

## READING AND TEACHING LITERATURE AS WRITING

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**ABSTRACT.** Christer Ekholm's point of departure in this article is Gert J. J. Biesta's call for a new pedagogical attitude that takes a stand against the current trend in education. At present, the dominant approach is to make what we do in school into something wholly predictable, measurable, and assessable, which (as Biesta argues) misses important aspects of what education actually is or should be. One such aspect has to do with "subjectification," that is, events where someone makes an appeal to me, singles me out in my uniqueness, and makes me ethically responsible to the other one before me. What role can literary education play in facilitating such events? What kind of reading strategies should be promoted with the aim of such an ambition? On the basis of a critical analysis of the discursive construction of an opposition between *reading as engagement* and *reading as distance*, Ekholm argues that the answer to these questions is to be found in an alternative literature didactics, where the work of fiction is understood not as text, but as utterance; not as something written, but as writing; perhaps even, not in terms of object(ification), but of subject(ification)?

**KEY WORDS.** literature didactics; reception theory; subjectification; performativity; speech genre

In opposition to the "strong" view of education that, in terms of control and assessment, is on the rise in Western schooling of today,<sup>1</sup> Gert J. J. Biesta argues for an attitude focusing on the unpredictable, the unknown, or — as he puts it in *The Beautiful Risk of Education* — the *risk*, as a primary feature of education. The fast-growing desire to make education predictable and secure is, according to Biesta, grounded in a definition of education as a combination of "qualification" and "socialization," where qualification stands for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions, and socialization has to do with the ways in which we, through education, become part of tradition and existing ways of doing and being. But education can also and, if it is to be called education, *should* consist in "subjectification," which for Biesta, inspired by Emmanuel Levinas, is an ego-interruptive event of recognition of and responsibility to someone other.<sup>2</sup>

According to Biesta, such events — where someone makes an appeal to me, singles me out in my uniqueness, and makes me ethically responsible to the other one before me — are crucial to the creation of true citizenship and, by extension, to a functioning democratic society. However, in the strong views and practices of today's "learning industry," these uncontrollable happenings, where

1. This strong tendency in today's educational systems toward testing and grading has been noted in several recent studies. See, for example, Ninni Wahlström and Daniel Sundberg, eds., *Transnational Curriculum Standards and Classroom Practices: The New Meaning of Teaching* (London: Routledge, 2018); Heinz-Dieter Meyer and Aaron Benavot, eds., *PISA, Power, and Policy: The Emergence of Global Educational Governance* (Oxford: Symposium, 2013); and Martin Lawn and Sotiria Grek, *Europeanizing Education: Governing a New Policy Space* (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2012).

2. Gert J. J. Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2013), 2–4.

students become liable subjects, are being structurally suppressed. What is needed, Biesta emphasizes, is a weaker, risk-oriented attitude “genuinely interested in the ways in which new beginnings and new beginners come into the world”; such an orientation would focus less on predictable and measurable “learning outcomes,” and more on “how we can help children and students to engage with, and thus come into, the world.”<sup>3</sup> The educational ethics Biesta is addressing and calling for is, then, concerned with the concrete experience of the individual, rather than with conformation to abstract, formal categories.

In the following I will, on the basis of Biesta’s argument, and especially the core concept of *subjectification*, approach the field of literary education, a field in which both specific ways of *reading* literature and the *teaching* of such reading practices play an important role. Has the reading of literature a space to fill in an education oriented toward subjectification? And what *kind* of reading strategies should be promoted by the teacher in the realm of such an ambition?

