

We Wonder If They Mind: An Empirical Inquiry into the Narratological Function of Mind Wandering in Readers of Literary Texts

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Abstract : The study investigates the content and triggers of mind wandering (MW) in readers of fictional texts. It asks whether readers' MW is productive (text-related) or unproductive (text-unrelated). Methodologically, it bridges the gap between narratological and data-driven approaches by utilizing a sentence-by-sentence self-paced reading paradigm combined with thought probes in the reading of an excerpt of A. L. Kennedy's "Baby Blue". Results show that the contents of MW can be linked to text properties. We validated the role of self-reference in MW and found prediction errors to be triggers of MW. Results also indicate that the content of MW often travels along the lines of the text at hand and can thus be viewed as productive and integral to interpretation.

Keywords : narratology, mind wandering, reading fiction, meta cognition

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