	1.68	for Mr Pritchard was an esteemed civil servant
#28	1.3	3.73	and a Companion of the Bath;
#29	2.3	3.73	but what was even stranger
#30	2.9	2.2	was that he was almost invariably liked.

^a no data obtained.

Note. Rating scales used: Affect: 1 = no affect, 5 = strong affect; Importance: 1 = most important, 6 = least important.

2. The rating for affect indicates the affective valency of each phrase, from strong affect to no affect. Such a rating provides an indication of which phrases may be important in a 'point-driven' reading, requiring evaluation of the reader. The rating of phrases for importance provides a similar indication (in fact, the two ratings show a high correlation, $r(28) = -0.718$, $p < 0.001$). The ratings thus provide a view of where evaluative effort is likely to be required. In the two short passages selected for analysis (phrases 6 through 14, and 21 through 27), there are strong contrasts between successive phrases in the ratings for both affect and importance, which may indicate shifts between

Level 1 and Level 2 response. Of particular interest will be marked jumps in strength of rating, for example from phrases 24 to 25.

7.1. Section 1: Phrases 6–14

A large proportion of the comment shown in table 3 rephrases or elaborates on the text being presented, as the reader thinks aloud. Thus there is much redundancy in the responses. But I have presented these verbatim, with nothing omitted. I have also presented the two sets of responses side by side so that comparisons between them can be made more easily. In the analysis that follows, I look at the common features of the responses, and at the issues of evaluation and anticipation.

The responses to #6 pick up the contrast of indoors and outdoors from phrases 1 and 5, and in so doing provide a minor example of an evaluation: Emma refers to 'freedom', John to 'relief'. While in the context of the next phrase (which the readers haven't yet seen) this interpretation is mistaken, yet it prepares for the move at #14, in which Sasha is shown to be relieved, but for a different reason. Both readers appear to sense a degree of closure in their responses to #14: Emma says 'there is a link now', while John notes 'it sort of comes to an end' there. This is an example of intrinsic structure: both readers make the same link between #6 and #14.

But the immediately succeeding phrase reverses the value given to #6: both readers, having imputed 'relief' to the situation, note that Sasha must be timid or vulnerable. This begins the move towards the value Bertram will have for Sasha (#15–#17), as well as other features later in the story. With the next two phrases, #8 and #9, both readers build a picture of a strong character, either 'confident' or 'masculine'. Another reader, Jane, noted at this point that the description of Sasha has 'made me rather wary of her for some reason', while a fourth reader, Mike, noted that Sasha 'almost appears to be overbearing with her presence'. Readers here seem to be particularly influenced by the idea of 'looking': Emma remarks that Sasha is 'used ... to being looked at', while John says 'she's a sort of strong character to look at'. The external appearance seems to involve readers for a moment in a more negative evaluation of Sasha.

With the complexity of the phrase structure here (exacerbated by the presentation of the phrases one after another), Emma is already in trouble at #8, although her problem turns out to be a productive and relevant one. Seeing a major difference between the bewilderment of #7 and the confidence of #8, she wonders if two different characters are being described. John, on the other hand, while he appears to run into a related problem of his own seems not to realize it until later, as shown by his response at #12. Meanwhile both readers see #10 in similar terms: Emma refers to 'the image of a statue', John to Sasha's presence being an 'outward thing'.

Table 3
Response protocols to Woolf, phrases 6–140.

