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The anatomy of excitement – teenagers' conceptualisations of literary quality

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Introduction. This paper suggests a theoretical model for understanding the core criterion of teenagers' conceptualisations (i.e. verbalisations) of literary quality, namely spenning/excitement.

Method and analysis. The core criterion was identified through quantitative analysis of on-line reviews written by students in secondary school on teen fiction books. In dialogue with a pragmatic and phenomenological framework the complexity of excitement were discovered through close readings.

Results. The different understandings of excitement pinned down is joined in a two dimensional model. First, the temporal dimension or the plot dynamics of the text is complementary to the readers need for relevance. Secondly, the relational dimension, in accordance with Georges Poulet, takes two directions, one leading from text to reader (impartation and voyeurism), one from reader to text (identification and sense of place). Both concern persona and setting respectively.

Conclusion. The study displays the complexity of reading experiences labelled exciting in a theoretical model of its anatomy. The theoretical framework should be useful for practical as well as further theoretical work on the promotion/mediation of literature (litteraturformidling/Litteraturvermittlung) in libraries, schools etc.

Spenning/excitement is a common criterion both for denominating literary quality among readers and in promoting literature for example to secondary school pupils. While often understood in terms of temporal suspense in literary studies ([Lothe et al. 1997](#)) and actual mediating practices alike, the aim of this paper is to plot the variety of possible experiences behind conceptualizing a good read as exciting. In asking what reviewers write about when they write about excitement – by analysing reviews written by teen-agers themselves on youth-literature – the criteria of excitement is (tentatively) disclosed (Aletheia).

After some theoretical and methodological considerations, the paper gradually evolves the features of excitement first in the temporal dynamics then in the relation between reader and book. To grasp the dynamics of the latter, Georges Poulet's distinction between two strategies of criticisms; one directed from reader to text, one from text to reader, is applied. The question then is: what are the possible scope of meanings beyond rewarding a book, a read for being exciting? It is this field of possibilities that I am trying to plot in the following.

Theoretical and methodological considerations

The material of this study is on-line reviews of teen fiction written by students in secondary school (aged 14 to 16, 7th to 9th grade) for *Uprisen* 2014 (<http://uprisen.no/arkiv/uprisen-2014>). The *UPrize* is annually awarded the best Norwegian youth book. It is organized by *Foreningen !les – the Association !Read* – an independent but publicly financed organization working to promote literature and reading.

The word *spennende/spenning/exciting/excitement*, occurs 879 times in 437 out of 667 reviews. This implies that 65 percent of the reviewers relate to excitement twice on the average. The frequency however varies. Excitement is only referred to by one reviewer of *Nesten saman/Almost Together* – a thematically connected collection of poems on falling in love, while ten out of ten assessing the horror story *Hodeløs/Headless* uses the word all in all thirty times. Though it is obvious that excitement depends on genre, the expectations for excitement even arise across genres. However, concluding from these written statements that excitement is a core criterion in assessing and appreciating the reading of literature demands some considerations.

First, excitement is a translation of the Norwegian *spenning*; a pendant to the German *spannung* that according to *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur* ‘soll Neugier und Interesse des Lesers oder Hörers am Stoff erregen und wacherhalten’. ([Wilpert, 1989, p. 871](#)) The word is not directly translatable into English. Suspense of course is related, but connotes more strictly to plot and story ([Lothe, Refsum, Solberg, 1997, p. 236](#)). Tension, thrill or even joy are adjacent synonyms, whereas dull, boring or indifference are associated antonyms.

Secondly, these reviews are written in a genre and a school context filtering the reviews. Labelling a book exciting might be a cliché – a formula expression – revealing little about personal, though of course socially constituted, preferences.