### THE SPACE OF READER AND TEXT

Literature didactics has for a long time conceptualized the reception of literature in terms of an either–or typology oriented around such conceptual opposites as *subjective/objective*, *empathic/analytic*, *identificatory/interpretive*, *immersive/reflective*, *mimetic/semiotic* (Michael Riffaterre), *aesthetic/efferent* (Louise Rosenblatt), and *fictive/factive* (Bo Steffenson).<sup>4</sup> An elucidative way to grasp the essence of this discourse is to refer it to the spatial and phenomenological figure of speech commonly used in modern reception theory regarding the reading of fiction, which relates the act of reading to content and form, that is, the fictional world described and the textual describing of it. When the reader wholly focuses on a text or, further still, becomes immersed in the world, events, and characters depicted, the space of the reading situation — that is, the phenomenological *relation* between reader and text — is diminished, or even obliterated. On the other hand, in ways of reading that focus and reflect on form — for example, on how the text is composed in terms of narratological design, characterization, motif, and theme — the relational spatiality of the reading situation is maintained, or even reinforced.<sup>5</sup> The German Konstanz theorist Karlheinz Stierle has conceptualized

3. *Ibid.*, 4–5.

4. Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 1–22; Louise M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (1978; repr. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), 184; and Bo Steffenson, *Når børn læser fiktion: Grundlaget for den nye litteraturpædagogik* [When Children Read Fiction: The Foundation of the New Pedagogy of Literature] (Copenhagen, Denmark: Akademisk Forlag, 2005), 100–116.

5. For a broad historical account of the establishment of this conception, see Karin Littau, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies, and Bibliomania* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

these contrary movements in the reading situation by applying the motional terms of *centrifugality* and *centripetality*. A centrifugal reading is thus a reading in which the reader is thrown out of the actual reading situation and passes through the text made invisible, entering into the fictional world, whereas a centripetal reading is a reading in which the reader is kept in and aware of the actual reading situation, of him- or herself as a reader, as well as of the text as something read.<sup>6</sup>

The influence of this way of thinking in the field of literature didactics has led to the establishment of two generally accepted assumptions. First, the binarity of reduction and preservation of the space of reception is often described in terms of noncritical versus critical reading, a tendency pushed to the very limit by Rita Felski. Second, it is often alleged that these two kinds of reception *exclude* one another, a state of affairs Joseph Hillis Miller describes as “the aporia of reading”:

Combining these two modes of reading is difficult, perhaps impossible, since each inhibits and forbids the other. How can you give yourself wholeheartedly to a literary work, let the work do its work, and at the same time distance yourself from it, regard it with suspicion, and take it apart to see what makes it tick?<sup>7</sup>

The centripetal mode of reading Hillis Miller presents as distanced, suspicious, and analytical has for a long time dominated the field of academic studies, a fact that in recent years has been addressed and problematized by theorists such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michael Warner, and, perhaps most notably, Rita Felski.<sup>8</sup> *Critical reading* — which is characterized by its analytical, problematizing, and subverting detachment from, as well as guarded suspicion of, the literary text — is, as Felski puts it in her “manifesto” *Uses of Literature*, nothing less than “the holy grail of literary studies.”<sup>9</sup> This scholarly idealization of a distanced, resistant reading is, according to Felski, deeply problematic, as it makes critics, teachers, and students disregard and overlook ordinary motives for reading literature, as well as common modes of textual engagement, such as recognition and enchantment.<sup>10</sup> In short, the distanced, critical reading performed by literary scholars — and put forward as a primary aspect of qualification in university education in literature — produces, uses, and abuses literature in a way completely different from how literature actually exists and works outside of the academy.

6. Karlheinz Stierle, “The Reading of Fictional Texts,” in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 87–88.

7. Joseph Hillis Miller, *On Literature* (London: Routledge, 2002), 124.

8. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading: Or, You’re So Paranoid You Probably Think This Introduction Is about You,” in *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 1–37; Michael Warner, “Uncritical Reading,” in *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*, ed. Jane Gallop (New York: Routledge, 2004), 13–38; and Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

9. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 2.

10. *Ibid.*, 1–22.