Emma	John
# 6 The open air and the sense of being out of doors	
Again a very normal image in the sense of being out of doors. Fresh air, freedom from confinement.	Moving out of the heat into the sort of ... open air, a sort of sense of relief then perhaps. See what goes on, what it has to say.
# 7 bewildered Sasha Latham,	
She's bewildered, as if she has been imprisoned, and she's unused to this freedom, and this sense of space, this out of doors feeling. And she seems very timid, as if she has been confined and doesn't quite know what to do with everything.	Ah, <i>Sasha Latham</i> revealed. So she's bewildered after leaving such a crowded indoors. Opening seems to bewilder, open space, being out of doors; perhaps she feels a bit vulnerable. We shall see.
# 8 the tall, handsome, rather indolent looking lady	
If this is the same lady, it doesn't fit with the bewilderment: 'tall, handsome' and 'indolent': she seems confident, that's images that give an idea of a confident lady, not a bewildered one. It seems to be a confused ... confusing image, compared to the previous bewilderment.	'Tall, handsome, rather indolent lady'. Handsome's a bit masculine. I suppose it depends how its written, really.
# 9 whose majesty of presence was so great	
I don't know whether it's another person, whether 8 and 9 are an image of another person, another character, because they are definitely different from bewilderment. I have an image of somebody confident and ... confident, beautiful, used to great wealth, and to being looked at, and being a person of consequence, being impressive, it gives an idea of somebody used to ordering people around.	Ah, so she's obviously got great presence. 'Majesty of presence' – regal almost. Again, that ties in with 'handsome and tall', I suppose, doesn't it. She's a ... she's a sort of strong character to look at.
# 10 that people never credited her with feeling	
This is the image of a statue, her status was ... that her presence was so great that she had no feelings: it gives the idea of a figurehead then that is there for a particular reason but has no feeling. Superficial: superficial, that is, one sided, no feeling. That's the image I get from this.	Her 'majesty of presence was so great that people never credited her with feeling': so she's some sort of, I don't know; she's so ...[repeats phrase]. It's a so ... outward thing: so strong, people don't credit her with any inward emotions. Ah!

Table 3 (continued)

Emma	John
<p>#11 perfectly inadequate and gauche</p>	
<p>This has developed that previous feeling into ... a totally different image: to add what feelings she doesn't have means that she has other feelings. But it is in line with the previous image of a confident person, therefore she couldn't feel inadequate.</p>	<p>'inadequate and gauche'</p>
<p>#12 when she had to say something at a party.</p>	
<p>And now it's bringing you back into the mood of the ordinary everyday life, because she's at a party where everybody goes. So she's not something at a distance, she's not so isolated. She is actually in everyday life. She's somebody you can meet somewhere, so it reduces the image a little.</p>	<p>'when she had to say something at a party'. I don't understand that: let's go back. [Reads last three phrases over]. It's that feeling that's perfectly inadequate – or she's perfectly inadequate when she speaks at parties. It's a sticky patch, that one.</p>
<p>#13 But so it was:</p>	
<p>An assertive statement. She's inadequate: she does feel inadequate. The character's developing, she isn't what she appears. She looks confident but she's not.</p>	<p>Ah, just a little introductory bit there.</p>
<p>#14 and she was glad she was with Bertram,</p>	
<p>It tells us something about Bertram. There must be some reason why she's glad she's with him. They have built up the image of a confident looking woman who is inadequate, which is ... which now does link back to the bewilderment she felt earlier. It's not so isolated, there is a link now. And it will probably build on to some sort of development of Bertram's character, to show why she is glad she was with him – unless she just doesn't get to this further on.</p>	<p>So she obviously likes Bertram then. So it was ... it sort of comes to an end at that little bit of character, I suppose. Yes, 'she was glad that she was with Bertram ...': so she's pleased, even though she doesn't like being out in the open space, particularly.</p>

At #11 Emma is emerging from her difficulty, and seeing that the phrases up to now imply that Sasha does have feelings, but that her appearance as a confident person gives the impression that 'she couldn't feel inadequate'. Thus Sasha's outward appearance belies the character within. As Emma remarked afterwards, referring to Bertram as well as Sasha, 'it seemed to be a series of opposite images ... two characters, both of whom had an opposing nature within them'. By now Emma is ready to apply a pre-existing schema about party situations to #12, reconfiguring Sasha's position as a common one –

Table 4
Response protocols to Woolf, phrases 21–27.