Thirdly, while the reviews are verbalisations on literature, I conclude on experiences of reading. These of course are two different ontological layers. Founded in above all phenomenological and pragmatic theory (for example [Merleau-Ponty, 2000](#); [Dewey, 2008](#)), LIS-studies on reading now consent that the sensual, affective and bodily experience of reading can never be fully articulated (for example [Balling, 2016](#)). In spite of this, we also know pragmatically that of course aesthetical experiences can be talked about and discussed, more or less precisely, nuanced, recognisable etc.

Fourthly, my method is close readings of what happens in the contexts where the words *spennende/exciting/excitement* actually occur, but with a sidelong glance at adjacent synonyms or antonyms. As my goal is to grasp the complexity of excitement, examples are chosen to clarify my points and to illuminate the inductively emerged theory.

Though my overall perspective is phenomenological in trying to grasp the valuations as subjective apperceptions of the literary text, my main tool is looking for criteria as understood in a pragmatic sense. In his aesthetical philosophy John Dewey underscores how

criteria are not rules or perceptions. They are the result of an endeavour to find out what a work of art is as an experience: The kind of experience which constitutes it. [...] Stating what a work of art is as an experience, may render particular experiences of particular works of art more pertinent to the object experienced, more aware of its own content and intent. This is all criterion can do ([Dewey, 2008, p. 313](#))

According to Dewey the use of criteria like excitement is the outcome of an effort to understand one’s own experience of art – and reading. Criteria are not objective and final insights (for example Andersen in a Norwegian classical article on newspaper reviews ([1987](#)) based on Beardsley ([1958](#))), neither specific norms nor principles looked for in reading or experiencing. For the researcher, however, criteria applied by the readers/reviewers are not results but beginnings. For him they must be read as places to start his search for an enhanced understanding of the appropriation of literature, as openings towards the experience of reading identifiable in any comment on an aesthetical object.

Plot dynamics – cumulative or oscillating

Excitement has a temporal dimension. It is a book's obligation to make its reader see that there is something to go on for, to ignite and maintain curiosity through temporality. Thus, excitement is represented as something unresolved, an opening towards a possibility.

I felt the book as exciting and gripping [gripende]. It was exciting because new things happened all the time. As for example when Robert went down into the catacomb and it was about to collapse. I highly recommend the book. I enjoyed the book because there was always something exciting going on. ([Hellebostad, 2014](#))

(All quotations of the material is translated by me.)

After a paraphrase of *Katakombens hemmelighet/The Secret of the Catacomb* that underpins the conclusion cited here, Hellebostad concludes that the hero is endangered by events following one another with a certain velocity – 'all the time'. Thus the review conveys a temporal understanding of excitement as an unceasing addition of new and dramatic content in laden settings. This is recognisable as the common sense essence of Western dramaturgy as it follows Aristotle's *Poetics* understanding plot as the imitation of actions oriented towards a climax or turning point – peripeteia. In agreement with Aristotle, but also with a twist, Veronica Jansen concludes her review of *Det som er sant/That which is Truth*.

I find the book incredibly gripping. When you have to follow a case through the entire book, you must find the answers of everything and nothing. It becomes easy to follow the book further on, and that is what makes it so exciting. You sit and wait for an answer, and once you get it, something new pops up that you want an answer to. The book is very vivid, and it is just as if you were in the situation yourself. The author has really done his work in holding on to the reader. ([Jansen, 2013](#))

While acknowledging the linear/temporal qualities of plot, Jansen also depicts a difference between the Aristotelian plot, and one that passes through a series of *peaks* not necessarily subordinated *one* climax. The book makes Jansen ask questions which next is answered while evolving new chains of questions that rather maintains and changes than increases intensity and excitement. In understanding the plot dynamics of excitement it might therefore be useful to distinguish between a cumulative Aristotelian and an oscillating plot moving through a series of contractions and suspensions as theorized by Marianne Hirsch in *The Mother Daughter Plot* ([1989](#)).