In *Uses of Literature*, then, the target attacked is clearly the centripetal mode of reading, a kind of literary reception that, according to Felski, is staged not only in the attentive, form-oriented close reading that, since the days of New Criticism, has been hailed as an indispensable sign of competence in the field, but also in the default academic mode of putting the text into an explanatory, critical–theoretical context. This type of reading is suspicious of — or even discredits and deems as naïve — the centrifugal readings performed by ordinary, nonacademic readers. Moreover, Felski judges the distanced academics of literature to be guilty of producing the literary text as a passive, submissive *object*, entirely at the mercy of their centripetal maneuvers. And yet, she states, “reading is far from being a one-way street; while we cannot help but impose ourselves on literary texts, we are also, inevitably, exposed to them.”<sup>11</sup>

For me, this pivotal statement reveals an interesting gap in Felski’s argument as a whole. This gap has (quite paradoxically) to do with her reluctance to deal with how a literary text, received in the same way as any other piece of used language, imposes itself on the reader — an intrusion that establishes a spatiality of reading which depends on centripetality and distance, but on a distance of a thoroughly different kind than the notion of it presented and criticized in *Uses of Literature*. The premise in my reasoning is that a literary text basically is, or rather can in terms of reception *be taken as an utterance*, as an *act of speech*, manifesting itself as directed toward and addressing the reader. This straightforward approach, in which the language of fiction is perceived as a variant of ordinary verbal communication rather than an exception from it, will in the remainder of this article be elaborated in relation to Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of *speech genres*. My ambition is to show how such a strategy reveals some interesting implications worth dwelling on with respect to the spatiality of reading and the matter of risk and subjectification in education.<sup>12</sup>

#### ANOTHER KIND OF DISTANCE

In his famous essay “Art as Device,” first published in 1917, Victor Shklovsky stressed an attitude to the structural features of literature not as form, but as intentional *shaping*, as *design*, as *device*.<sup>13</sup> His successor Mikhail Bakhtin takes this line of inquiry further in his “The Problem of Speech Genres,” written in 1952–1953, where he links the literary *use* of language to the different uses of language as a whole. For Bakhtin, any understanding of language — of words, sentences, texts — must take into account the fact that language always comes

11. *Ibid.*, 3.

12. For a similar approach, see Christer Ekholm, “Aktivering och ansvar: Subjektifierande litteraturundervisning i teori och praktik” [Activation and Responsibility: Subjectifying Literary Education in Theory and Practice], in *För berättelsens skull: Modeller för litteraturundervisningen* [For the Sake of the Story: Models for Literary Education], ed. Ingrid Lindell and Anders Öhman (Stockholm: Natur & Kultur, 2019), 169–189.

13. Victor Shklovsky, “Art as Device,” in *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (McLean, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), 1–14.

into the world as *communication*, that is, as responses to previous articulations directed toward, and presupposing, some kind of active reply from the listener or reader. *Utterances*, then, are the fundamental units of language as communication, and they are characterized by being *uttered by someone* and *directed to someone*: “addressivity, the quality of turning to someone, is a constitutive feature of the utterance; without it the utterance does not and cannot exist.”<sup>14</sup>

The concept of *speech genre* captures the fact that each sphere in which language is used develops its own relatively stable types of utterances. Bakhtin here makes the distinction between *primary*, or *simple*, speech genres (such as different forms of daily dialogue, military commands, letters, business documents, and so on) and *secondary*, or *complex*, speech genres, including the literary ones, in particular the novel. According to Bakhtin, the novel is a genre that, during its formation, continuously absorbs and digests various forms of simple speech genres, ridding them of their immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others. However, Bakhtin emphasizes, this digesting of utterances does not result in the novel losing its existence as an utterance: “The novel as a whole is an utterance, just as rejoinders in everyday language dialogue or private letters are.”<sup>15</sup>

From the point of view of the addressee of a work of literary fiction, then, the stylistic, designating features, as well as what is designated, are part of the overall utterance that is the novel as a whole. Both form and content are saturated by an addressivity that Bakhtin describes as “the subjective aspect of the utterance” and refers to as a “speech plan” or “speech will.”<sup>16</sup> An essential part of active responsiveness in communication is the recipient’s imagining of this speech plan, thinking to him- or herself what the speaker *wants to say*. When it comes to the novel, this saying is not finalized — that is, it does not appear as a full utterance — until the recipient reads the end of the book. But even from the very beginning, Bakhtin declares, the reader grasps for the author’s speech plan and “sense[s] the developing whole of the utterance.”<sup>17</sup>