Emma	John
#21 Indeed, if one had taken a pencil	
She's going to develop this into a further image about his character that maybe will build up a picture, a metaphor, a separatish image, outside, outside the rest ... I don't know.	Ah, so we move on again, expanding the same idea as was opened before by the authoress just there [that Bertram is saying nothing of note].
#22 and written down his very words –	
Why you should write down anybody else's words, his 'very words' –it's an odd word to use, 'very words', it has this ... trying to convey that there might have been sense in what he said, somewhere or other, but if you take down every word, you take down anything else but its peculiarness, its ... It makes you wonder what's coming next. It makes you wonder what on earth she's going to say, it makes you want to look forward to the next image about what his very words will say.	'written down his words'
#23 and one night of his talk would have filled a whole book – [omitted]	
#24 no one could doubt, reading them,	
'no one could doubt, reading them'. Everybody doubts, so far: everybody doubts anything he says, because he says nothing significant. So, it's a linking sentence, but it leads you to think that there's going to be some sort of revealed statement next.	'no one could doubt, by reading them': could doubt what?
#25 that the poor man was intellectually deficient.	
[Laughs] And after all that she just gives a very ... she just tells you what you already knew anyway. She's already told you that his different words are insignificant that there's actually no connection between them. Now she's just increasing that image of a silly man, and making it stronger; she's making you think that he's 'intellectually deficient'. So you feel sympathetic, you feel superior and patronizing towards him, because you know he's not really.	[Laughs] 'poor man was intellectually deficient' Ah, clever. It's quite humorous when it's revealed like this, I suppose. I don't suppose it would be in the book necessarily, because you'd have a more open view of the whole page, but ... That struck me as quite funny, then, I have to admit. My warped sense of humour. So just again, sort of emphasizing a little bit perhaps about the character, and a sympathy though, 'poor man'. But a sort of emphasis about his character there, but also perhaps just sort of re-emphasizing the fact that really it was unimportant what he said. Perhaps more important by what's been written over the last few lines is how he said it, and, you know, not its content.

Table 4 (continued)

Emma	John
<p>#26 This was far from the case,</p> <p>And now she's completely contradicting it. So there was something in it, that you know he's not really. So she's given an idea of ... She's made you pause, she's told you one thing, and this has made you pause and look again at something else. She's done the same thing as she did with the picture of the lady, Mrs Latham, where if you ... she builds up a picture of one image, of a character and then contradicts it to give a totally opposite view. In both cases you're getting a picture of a shell, two people in a shell.</p>	<p>'This was far from the case': a bit of ... Ah! This is catching me on my toes, a little bit there. So he's obviously not intellectually deficient, he's obviously quite bright. Which is a nice little parry there; it makes me feel a bit insecure, if you like, about laughing.</p>
<p>#27 for Mr Pritchard was an esteemed civil servant</p> <p>Exactly so. Now she says what he is, he obviously is totally different from what he seems, he's obviously got to be a clever person. 'Esteemed civil servant' is a very conservative, prim sort of an image, similar to the prim image you have at the very beginning of the old-fashioned prim image of a person.</p>	<p>'an esteemed' whatever: it's a bit more about his character, old Bertram.</p>

'She's someone you can meet somewhere'. Note in table 2 that at #12 the mean ratings for both affect and importance decline markedly from the preceding phrase: readers generally seem to have seen #12 as a Level 1 phrase. Interestingly, Emma has already identified both what is commonplace in Sasha's position and what seems to isolate her. In fact this will be the major feature of the story (Sasha's vulnerability to the commonplace provides the crisis or turning point some two-thirds of the way through the story), although Emma is not ready to anticipate consciously what might follow from this paradox.

At #14, as well as the sense of a link back to #6, Emma now consolidates her view of Sasha and anticipates a section developing Bertram's character which will 'show why she is glad she was with him'. This is indeed what happens: phrases 15 to 58 are devoted to Bertram's character, with special attention to his conversation. The readers' responses to a small section of this passage are analysed next.