Apperception – from reader to book and from book to reader

While Jansen in the above quote values a book for being *gripping*, Hellebostad appreciates another for being *exciting and gripping*. In his "Phenomenology of Reading" Georges Poulet uses *gripping* to pinpoint a phenomenon which 'appears in its most obvious and even naivest form in the sort of spell brought about by certain cheap kinds of reading, such as thrillers, of which I say 'It gripped me''. ([Poulet, 1969, p. 57](#)) Looking beyond his normative degrading, *gripped me* refers to the interchange between subject and object when a reader is hooked. Thus it points to the other constituting, relational, dimension of excitement; apperception understood as 'the manner in which we receive a thing into our minds'. ([James, 2005, Ch. XIV](#))

Versus the temporal and syntagmatic which both Aristotle and Hirsch highlight, Poulet is concerned with the relational and paradigmatic dimension of, in my reading; excitement. For Poulet reading is

the act in which the subjective principle which I call I, is modified in such a way that I no longer have the right, strictly speaking, to consider it as my I. I am on loan to another, and this other thinks, feels, suffers and acts within me. ([Poulet, 1969, p. 57](#))

Thus Poulet indicates why *being gripped* is exciting: The stability of the ego is questioned or altered cognitively and affectively. A comment on *Blå øger kan isje lyge/Blue eyes don't lie* describes how the book grips, hooks.

The author is a strange person, which makes the book strange, it has no clear plot and no particular progress. It can be confusing and often throws you hither and dither into different situations in a story inside the head of the protagonist. But that is also what makes you want to proceed reading. The book is so strange, so you just want to read more to find out how it all ends. The story is not very interesting, but its strange story keeps your eyes locked to the book. (Vetle Andre, 2013)

Echoing Poulet the reviewer actually explains his excitement: Behind the book is the author who constructs an unclear plot that just as well throws the reader around in the head of the protagonist. The metaphor of the locked eyes sums up how the reviewer in spite of the strange and confusing lack of plot still has to continue reading. He describes how attention is caught in what seems like a reading of prototypical modernism. It is as if he is negotiating his own experience, working towards an understanding of what is going on here, what is the value, what is in it for him. The reader seems thrown between differing situations which confuse and estrange, but at the same time, or maybe even therefore, keeps him reading.

To further sort out the scope of features of excitement pertaining to apperception Poulet's distinction between two strategies of criticism is useful.

In order to establish the interrelationship between subject and object, which is the principle of all creative work and of the understanding of it, two ways, at least theoretically are opened, one leading from the objects to the subject, the other from the subject to the objects. (Poulet, 1969, p. 67).

In the reviews studied here the subject-object division is reflected in a corresponding tendency to anchor the experience of excitement in the book-object or the reader-subject. As this distinction comes to the fore, it further discloses how excitement in apperception either deals with persons or with landscapes or situations. Within apperception therefore this should be dealt with as a crossing distinction.

Identification – putting on a mask

The excitement of entering a text and so to speak become-character may be labelled *identification*. Referring back to everyday-experiences it is easy to see how playing a role or putting on a mask might be exciting. Identifying with characters is like playing that person or avatar. On *Odinsbarn/Children of Odin* Emilie throws the dice at six.

Hirka is told she is a child of Odin, despised, feared, hunted. She is lacking something that everyone else has, something so important that without it you are nothing. The book takes us to a world where man is myth.

The book was incredibly good, it was exciting, almost from beginning to end. It was romantic, but luckily it was not one of these stupid love stories. It was also Norse mythology, I love all mythology so that fits well. One is tied to the main characters, the author writes so that I get the same feelings as the main character [...] I could not manage to put away the book. (Emilie, 2013)

The reviewer focuses her paraphrase clearly on the protagonist's lack and expulsion. In line with this she describes her world as inverted. The valuation then concentrates on excitement. Next she appreciates in a balanced way both what the book is and is not, and in conclusion her identification is connected to excitement through the concrete description of being unable to put the book away. The book gets exciting because she can feel like Hirka.