Regarding the speech plan in fictional narratives, Anders Öhman has brought forward the idea of *shadowing the plot* — that is, to focus on, or even to lose oneself in what is *happening* on the described plane of a narrative — as a way for a reader to come to actively respond to a novel or a short story as an utterance. According to Öhman, the plot is not only a key feature of fictional narratives, but it is also an *ordering* of fictional sequences that can or should be regarded as an expression of the author’s intention, that is, as the speech plan of the narrative as

14. Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 99.

15. *Ibid.*, 62.

16. *Ibid.*, 77.

17. *Ibid.*, 78.

an utterance.<sup>18</sup> On this basis, Öhman advocates that secondary school literature education promote an *initial* centrifugal reading movement — the shadowing of the plot as a whole — as necessary in order to give real significance to any *subsequent* centripetal/reflective strategies.

Öhman's line of reasoning is persuasive, and his practical examples of what can be gained by readings that follow the plot in an educational context seem in many respects productive. All the same, it could be argued that Öhman tends to marginalize a basic and, from a Biesta-inspired point of view, pedagogically interesting aspect of Bakhtin's conception of the fictional narrative as an utterance, namely the centripetal force that such a stance inevitably introduces in the space of reading. To take a novel as an utterance is to posit yourself *before* the text, to take the *position* of the addressee; this position logically follows from the reception of a text as an utterance, that is, as someone's intentional *use* of language, about something, *directed to* someone. In this respect Bakhtin's frequent use of words like "choice" and "selection" when it comes to the activity of the author in the frame of communication is worth noting. This *authorial choosing* is certainly realized in the plot — as well as in every other aspect of the text. With this in mind, then, possibly it is important for the text to maintain its status as an utterance in the act of reading and thus, in that act, to uphold a sense of the text as a series of *authorial choices, doings, and stagings* connected to an overall intentionality for the reader to respond to.

Against this background, a way forward freed from thinking in terms of either–or (or first–then) is revealed for literature didactics. In this way forward, engagement and distance exist simultaneously in the act of reading, and the reader's distance from the text is not a matter of critical regimentation and objectification, but, on the contrary, it emerges as a precondition for bringing about the events of accountable responsivity that Biesta demands of an education worthy of the name. This choice of path is certainly in accordance with a particular phenomenological line of thought that runs through the "ethical turn" in the philosophical and cultural theorizing of the recent decades, in which "ethics" is understood not as a property of the artifact (in terms of, for example, authorial responsibility or the moral exemplariness of theme), but as referring to the uniqueness of the ethical situation itself as a drama of encounter and recognition.<sup>19</sup> In literary studies this line of thought has paved the way for approaches such as the much talked about "narrative ethics" of Adam Zachary Newton. Newton defines narrative as "relationship and human connectivity, as Saying over and above Said, or as Said called to account in Saying; narrative as claim, as risk, as responsibility, as gift, as price. Above all, as an ethics, narrative is performance or

18. Anders Öhman, *Litteraturdidaktik, fiktioner och intriger* [Literature Didactics, Fictions, and Plots] (Malmö, Sweden: Gleerups, 2015), 46–47.

19. Dave Boothroyd, *Ethical Subjects in Contemporary Culture* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 1–27.

act."<sup>20</sup> In a literature didactics that is structured around Biesta's concepts of risk and subjectification, the productivity of such a definition of the literary subject matter is given.

