

(Un)triggering Anorexia: A Cognitive Literary Analysis of Lia “the Liar” in *Wintergirls* (2009)
Rocío Riestra-Camacho

The Role of Writers and Readers

In 1969, Louise Michelle Rosenblatt, one of the early proponents of reader-response, declared that twentieth-century literary critics had “sought to dissociate the interpretation of the text from the author’s intention” but those efforts “did not, however, lead to a systematic understanding of the reader’s contribution.”¹ Fifty years before her essay, T. S. Eliot developed Washington Allston’s “objective correlative” to describe textual features that have the same emotional impact for the author and the reader.² According to Rosenblatt, the objective correlative was erroneously interpreted to mean aspects of the text that “somehow elicited an automatic response from the presumably passive reader.”³ For Rosenblatt, this interpretation equated the act of reading to that of responding to a set of traffic lights, whereas “any reading is far more complex than such a simple stimulus-response situation.”⁴ Nearly three decades after Eliot, in 1946, W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, two of the most eminent proponents of the New Criticism school of thought, removed the author from the picture entirely with their coining of the “intentional fallacy.” Rather than an author conveying intent through an “objective correlative” to a receptive reader, then, they argued that the intentions of an author were simply not pertinent to the reading or evaluation of a piece of fiction. The postmodern vision of Roland Barthes in “The Death of the Author” was likely influenced by the ideas of Wimsatt and Beardsley, and proved widely influential to a generation of critics.⁵ By the 1990s, however, literary critics like Alice Templeton asserted that the author had been “too easily put to death.”⁶ Rather than achieving the renaissance of the reader, she argued, the postmodern “death of the author” had overstated the status of academic literary critics at the expense of audiences in the street. Readers had been “too easily generalized or idealized” since literary criticism obscured the part played by their diverse, individual interpretations.⁷

Among others, narratologists Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon have questioned critics’ tendency to consider their acts of reading as broadly representative and to ascribe their own interpretations to a singular common reader.⁸ Cognitive literary scholars take this objection a step further. Some claim that studying

the diverse psychological effects of texts on readers is *the* function of literary criticism.⁹ In that sense, cognitive literary studies starts from an assumption that Emily Troscianko says is “diametrically opposed” to Wimsatt and Beardsley’s focus on the text itself. Instead of limiting the critical focus to the textual object alone, that is, Troscianko sums up the cognitive approach as assuming “that what a literary work ‘is’ can be best understood by investigating what it ‘does’ (because words on the page are not literature until they start to do things cognitively), and that there is therefore no better starting point for literary investigation than the psychological effects of great works of fiction.”¹⁰ Troscianko herself has studied these effects, conducting a survey on the fiction-reading habits and self-reported effects of reading on people with and without personal experience of an eating disorder. A key finding of the study was that fiction thematically related to eating disorders has a clear potential to exacerbate related attitudes and behaviors.

Arguably, Troscianko's approach shares feature with reader-response criticism. Hans Robert Hauss, one of the key scholars of the latter, has argued that the interpretation of a text varies according to the experiences lived by the readers, with the result that they do not always share the motivations the author had when writing the piece.¹¹ Cognitive literary studies defends this same idea. This becomes clear in the study of unreliable narration. Contra rhetorical accounts of the role of the author in unreliable narration, which claim that a narrator is unreliable only when held up against an implied author, Ansgar Nünning disagrees, noting that this viewpoint “appears to provide the critic again with a basis for . . . the correctness of an interpretation.”¹² For him, a narrator is unreliable according to “the reader’s or critic’s psychological disposition, and system of norms and values.”¹³ In short, an unreliable narrator is the product of a reader’s interpretation strategy: it’s how she makes sense of narration that departs from her own standard of normalcy.