Though identification as a pedagogical term applied on children's literature might imply passive adoption and acceptance (Nikolajeva, 2010, p. 185-187), psychoanalysis conceives it as an active practice; as

a psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property, or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, by the model the other provides. It is by means of a series of identifications that the personality is constituted and specified. (Laplace and Pontalis, 1988, p. 205)

Through identification the subject moves into and adapts to a feature of or takes on the perspective of another. According to Freud this process depends upon a resemblance that can be found in the subconscious. (Laplace and Pontalis, 1988, p. 206) (Whether resemblance is required or one can identify (playfully) without, indicates two ways of identifying.) In a review of *Den onde arven/The evil heritage* this common element is a recognition of not knowing one's father.

I think **Den onde arven** is an amazingly good book. One of the reasons I like it is that I can recognize myself and my history in the story. I have not met my father either, and there is a lot I do not know about my family [...]

When Julie stresses, I stress. When Julie gets frightened, I get frightened. When Julie is sweating, I am sweating. I shiver when I read and someone must take the book out of my hands to stop me.

I like that it is written in present tense, that makes the exciting parts even more exciting. The main character, Julie, is not one of the popular that can say whatever. But in the book we take part in a journey she also has with herself. She becomes stronger, or she dares to put forth the stronger one inside her. Julie dares to stand up for herself. ([Kaarby, 2013](#))

This excerpt illustrates how the book becomes exciting because of a recognition that enables the reader to enter the fiction and feel as the protagonist. In spite of no explicit explanations, apart from pointing at the verb tense, the review displays how the writer's excitement and bodily reactions are intertwined with how she perceives the protagonist from the inside. This is in line with one of the ways Laplanche and Pontalis identifies identification 'according to the direction in which identification operates [...] the subject identifies himself with the other' rather than 'the other with himself'. ([1988, p. 206](#))

Sense of place – entering another world

Sense of place, like identification, designates a move from reader to text. It underscores how exciting it can be to visit other places – which is different from looking through the eyes of or feel like a character as in identification. A reviewer of *En flåte av gull/A fleet of gold* concludes that

the book was very exciting and interesting. I liked it a lot because I could imagine where they were and how it looked. I lived myself into the book, one could say. I love excitement and this book is a fantastic book ([Haugnæss, 2013](#)).

Even though *Så vakker du er/You are so beautiful* 'is written in relatively short sentences, they are enough to give you these amazing sense-perceptions. You get this feeling of being inside the book, a feeling that you yourself lives through it all.' ([Hansen, 2013](#)) Hansen here articulates how her sensuous apparatus is activated in this experience of being inside. Without identifying with the protagonist, she has this feeling of perceiving the other world as if being there. Another reviewer describes how 'the excitement came as the pulse beat. I felt I was in the house together with the persons and the story was easy to enter.' ([Rødal, 2013b](#))

Michel de Certeau refers to how Saint Teresa de Avila (1515-1582) along with other spiritual thinkers acclaimed reading for giving readers a possibility 'to be elsewhere, where they are not, in another world'. ([1988, p. 173](#)) De Certeau further states that 'to read is to wander through an imposed system (that of the text, analogous to the constructed order of a city or of a supermarket)'. ([1988, p. 169](#)) If tourism as Jakle states 'involves the deliberate searching out of place experience' (1987, p. 8; in [Jivén and Larkham, 2003, p. 69](#)), readers appreciating excitement in this sense, are precisely tourists.

Sense of place is a key concept in geography, architecture and other disciplines occupied with how people relate to their physical surroundings. It departs from Martin Heidegger's thinking of being human as appropriating the things of the world, of transforming the being-there of existence in transcending acts, words, consciousness ([Heidegger, 2010](#)) (McCrath ([2008](#)) gives an excellent introduction to the complexity of Heidegger's thinking). In line with Heidegger architect Christian Norberg-Schultz states that '[T]he basic property of man-made places is concentration and enclosure. They are 'insides' in a full sense, which means that they 'gather' what is known. To fulfil these functions they have openings which relate to the outside'. ([1980, p. 10](#)) The architect's reflections of place could even count for how readers, as quoted above, enter fictions and turns fictional space into lived/real place, a sense of place as 'the subjective and emotional attachment people have to place'. (Agnew, 1987; in [Creswell, 2004, p. 7](#)) Even for a reader, places has a certain materiality of roads, houses, rooms, beds, colours and atmosphere. 'Novels and films (at least successful ones) often evoke a sense of place—a feeling that we the reader/viewer know what it is like to 'be there'', says geographer Creswell. ([2004, p. 7-8](#)) For architectural theorist Gordon Cullen townscape was a key to understand the relationship between the subject and the different elements that together form an urban place. For him it was important