7.2. Section 2: Phrases 21–27

The next set of responses is shown in table 4. It should be noted that, due to a transcription error, readers were not presented with phrase 23.

In this section Woolf expands on the basic idea that Bertram is a talker who has nothing to say. As the ratings in table 2 show, in terms of both affect and importance, #21 is not seen as a significant phrase. The basic schema for the character has already been established, thus #21 is a Level 1 phrase which merely fulfils expectations. Both Emma and John acknowledge this, referring to this phrase as developing or expanding what has gone before. In addition, Emma also feels that Bertram is probably only a figure in what is essentially Sasha's story, 'a separatish image, outside ... the rest'.

At #22, however, an interesting difference between the readers occurs. Emma is particularly struck by the phrase 'very words', responding to what, in the terms of Hunt and Vipond, Emma recognizes as a discourse evaluation (a distinctive stylistic feature). She responds fully to this, as her remaining comments show. In John's response, by contrast, the key word 'very' which makes the phrase distinctive has been dropped, as though John hasn't noticed it. Seeing it as another Level 1 phrase, John thus has nothing to say. Emma's response not only evaluates the phrase – it conveys 'that there might have been sense in what he said' – but also anticipates the direction the story will take later by developing an alternative view of where this 'sense' lies: 'you take down anything else but its peculiarness, its ...'. In this comment Emma is unable to conceptualize her sense of what Bertram's words will mean (as her broken syntax shows), but the affective nature of her response seems evident: 'it makes you want to look forward to the next image'. Her affect, in other words, is the vehicle of anticipation.

Emma is still anticipating at #24, although this now appears more a function of the syntax; John makes the same anticipation. The next phrase, #25, both rewards their expectation and seems to exceed it, as their laughter at this moment suggests. Both readers also explicitly note their sense of a contrast being developed, in which Bertram is insignificant in one way but not another, and both declare a 'sympathy', mainly due to the phrase 'poor man'. In addition, by this point, John has also begun to anticipate specifically where the phrases about Bertram's words are leading (arriving at this realization two phrases later than Emma): 'Perhaps more important by what's been written over the last few lines is how he said it, and, you know, not its content'. There is now a sense of disbelief over where these phrases are leading: thus #25 is another discourse evaluation, where the reader recognizes that behind the irony a more complex view of the character of Bertram is being prepared. The ratings in table 2 shift markedly at this point, also indicating that this phrase requires Level 2 interpretation.

That readers are developing a view of Bertram which goes beyond what the story phrases have stated is shown by the responses to #26: Emma's view is largely confirmed while John is somewhat surprised. But both readers also register, in different ways, their sense of the complexities: Emma notes the contradictions in the account of Bertram; John acknowledges that the phrase

'makes me feel a bit insecure ... about laughing'. Finally at #27, while both readers pick up the word 'esteemed', both see it as a reflection of Bertram's character rather than an objective account of his position, and both in slightly different ways seem to feel that the description is patronizing: for Emma it gives an 'old-fashioned prim image', while for John it is more simply 'old Bertram'. Both readers thus evaluate the phrase. Another reader, Jane, has by this point also begun to note the complexity, since she sees #27 as 'Another ambiguous remark about a character which will perhaps be expanded later on'.

In summary, while phrases 21 through 27 develop a sense of the complexity of Bertram as a character, the most striking feature of the responses transcribed here is the accurate anticipation of both readers concerning Bertram's words. These readers sense that something other than the meaning of the words will be significant. A few phrases later this is what the story goes on to describe: 'something immaterial, and unseizable' existed in the sound of Bertram's voice, which 'made itself felt independently of his words, indeed, often in opposition to them'.