Despite the similarities between reader-response and cognitive literary studies, their approach to literature differs widely. Rosanne G. Potter insists that while reader-response does not integrate scientific perspectives, cognitive literary studies does.¹⁴ One of the implications of this is that cognitive literary studies incorporates variables like age or gender into the investigation of readers’ responses to texts, asking how these and other factors influence the reception of a literary piece.¹⁵ Moreover, cognitive literary critics are increasingly interested in psychological variables among readers, including mental illness and functional diversity.¹⁶ Through insights from psychology—the pillar of cognitive literary

studies—such critics seek to analyze what Troscianko has referred to as “particular embodied cognitive reading situation[s].”¹⁷ This particularity establishes a fundamental difference from postmodernism, where the possibility of defending a multiplicity of interpretive perspectives leads to a relativist position where “anything goes.”¹⁸

In cognitive literary studies, a particular type of reader is defined around variables of study which are the common ground of psychological practice. Cognitive literary scholars’ interest in both psychological and literary research can then be exploited in therapeutic programs that enlist fiction to promote mental well-being (or “bibliotherapy”).¹⁹ The opposite pattern of implementation can also be contemplated: scholars can analyze the negative effects provoked by reading certain books—that is, their *iatrogenic* effect. Troscianko herself focuses on investigating the reading situation of people who suffer from eating disorders from this perspective, and has gathered data about the harmful effects of literature dealing with eating disorders (EDs).²⁰

In this journal, Emma Seaber has explored the reinforcement potential of anorexia memoirs, noting how Marya Hornbacher’s 1998 *Wasted* is misused by patients “to exacerbate their anorexic thoughts and behaviors.”²¹ Her conclusion was cautious about the role exercised by literature in the development of an eating disorder, claiming that it would be preposterous to posit that Hornbacher’s memoir is capable of causing anorexia, as “it has not been established that any text can trigger the disorder in healthy individuals.”²² Seaber’s observation regarding healthy cohorts is particularly relevant. Indeed, the study by Jennifer Thomas and colleagues she references found that anorexia memoirs did not trigger eating disordered behaviors in a sample of undiagnosed subjects; their explanation was that the potential iatrogenic effect might be limited to vulnerable populations.²³ In this sense, Seaber conceded that “there does appear to be a special relationship between particular writing and reading practices and anorexia identity formation and maintenance for some readers *with a predisposition to eating disorders*.”²⁴ Leslie Heywood’s thesis is in line with Seaber’s, and places an emphasis on the “textuality” of eating disorders. Heywood explores how emaciation is attained through obsessive academic practices of reading and writing, where “the bodies [are] sacrificed to textual models.”²⁵ In *Starving, Writing, and Imprisonment*, Maud Ellmann insists that reading and writing supplants the act of eating, comprising an “inverse relationship of words to food” because anorexics “read . . . voraciously.”²⁶ Abigail Bray, who employed the

label “reading disorders” to refer to anorexia, submitted that “anorexic reading practices” are a “perverse irrationality” because their “consumption facilitates autophagy.”²⁷ Nieves Pascual agrees, arguing that for them, “the written word can actually take the place of food.”²⁸ This noxious correlation between eating disorders and the habit of reading ED fiction seems specific to the anorexic pathology, and it has not been found for other texts which prompt self-destructive behaviors.²⁹

Ironically, practitioners of bibliotherapy have supported the use of ED literature for anorexia patients, out of the supposition that a cathartic-driven identification with the struggling character would encourage the patient to initiate recovery.³⁰ Others have insisted on the idea that the genre depicts characters gaining agency over their bodies—Melanie Goss, for example, coined the term “self-destructive agency” to denote the empowerment of protagonists in ED fiction, including in Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Wintergirls*.³¹ In this essay, I am not arguing that such literature should be censored. Yet the evidence suggests that bibliotherapy with ED fiction does not work for patients suffering from eating disorders. If an intervention is planned, literary analysis should be conducted beforehand, since researchers need to first delve into the complex consequences that reading a book can have for the mental health of audiences before beginning to exploit their supposedly therapeutic potential. This is one of the reasons I consider the analysis of *Wintergirls* crucial. Troscianko’s experiment opened up an interesting line of research, which stands behind the aim of this essay: namely, analyzing how people with an ED use ED-related fiction to “deliberately exacerbate an eating disorder.”³² One of the works participants in Troscianko’s experiment resorted to more frequently to trigger anorexia is *Wintergirls*.