to take all the elements that go to create the environment: buildings, trees, nature, water, traffic, advertisements and so on, and to weave them together in such a way that drama is released. For a city

is a dramatic event in the environment. (Cullen 1961, p. 9. in [Jivén and Larkham, 2003, p. 69](#))

Substituting the city for the book, this quote neatly proposes what the young reviewers quoted above appreciates as exciting reading experiences. The textual *bookscape* has to be weaved so that a drama is released when the reader enters.

Impartation – the voice of another, meeting someone

While the aforementioned aspects implies a movement from reader to book, impartation (and next voyeurism) depends on the book coming to the reader. The excitement of impartation is about being addressed by someone, feeling that a voice speaks to you, meeting someone. Does the author, or a character, or a voice tell something that excites the reader? Here is an example of the opposite.

If the authors have tried to write about today's society and young people and the way we meet people online, they've missed the point completely. Elias and Susanne does not seem like teenagers at all, and I do not think anyone talk to each other in that way. I do not understand why the authors have used time writing this book because it is so incredibly bad. ([Sofie, 2013](#))

Sofie perceives the dialogues in *Det blir pinlig uansett/It is embarrassing* either way as inauthentic and absent. The authors have not attuned their way of speaking to the listeners/readers. Similarly *Elefanten i rommet/The elephant in the room* is discarded for being 'boring because the writing is so tiresome and childish. So the story was good, but it was terribly written. The book ended after the last page'. ([Knudsen, 2013](#)) The last sentence remarkably asks whether this was all the author had to say. It calls for literature that imparts something that literally exceeds the book. A review of *Den onde arven/The evil heritage* is complementary: 'The characters are well described, and you feel that you know them. I am left with a good aftertaste from the book and the excitement endured after the last page.' ([Rødal, 2013a](#)) In real life the excitement of meeting someone you feel connected to lasts beyond the meeting, in reading beyond the book. Or, again complementary, the impatience when someone keeps talking and talking above my head or simply does not address me. 'I do not think the book [*Ufo! Ufo!*] will become very popular, because it is tiresome to read. One is annoyed and only wants the main character to stop speaking.' ([Olkkonen, 2013](#))

To understand this aspect of excitement one has to accept that phenomenologically speaking it does not matter if a character, author or living person is speaking. What matters is that either as a reader or a listener you listen to *someone* talking/writing in a certain manner and form. Even though literary criticism has tried to expel the author, readers have of course never fully subscribed to that excommunication. To readers literature is (also) an utterance from an author, a voice that says something in a certain tone, an impartation.

In Mikhail Bakhtin's sense reading is understanding is answering. In his dialogism the structure of answers and questions is constantly overturned. 'Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker'. ([Bakhtin, 1986, p. 68](#)) Thus any reviewer answers to whether she finds the voices and characters exciting to listen to or meet with. The key here is whether or not an answer 'only duplicates his [the questioner's] own idea' (p. 69) or not. Duplication is repeating without a difference. Readers feeling that a voice misses talking to or even underestimates them, will question if the utterance addresses *them* or only duplicates the author's pejorative picture of them – ultimately objectifying them.

