

Revolutions in Reading: Literary Practice in Transition

24-26 August 2020 at Stockholm University

How to read and why? Reading is intimately connected to the materiality and mediality of texts, as well as to dominant assumptions about what texts are and how they should be approached. Today, digitalization is profoundly changing practices and cultures of reading, a development which is often seen as a threat, risking to change the human cognition in ways that makes the traditional book obsolete. At the same time, it presents exciting possibilities for new and innovative ways of consuming and studying literature. Indeed, within the field of literature studies there is a renewed interest in re-assessing reading as a methodology, including the various epistemological and political implications of our approaches to texts: should we read critically or postcritically, closely or distantly, globally or locally, comparatively or monolingually?

This conference puts the searchlight on contemporary and historical revolutions of reading with four main streams of inquiry:

Critical and Postcritical Reading

Recent scholarly debates have directed attention to a growing disenchantment with the idea of critical reading, or what is sometimes called the hermeneutics of suspicion. At the same time, critical reading has undergone important developments in the past thirty years, notably in the fields of feminist, queer, materialist and postcolonial literary studies. In this stream, we invite explorations of these debates, of the conditions of critical reading today and historically - as well as of alternative approaches to critical reading, such as reparative reading, reading as attunement and attachment, reading as therapeutic practice, and reassessment of layman readings.

Reading Across: Multilingualism, Translation and Comparison

Although literary production has always existed in cultural and linguistic circulation rather than within national borders, literary studies continues to be organized according to national philologies. What is gained and lost by reading within versus reading across traditional disciplinary boundaries? What are the localities of reading in a world of entanglements between local, national and global geographies and temporalities? How are reading practices shaped by multilingualism, migration, translation, (post)colonialism and world literary flows?

Materialities of Reading

How is reading affected by changes in the materiality and mediality of the text, both in the current (post)digital era and at other historical moments? How are literature and reading practices shaped by and in shifting mediascapes? In this stream, we invite inquiries into the ways reading practices are shaped by different aspects of digitalization and other material and medial revolutions.

Zooming In and Out: Reassessing Reading Methodologies

The growing field of digital humanities offer new methods for working with and across a wide range and number of texts, such as data mining, distant reading, and not-reading. What are the implications of this development for literary scholarship, and what does it mean for the role of traditional practices of reading such as close and slow reading?

Abstract submission

Please submit your abstract (no more than 250 words) and a brief biography (2-3 sentences on university affiliation, research focus, most important publications) to revolutionsinreading@su.se.

Deadline for submission is 15 January, 2020.

More information about the conference available at:

<https://www.su.se/ike/english/revolutions-in-reading>