Authorial Intention, Readerly Uses

Now the highest-rated novel in Goodreads.com’s ED fiction category,³³ *Wintergirls* debuted on the *New York Times* bestseller list in 2009.³⁴ The novel is a first-person narrative told by an unreliable protagonist, the 18-year-old Lia Overbrook. Lia suffers from anorexia and self-harm. After she has a falling-out with her friend Cassie, Lia learns that Cassie has died from bulimia, complicating the protagonist’s life and forcing her to confront her illness. According to Lisa Zunshine’s Theory of Mind (ToM) theory,³⁵ average readers associate the thoughts narrated by a character to

corresponding actions.³⁶ If a character refuses food, they assume that she is not hungry, is unwilling to eat, or that she dislikes the food being offered, among other possible explanations. These kinds of “scripts” are complicated when the narrator is unreliable, as Lia is.³⁷

Without being sure about the narrator’s intentions behind her continuous rejection of food, readers may ask about the *author’s* intention. For Linda Oatman, the author intended the novel as a model of hope for readers with anorexia because “rather than leaving them drowning in despair, . . . she brings both reader and protagonist up for light and air, skilfully instilling and infusing hope.”³⁸ Her optimistic view of the novel is shared by a fair quantity of critics;³⁹ according to Dorothy Karlin, for example, *Wintergirls* can even be interpreted as a text with a “messag[e] of body acceptance,” written with “a desire to help readers.”⁴⁰

Oatman sought out the author’s intention in an interview and inquired about the representation of hope in her novel. Anderson responded: “ending on an encouraging note is part of my moral code. Teenagers need to see a model of hope and growth.”⁴¹ Despite this, she noted that the metaphors of light-as-hope Oatman had identified throughout *Wintergirls* were neither intended nor conscious choices.⁴² Oatman also addressed the controversy around *Wintergirls* about its possible “copycat effect” among teen readers prone to anorexia, asking Anderson whether writers have a moral responsibility regarding the possible reactions sparked by their work.⁴³ Anderson did not reply clearly to this, declaring that the stories she writes stem from the heart, and that she could not allow this one to be bound by factors and opinions external to it.⁴⁴ On another occasion, she answered more adamantly, claiming that her book is a depiction of the horror of anorexia, not a glamorization of it.⁴⁵

Paradoxically, Anderson herself confirmed in another interview that even though she was never diagnosed as anorexic, “disordered eating was definitely a piece of [her] life.”⁴⁶ Assuming a degree of autobiographicity in *Wintergirls*, then, one might join Pascual, who wonders “to what extent can the writing of an autobiographical text reinforce the process of remission?”^{47,48} Pascual goes on to suggest that such texts in fact reinforce the pathology, both for authors and for readers, “who can be lured into catching the illness.”⁴⁹ Kelsey Osgood shares this view of anorexia memoirs in her own autobiography about the illness, remarking how they can be used as “guidebooks” because of their strongly “contagious” nature.⁵⁰ Megan Fogg’s take is equally vital; as a reviewer who developed anorexia after reading *Wintergirls*, she warns that “many of the

writers behind this supposedly ‘pro-recovery’ rhetoric remain seduced by their illness, and this ultimately permeates the language.”⁵¹

It is my view that Anderson’s ethics, in the sense of aiming to write a hopeful novel for teenagers, are irrelevant. On the contrary, the intentionality of the *readers* is a more useful starting point when considering how Anderson’s audience approaches the book. As Kent Bales proposed as early as 1987, “considering a reader’s *intention*, then, is multiply improbable. Yet it is necessary . . . if empirical research into why readers read differently is to proceed beyond very simple levels.”⁵²

I submit that one goal of Anderson’s *Wintergirls* readership is that of reinforcing hunger self-denial. Although I concede that readers of *Wintergirls* play an active role as consumers who choose what to read, and despite the fact that their capacity to critically receive this novel cannot be ignored, subjects with eating disorders display strong cognitive biases. Essentially, they present attentional and memory biases which prompt them to evaluate texts and images as weight and shape related, which hamper their ability to escape harmful interpretations of eating disorder fiction.⁵³ In fact, even for those readers aiming at collecting information about the disorder to escape from it, possibly motivated by *Wintergirls*’s multiple positive reviews, the protagonist’s unreliable narration cancels out this initial aim. In one powerful review of *Wintergirls*, Ellen Ricks declared that despite her former intentions to fight the early signs of an eating disorder, she quickly started to mimic the narrator’s habits.⁵⁴ Ricks gathers evidence of others who do the same, particularly in blogs which glamorize eating disorders and quote the novel as a model for anorexic practice. Here we might predicate the existence of an “unreliable” *reader*, whose objective would be to willingly read fiction intended for healing—yet with the intention of doing themselves harm. Fogg in fact admits that Lia’s “perception of the world is so drunk with delusion and toxicity that ‘disordered readers’ cannot help sinking into this intoxication themselves.”⁵⁵ She ends by insisting on the need for ED writers to be honest about their audience.⁵⁶ For her part, Ricks’s conclusion is that there is no doubt “that *Wintergirls* was written with the best of intentions” but being “too well-written” is one of its fatal flaws.⁵⁷ Specifically, the veracity of Lia’s account offers excessive evidence for vulnerable readers to initiate or worsen their disordered condition. Anderson herself emphasized that she wanted to portray “the ugly truth,” the “truth on the page” of an eating disorder and, significantly, admitted that “the book is raw and disturbing and scary as hell, because it tells Truth.”⁵⁸