In the prolongation of Judith Butler I will claim that every book ultimately asks its reader 'Is it You?' like a person that enforces the reader to clarify herself. Referring to Nietzsche Butler discusses how

I begin my story of myself only in the face of a 'you' who asks me to give an account. Only in the face of such a query or attribution from another – 'Was it you?' – do any of us start to narrate ourselves. ([Butler, 2005, p. 11](#))

Simultaneously reading interferes in the life of the reader in more or less clearly/directly asking who you are. The reader thus may answer through her silence, acceptance, reluctance, associative deviances or as Butler says in her parallel context: 'I will not dignify this allegation with a response.' ([Butler, 2005, s. 12](#))

Voyeurism – looking unseen from a distance

While impartation is about characters coming forth or voices talking to the reader, voyeurism is about a reader getting excited by looking at the landscapes literature displays – hereunder the situated social play. Geographer Cresswell underscores my point in describing the difference between places and landscapes: ‘We do not live in landscapes – we look at them.’ (2004, p. 11) While the sense of place supposes a reader who enters the setting, landscapes are looked at from a distance.

In accordance with Laura Mulvey’s use of the term in her iconic article ‘Visual pleasure and narrative cinema’ I understand voyeurism as the secret and unseen gaze of looking at someone not conscious of being looked at. In contrast to Mulvey however, I do not consider voyeurism as sexually loaded, neither as a specific male gaze (Mulvey, 1975) and as stated above – it is not necessarily about looking at people, but looking at something that is described in a way that makes it vivid. A voyeur looks for something coming forth, emerging.

For Lina Marie Holmedal *Det er her jeg skal være/This is where I belong* gets exciting because she does not know whether the protagonist will commit suicide or not. She concludes that ‘I want to read more by the author because she was really good at describing. She writes so well that the story was transformed into a movie in my head while I was reading it.’ (Holmedal, 2013) Thus she praises plot dynamics while stressing the visual descriptions as a prerequisite for it taking hold of her mind. The descriptions transforms text to life. Similarly *Morgenrgy/Dawn* is acclaimed for having ‘Good sentences that at least made nice and good pictures in my head’. (Riisdal, 2013) An ampler example:

I always had to read a whole chapter when I read, or else I could not put the book aside. When I read I could almost watch a movie inside my head, it was easy to imagine the events and make them come alive in my memory. I think the author described both people and places extremely good, and she uses a language that girls in high school easily can relate to. (Henriette, 2013)

Henriette stresses how excitement unfolds chapter by chapter. Scene by scene characters and places become alive as if on a stage, as if in a film. Various reviewers implicitly argue that this demands amplitude or even slowness. One is critical to how in *Dødelig gjenkomst/Lethal return* even ‘the most exciting moment are lifeless to me’. (Jørgensen, 2013) Complementary, on *Ufo! Ufo!* Ryseth says: ‘When it was most exciting the moments were dragged out very long.’ (2013) Excitement thus depends on a description that is so ample that it allows time for observation. The reader must be allowed the time and space necessary to become a spectator, she who according to Jacques Rancière

observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of place [...] She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way – by drawing back, for example, from the vital energy that it is supposed to transmit in order to make it a pure image and associate this image with a story which she had read or dreamt, experienced or invented. (2009, 13).

A spectator is active in choosing a perspective as defined by distance and angle, in appropriating her focus to her own history and situation as well as looking in a certain way. Consciously or not, a spectator embodies one particular way of seeing rather than others. She might look for and get excited by the slight changes in the colours of a surface, the meaning beyond a textual fabric; the connections and similarities or the differences and incongruences; the images that resembles herself – as Narcissus – or she can find herself staring at something fading away the more she looks at it – like Orpheus. So then, the excitement of being a voyeur might be a resultant of knowing that I can be seen, an awareness that I actually see my way, and ultimately I am able to look differently.