8. Conclusion

The transcripts provide a view of response in which a number of systematic and characteristic features are apparent. In general the readers made the same distinctions between phrases at Level 1 and those requiring evaluation at Level 2. The main exception is the difference in responses to #22, but this is because John seems to have overlooked the key word in the phrase which prompts evaluative effort. These readers also tended to link the same phrases across the story, suggesting that the story possesses an intrinsic relational structure that directs response. Lastly, both readers formulated the same anticipation regarding the significance of Bertram's words, although John (who seems to have read a little less attentively than Emma) arrived at this anticipation two phrases in arrear of Emma. Features of response similar to these are apparent in the remainder of the transcripts of Emma and John (and in the transcripts of the other readers to a lesser extent), suggesting that the reading process is directed in systematic and partly predictable ways by the literary text.

A reading of 'A Summing Up' as a whole will also show to what extent these reader's comments anticipate the larger concerns of the story. Not only is Sasha seen as vulnerable (cf. Emma's comments on #13 and #14), which anticipates the crux of the story, but the comments which both readers made about the complexity of both the characters anticipate one of the major conclusions it is possible to draw from the story. The inner character (the one inside the shell, as Emma implies at #26) is not only vulnerable but actually isolated, incapable of communication. The narrator coins a striking metaphor

for this: Sasha at the end of the story is 'the widow bird', a soul which is as remote as 'a crow which has been startled up into the air by a stone thrown at it'. Thus these readers are, almost from the first, developing a Level 2 sense of the story's significance. The evaluations made in this opening section already show Sasha as the centre of serious attention, while Bertram is a more comic figure, towards whom the readers feel a somewhat patronizing sympathy.

The evidence from these readers indicates that it would be wrong to view this text, at any rate, as indeterminate. The text exercises powerful constraints on the reading process at several levels: phrases requiring evaluation, relationships between phrases, and anticipations of passages or themes to come. Beyond this, however, it would probably be correct to say that there is indeterminacy in the nature of the valuations placed on the text by different readers. This is not a major feature of the present transcripts, perhaps because the readers are near the opening of the story: it should not be expected that the reader will have a clearly articulated set of evaluations this early. Even so, some differences in evaluation are already emerging; at #8, 'confident' vs. 'masculine'; at #10, 'statue' and 'figurehead' v. an 'outward thing'; at #26, the acceptance of 'opposite views' vs. the reader's sense of being 'a bit insecure'. These are among the points at which an overall Level 2 valuation of the story must develop, which are dependent on individual acts of evaluation.

To the extent that valuations differ, originating in the specific experiences and concerns of readers (their self concept, the images and affects of episodic memory, etc.), so will construals of the story as a whole. Thus it is quite possible for two readers to make evaluative responses to the same phrases, see the same network of relationships across phrases, and make anticipations at the same moments, yet emerge with opposite readings of a text. Since in discussing texts we normally only discuss the end result of a reading process and don't study the process itself, the existence of a high degree of commonality in responses to the same text seems to have been consistently overlooked.

The analysis undertaken here suggests a different set of forces within the reading process than the competencies of the ideal reader posited by Culler (1975), who asks us to refer to 'what an ideal reader must know implicitly in order to read and interpret works in ways which we consider acceptable' (pp. 123–124). Given that readers can recognize the points requiring evaluation (at one end of the spectrum of competencies), and are sensitive to the modernist genre to which a story like 'A Summing Up' belongs (at the other), the role of individual valuations still seems inescapable: they are neither as insignificant nor as wayward as Culler seems to believe. Nor, to answer Fish, are reader's valuations entirely regulated by the conventions of the reader's interpretive community. Readers do differ, and do so in ways which are internally consistent (directed by the intrinsic structure of the text), and – more importantly – in ways that are often of profound personal significance to the individual reader.

The larger implications of the view of texts and reader response that I have argued here are numerous, and cut across current theoretical positions at many points. Given the wealth of information about reading that is available from talk-aloud data, it is clear that more such analyses are required, informed by a sense of what theoretical issues are at stake. The present paper offers only a small sample of the work that might be done.

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