

purchase of a new title or retention of an existing one. All types of libraries should consider including *Magazine for Libraries* as a core reference tool. —*Eleanor I. Cook, Appalachian State University.*

Reading Sites: Social Difference and Reader Response. Eds. Patrocínio P. Schweickart and Elizabeth A. Flynn. New York: MLA, 2004. 357p. \$22 (ISBN 0873529855). LC 2003-022482.

The “reading sites” of this book’s title are not libraries but, rather, locations in the imaginary space populated by readers, texts, and authors where, at least in the view of reader-response theories of literature, the meaning of texts is constituted. For humanities librarians who studied literature in the 1970s and 1980s, the essays collected here will transport them back to the exciting debates and discoveries of their apprentice years, the theoretical breakthroughs of Iser, Jauss, Fish, Bleich, and Holland that shattered the classical view of the reader as the dispassionate receptacle of incontrovertible meanings placed in literary works by sagacious authors. Until then, literary education had been in the hands of positivists who approached the understanding of the literary work as if it were a problem in physics, a goal of elucidation and not of socially, historically aware debate. The student learned literary interpretation as a type of exegesis and accepted that his or her subjectivity figured “mainly as a source of error” (I. A. Richards) in the reading experience. Reader-response theory, by contrast, elevated the reader to a co-constituent of textual meaning—in its more extreme expressions, in fact, as the principal or sole producer of meaning. Reader-response “monists” argued that because the message of a literary work has no objective reality, it is produced entirely by the will and the intellect of the reading subject.

For a reviewer in a library science journal, an examination of this work leads to several questions. First of all, what do the essays in this volume offer today’s selector of a library literature collection beyond, say, what an earlier collaboration of these same two editors, *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts*, did in 1986? And second, more relevant perhaps in a library science context, why even review this book here at all, rather than in a journal directed at readers in English departments?

To answer the first question, both the 38-page introduction that the editors provide and the highly diverse scope of this volume’s eleven essays document beyond a doubt that reader-response theory has moved significantly beyond its beginnings twenty and thirty years ago. The erstwhile theoretical construct of the monodimensional reader has been diversified, gendered, racialized, and chronicized. Where early theorists such as Jauss looked at the “reader” in reader-response theory as a “generalized other,” the essays collected here seek out a far more *personal* other, rejecting “homogenization” of manifoldly disparate readers and attending to “the specificities of persons and situations ... differentiated, among other things, by race, ethnicity, and class.” These specificities overlay and conflict with one another. If, for example, a white feminist might be inclined to reduce everything in a work of literature to issues of gender difference, for black feminists—such as Angeletta K M Gourdine, represented in this volume with an essay entitled “Colored Readings; or, Interpretation and the Raciogendered Body”—race melds complexly with gender in the context of “multiple systems of social and cultural domination.”

Even individual readers are revealed by these essays as internally conflicted, contradictory, often moody constructors of meaning—and this is where the book

becomes relevant within a library context, for the polyvalence of meaning has been a theme in our discipline ever since Martin Schrettinger questioned the existence of any book's unique position on library shelves in his writings of the early nineteenth century, drawing attention to what Nikolaus Wegmann has called the "illusion of the 'mono'graph." Other contemporaries wondering about the validity of library classification also have written in this vein. In a 1999 book, *Into the Looking-Glass Wood*, Canadian reading historian Alberto Manguel described the power of the fickle reader this way: "what we believe a book to be reshapes itself with every reading. Over the years, my experience, my tastes, my prejudices have changed: as the days go by, my memory keeps reshelving, cataloguing, discarding the volumes in my library; my words and my world—except for a few constant landmarks—are never one and the same. Heraclitus's bon mot about time applies equally well to my reading: 'You never dip into the same book twice.'" The book by Flynn and Schweickart provides a host of evidence regarding the role that the overlapping, constantly shifting roles of race, gender, age, social status, and ad hoc intent plays in the construction of any particular reader's interpretive matrix.

Thus, we encounter here highly specific, nongeneralizing essays looking at mixed sets of reader characteristics and predispositions responding to narrow genres of writing. Jane Greer, for example, contributes a study of working-class women readers in mid-twentieth-century America and their particular reception of confessional magazines. Erin A. Smith looks at another highly specific topic, the genre of women's hard-boiled detective fiction, popular in pulp magazines of the 1920s through the 1940s, again as read by working-class readers. Louise Yelin transnationalizes the topic by examining various readings of works by Australian

Peter Carey, Franco-Afro-Caribbean writer Maryse Condé, and Anglo-Caribbean writer Caryl Phillips, each of which itself represents a rereading of a classical nineteenth-century British work.

A librarian reading these essays emerges with a sense of relief that our profession continues to eschew the assignment of subject headings to works of fiction, but also wondering how many innovative research ideas are nipped in the bud by the straitjacketing assignments of subject headings to works of history, criticism, and analysis. Odds are, however, that our user communities are well beyond us in this arena. They use Google and other online tools to execute subtle and highly associative searches with relevance rankings based not on inflexible search-heading vocabulary, but on occurrences and co-occurrences of certain "key" words that *they* choose. Ideally, these searches retrieve books, chapters, Web sites, and articles prioritized by complex ranking algorithms that still somehow replicate the "purposeful randomness" of human thought. —*Jeffrey Garrett, Northwestern University.*

Women's Issues at IFLA: Equality, Gender and Information on Agenda: Papers from the Programs of the Round Table on Women's Issues at IFLA Annual Conferences, 1993–2002. Ed. Leena Siitonen. Munchen: K.G. Saur (IFLA Publications 106), 2003. 244p. alk. paper, \$94.55 (ISBN 3598218362). Critically renowned author and editor Leena Siitonen gathered thirty diverse papers pertaining to the historical and contemporary professional status and advancement of women in the field of librarianship. Each contributor to the monograph has been a member, at some time since 1990, of the Round Table on Women's Issues (RTWI), a dedicated section of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). Siitonen has been the editor and author of