#### READING AS RHETORIZATION AND ACTIVATION

The notion of reading fictional narratives as an act in which the reader is at the same time absorbed in what is being described and aware of the act of describing is actually not a peculiar one. Even Felski briefly inquires into this line of thought with reference to the following famous statement on the art of cinema by French sociologist and philosopher Edgar Morin:

[W]hile intensely bewitched, possessed, eroticized, excited, terrified, loving, suffering, playing, hating — we do not stop knowing that we are in a seat contemplating an imaginary spectacle: *we experience cinema in a state of double consciousness.*<sup>21</sup>

Morin's observation follows a basic idea in the tradition of practical criticism as well as in Martha C. Nussbaum's well-known claim that narrative fiction, by nurturing empathic capacities in the reader through the process of immersive, identificatory perspective-taking, can play a significant part in a politically productive education.<sup>22</sup> In both cases it is assumed, as Richard Kerridge has pointed out, that precisely because of the awareness of what is read *as* fiction, "the reader has no direct stake in the conflicts depicted (though plenty of indirect, generalized stake), defences will fall, and the reader will be capable of greater imaginative sympathy than in the direct encounters of real life."<sup>23</sup>

In the perspective put forward in this article, it is worth pointing out that this fictional awareness is ultimately an effect of the conceptualization of the narrative as an utterance. Reading a work as fiction is, in this view, a positive response to the text considered as a speech act,<sup>24</sup> that is, it is a response to different types of performative, urging signals included in and paratextually attached to the text.<sup>25</sup> The state of double consciousness Morin is talking about can thus be understood as emanating from a communicational contract established by two active, or rather *activated*, agents.

20. Adam Zachry Newton, *Narrative Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 7.

21. Edgar Morin, *The Cinema, or The Imaginary Man*, trans. Lorraine Mortimer (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 225; and Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 74.

22. See Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of the Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 426–431.

23. Richard Kerridge, "Ecocriticism and the Mission of 'English,'" in *Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies*, ed. Greg Garrard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 16.

24. This line of thought is extensively pursued by Gregory Currie, who argues that poets and novelists perform actual speech acts, inviting the reader to perform an act of make-believe. Gregory Currie, *The Nature of Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 35–51.

25. Regarding the transtextual concept of paratextuality, see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Levin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

The notion of narrative fiction as speech genre and utterance — and this is in some way the very starting point for Bakhtin's argument — is not an attitude usually at the forefront in the field of literary studies. In spite of the influence in recent decades of, for example, speech act theory and, especially, the concept of performativity, the fundamental utterance-ness of the literary text is still often actively suppressed. This is the case in lower as well as higher education, a fact that Felski unintentionally pinpoints in her description of how the critical reading promoted in the academy transforms the literary text into a passive, submissive object. But how, then, can a literary text, in the realm of reception, emerge as a subject?

For the utterance-ness of literature to be acknowledged, rather than be diminished or even erased, the reading of it must, I propose, consist of at least two entangled reception processes, both of which serve to maintain a *distance* between reader and text that is necessary for the act of reading to take shape as an event of communication — a *social, dialogical* distance to possibly embrace rather than reject.

First, the text has to be *rhetorized*; here, rhetorized simply denotes a process in which the sequence of words is de-objectified by being given verbal *agency*, which, in the case of fiction, is realized when the text is taken as *uttered by someone*. The rhetorization of literature is, in this respect, merely an act of recognizing the text as uttered by an addressing Other, a recognition by means of which the text is received as directed communication, as speech, or, as Émile Benveniste puts it, as “discourse.”<sup>26</sup>

Second, the text has to be *activated*. This strategy is essential in the speech genre of fictional narratives, since the utterer in this kind of communication does not actually speak, but only comes to the fore as the one implicitly *enabling* others to speak, and as the one implicitly *choosing* the actual style and kind of narration as well as the described world, people, happenings, and the ordering of these categories in the shape of a plot. Because of this, the reception of a literary text as an utterance builds on a conception of the text as saturated by intentional *activity* or *action* directed toward and addressing the reader, rhetorically both demanding a response and limiting its scope.

These procedures approach and produce the literary work not as text, but as *performance*, not as a *fact* of language, but as an *act* of communication, or, in the words of Derek Attridge, as an *event*. Attridge, writing from a perspective similar to mine, emphasizes that it is the reader who “brings the work into being,” enacting it “not so much as written, but as writing ... as verb rather than as noun.”<sup>27</sup> This enactment creates a space of singular *difference* between the work and the reader and between the work and other works and literary conventions to which it relates.