The veracity of *Wintergirls* is inextricably linked to the representation of the protagonist's unreliability, since pathological lying plays a relevant role in anorexia. In particular, two major categories of dishonesty can be distinguished. On the one hand, there is unintentional denial, which could be motivated by distorted information processing, a neurological or psychotic impairment. The second category entails a deliberate "denial or refusal of self-disclosure (including 'faking good'), expressing an avoidance of feared consequences or a need of self-determination" with regard to food intake.⁵⁹ In short, anorexics lie to avoid eating. In line with the latter category, Lia is mostly a deceptive character—she has even been described as "a master of deception."⁶⁰ The way the narrator resorts to deliberate obfuscation coincides with the strategies of anorexics in such a way that readers with the condition do not find Lia "unreliable because [their] values are not in discord with the narrator's."⁶¹ Their failure to interrogate Lia's deception reinforces the core of anorexia pathology, since, as Nünning argues, "an unreliable narrator . . . [works] as an interpretive strategy by which the reader naturalizes textual inconsistencies that might otherwise remain unassimilable."⁶²

The fact that Anderson aimed to portray anorexia truthfully, selecting an unreliable narrator to do so, is understandable but problematic. For Lia is not a mere liar: as will be seen in the following analysis, her role as an unreliable narrator often consists in revealing the truth whilst at the same time denying it. Tellingly, Lia equates eating with lying. Recalling her stay at a psychiatric center, she remembers how she "bit, chewed, swallowed day after day and lied, lied, lied. (Who wants to recover? It took me years to get that tiny. I wasn't sick; I was strong)."⁶³ Touches of magic realism are sprinkled across the permanently ambivalent representation of her psyche. Overall, such flourishes attain a curious effect where the portrayal of the reality behind anorexia, with its persecutory delusions, is a matter of fantasy and unreliability only for those currently outside the condition. Troscianko's point supports this interpretation, when she contends that "a strongly pathological interpretive filter can result in highly selective readings of texts."⁶⁴ Without assistance, vulnerable readers are left to their interpretive biases to resist the ambivalence which characterizes Lia's powerful narration—as well as anorexia itself.⁶⁵

Etymologically, the term anorexia means "lack of hunger" (*an*, "no"; *orexis*, "appetite"). Nonetheless, people with anorexia display constant hunger ruminations.⁶⁶ Feminist theorists emphasize that its seemingly contradictory nature speaks of a metaphoric food

denial—the “crystallization of culture” of what is wrong with society in its glamorization of women’s skinniness.⁶⁷ Identifying the cultural components of anorexia, as some feminists have done, is essential work. Yet I disagree with their emphasis on psychoanalysis-based accounts of a disordered corporeality, where the androgenization of an emaciated body arguably protects female flesh against a feared sexuality.⁶⁸ Joan Jacobs Brumberg maintains that the “poor heterosexual adjustment” which feminists propose as “the explanatory aetiology for anorexia nervosa” is absurd, since anorexics are not in search of beauty or romance.⁶⁹ Clinical evidence suggests that the root of anorexia’s ambivalence is in fact mediated by volitional attitudes towards food, namely by means of the anorexic’s creating a conditioned reflex of denial and disgust around food. These chains of ruminations feed back on themselves because anorexics’ priority is denying hunger.⁷⁰ Moreover, suppressing ruminations is a cognitively demanding task, and “deliberately focusing attention away from negative thoughts and feelings may reinforce tendencies to thought suppression,” a phenomenon which is associated with recurrence rather than remediation of the affects aroused.⁷¹ In that sense, anorexia is an ego-syntonic condition, which the patient does not often want to recover from but exacerbate. I specifically suggest that such conditioning and ruminations are further strengthened via reading about similar mental states of fictional characters with anorexia, such as is the case with Lia in *Wintergirls*.