In his little book *Why Look at Animals* cultural sociologist John Berger, depicts the excitement of the voyeur; the dynamics of her gaze. He tells a story of how visitors are astonished by his showing them photographs of the Finnish photographer Pentti Sarmallahti. They look at his pictures longer than usual, but ‘never try to put their evident pleasure into words, for it is a secret one. They simply look closer and remember. What?’ (2009, p. 8-9) The visitors see what confirms but also something that might intervene the habitually seen, and Berger he is excited by their excitement. ‘Yet it can happen, suddenly, unexpectedly, and most frequently in the half-light-of glimpses, that we catch sight of another visible order which intersects with ours and has nothing to do with it.’ (2009, p. 10)

Conclusion: between excitement and relevance

In the preceding effort to understand excitement I have not looked at its outside nor what is beyond, neither empirically nor theoretically. Questions of what the 212 reviews that do not mention excitement appreciate, or how excitement is related to other criteria within a review, has been ignored. These questions could of course be investigated further through more extensive quantitative analyses, as well as through close readings of whole reviews. When readers, young or old, term a book exciting or library users request exciting books they might of course refer to suspense in the strict sense, plots full of action and fast shifts. Just as well there might be more to it. My intention then has been, at least partly, to provide a frame of reference, another step towards, further reflections on the practices of mediating or promoting literature for persons and groups we know something about.

In this paper I have tried to show how excitement as a criteria of quality unfolds along a relational dimension as well as a temporal: while temporal suspense arises in an oscillating or a cumulative mode, the relational excitement of apperception is disclosed as coming either from a reader's movement into literature or from literature coming forth to the reader. The relational dimension is utterly complicated as excitement either is due to encounters with fictitious people and their voices, or to experiences of landscapes/settings/situations. But then again, of course, the concepts of identification, sense of place, impartation and voyeurism – as well as the distinction between oscillating and cumulative plots – in this context have at least a somewhat ambiguous status.

In trying to reveal the complexity of excitement, I suggest a theoretical order which again of course threatens to reduce the empirical complexity. It is therefore necessary to remind about the epistemology of theory: the anatomy of excitement as I have disclosed it here is a, not the, theory. In this effort I have deliberately labelled the features of excitement, the elements of its anatomy, more in accordance with how everyday language reflects and conveys perceptions and interests, than in line with the language of literary scholarship. Though the features I have highlighted above have been formerly identified and termed by scholars of various schools, the conjunction, as inductively sketched bottom-up from what the material says, might hopefully contribute even to studies of reading and mediation in twisting the idea of what teenagers might talk about when talking about excitement. Seen from yet another perspective or in a different way other aspects would come to the fore. Such is literature and such is the nature of studies on the mediation of literature.

So; the main idea here is not to say that the world looks like this, that there is a necessary (lawful) correspondence here, but to actually concentrate on a phenomenon that deserves more attention because we are engaged in *how* teen-agers read, and to make the notions or prejudices we already have about this phenomenon tremble or fall apart so that we come to ask what else it could be. Then of course work remains on how this model could serve as some sort of tool for librarians in their mediating work, in order to better understand teen-agers preferences, tastes and conceptualisations of the quality of literature, how it can serve as a starting point in emphasizing other aspects of youth literature and reading in addressing a public that requests or is *presupposed* to request exciting books, readings, stories.

As suggested in the introduction I have plotted relevance as a possible counterpart to excitement. Though this is definitely speculative, I would claim that relevance belongs (primordially) to the subject-reader, as plot dynamics to the book. To be perceived as such, plot dynamics must be echoed by some kind of need or usefulness – entertainment for example. Without sensing, feeling or knowing that what is going on is relevant in one sense or another, a plot will never be exciting.

Lastly, once again I will emphasize that the intention of this paper is *not* to plot the final map of how young readers experience, value and assess literature intended for them, but to encourage slightly different conversations and discussions about literature and reading among teen agers – a group which internal differences are so immense that it actually is meaningless to talk about them as a group. On the other hand, pragmatically – we do talk about teen agers and we do meet teen agers in groups and settings not least in secondary schools, and teen-fiction as a category does exist in schools, libraries and book-shops. Therefore, even the readings of these readers must go on.

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