26. Émile Benveniste, *Problèmes de Linguistique Générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 79–88.

27. Derek Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 9.

On the other hand, it is an enactment that highlights the otherness of the work, producing a communicational *connection* between text and reader. Attridge's view of the work of literature as writing results in a conception of reading as an *ethical* activity akin to the one described by Newton. Only in the ethically responsible reading, where the singularity and the otherness of the work are acknowledged — an otherness asking for a reply to precisely *that* utterance — is, Attridge concludes, the universal potential of the work activated.<sup>28</sup>

#### THE EDUCATIONAL SUBJECTIFICATION OF FORM AND CONTENT

Biesta dwells on subject-ness and the process of subjectification in a way similar to Attridge's description of the ethically responsible reading. Subjectification, for Biesta, drawing on Levinas, is an *event* of subjectivity, where someone makes an appeal to me and singles me out in my uniqueness, thus making me ethically responsible to the Other one addressing me.<sup>29</sup> Even though Biesta is very clear that educators cannot produce these ethical events in the strong, metaphysical sense of the word, one thing teachers *can* do is to *make room* for such experiences in the classroom.<sup>30</sup> To accomplish this when it comes to the teaching of literature — and even, more progressively, to actively approach the matter of subject-ness and subjectification as one aspect of what education is actually for and should be contributing to — could be to consciously, through strategies based on rhetorization and activation, introduce literary texts as events of writing.

On a practical pedagogical level, the enactment of fictional narratives as directed utterances can be promoted through quite simple maneuvers on the teacher's part. Consider, following the lead of Stanley Cavell, this approach: instead of asking questions about *what* or *how* something happens in a narrative, initiate a receptional discourse that focuses on *why*:

- *Why* does the story begin/end in this way (and not in another)?
- *Why* is the story set in this place and time (and not in another one)?
- *Why* is the protagonist characterized in this way (and not in another)?
- *Why* is the focalization made in this way (and not in another)?<sup>31</sup>

28. *Ibid.*, 11–12. Stanley Cavell presents a similar view of the reading of a work of fiction, based on conception of it as something someone has done, and is meant to be exactly what it is. Reading is for Cavell a responsive act of acknowledgement, establishing a relationship based on a recognition of separateness. See Stanley Cavell, "Knowing and Acknowledging," in *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 238–266.

29. Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, 19–22.

30. *Ibid.*, 23.

31. Stanley Cavell, "A Matter of Meaning It," in *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 213–37. See also Toril Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary: Literary Studies after Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 180–182.

What this kind of alternative approach to *talking about narratives* actually has power to do is to performatively transform the textual matter of facts (whether it has to do with form or content) to rhetorical *doings* and *choices*, a process of amplified *artifaction*, that is, a procedure whereby the text is not only put forward as something made, but is also given agency as communication.

To make room for this kind of engagement with fictional narratives, where the reader takes the ethical position of a responding addressee rather than becoming emotionally immersed in the characters and happenings of the fictional world, can certainly be regarded as a reduction of the literary experience. My point, however, is not to take Plato's stand against Aristotle in the longstanding debate over the moral effects of identificatory reception of fiction. The question I have been addressing has to do with the *teaching* of literature, and what kind of *reading* of literature this teaching should be oriented toward in the realm of an overall ambition to pave the way to an education for events of subjectification. What I would like to suggest is that an approach to teaching literature that highlights pedagogically the utterance-ness of the texts — that is, a teaching where the texts are not merely produced as objects of analytical criticism or identificatory colonialization — has the potential to, in the classroom or seminar, orchestrate situations in which the students have to take responsibility for their responses along the lines of what we as humans ethically demand and rely on from each other. The pedagogic strategies of rhetorization and activation — strategies that are themselves a kind of subjectification, transforming the written into writing, into an event — seem thus to be a way for fiction to play an important role in an education focused on the risky business of helping students to engage with the world of other individuals. The uses of literature in other situations are numerous, which, of course, is why it matters so much, for so many of us.