“Sweet, Sweet, Filthy Food”

Lia Overbrook, the intradiegetic narrator-protagonist of *Wintergirls*, moves easily through contradictory messages about hunger throughout her stream of consciousness. Strikethrough print is the main formal feature that *Wintergirls* employs to indicate that its narrator is unreliable.⁷² I will focus on it as a strategy to deny hunger, which is its chief function.⁷³ Early in the novel, for example, at her stepmother’s suggestion to have breakfast, Lia muses “~~because I can’t let myself want them~~, because I don’t need a muffin (410), I don’t want an orange (75) or toast (87), and waffles (180) make me gag” (8). What is particularly triggering in this passage is the fact that the various options for breakfast are categorized according to their caloric value.⁷⁴ In Willems’s terms, this is anorexic-specific content, and Ricks speaks clearly of its iatrogenic effect: the “calorie counting . . . that [is] mentioned frequently in the novel took over my life.”⁷⁵

The National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA) asks writers to avoid content focusing on numbers, and this is standard practice in anorexia recovery groups.⁷⁶

Strikethrough is not unique to this passage, however. In this same scenario, Lia replies that she will have some cereal, but her stepmother finds her serving too small. The narrator's interior monologue proceeds as follows: "~~I could eat the entire box~~. I probably won't even fill the bowl" (5). This is a dichotomous line of thought where, on the one hand, Lia admits that she would be capable of ingesting a disproportionate amount of cereal. This desire is formally negated, and appears in opposition to the opinion Lia takes as legitimate, according to which she will not manage to top off her plate. This textual trait embodies the struggle between Lia's ordinary self and her ill persona, where her "anorexic thoughts 'correct' what was originally said."⁷⁷ Eventually, Lia adduces that her stomach is "upset," so she really cannot eat any more cereal (5). Hence, Lia acts as a canonical unreliable narrator: her credibility to be exempt from further eating, based on an imaginary stomach pain, is compromised in the minds of her readers, since she admits wanting to eat more.

This visual technique is also employed to negate feelings of hunger at the high school party Lia attends in order to help out at the food selling stands. (Helping out at a foodstand is one way Lia engages in a paradoxical form of self-control; individuals with anorexia will sometimes purposefully put themselves in the way of appetizing food that others, but not themselves, will "succumb" to.) One of the mothers helping there suggests that she try one of the cakes. Lia, without censoring her opinion at first, muses "I would love a seven-layer bar. I would love to pick up a piece of fudge, gossip about the latest episode of whatever, bite the fudge, laugh" (200). Immediately afterwards, nonetheless, she decides that the cake is not tempting but sweat-inducing (201). Similar to the breakfast example, the narrator exposes her true wishes about tasting the pastries, but only briefly. The different versions of the verbal periphrasis "I would love" represent her longing for sweets and for community, neither of which is fulfilled. Observing the mothers around her, Lia cannot avoid noticing how they "slap their thighs, wiggle their butts, pinch their bellies" (200).

From this reflection, Lia starts experiencing contradictory feelings. While she rejects the vulgar ways the mothers eat, and the result this has had on their bodies, she nonetheless begins to feel tempted. For this reason, she resorts to her particular graphic way of burying her thoughts, meditating: "~~my traitor fingers want that fudge~~."

No, they don't. ~~They want a seven-layer bar and some weird muffins and those pretzels.~~ No, they do not. ~~They want to squish the marshmallows and stuff them into my mouth.~~ They will not" (202). Lia's thoughts appear divided, as one part of her wishes to succumb to sweets whilst the other denies it. The pattern "no, they do not" is repeated twice, whereas the third time the structure contains an excruciating variation. Now the voice in Lia's head does not deny the wish to eat in the present tense. Shifting decisively to the future simple, Lia admits her wish and hence takes a step further, denying herself its fulfilment. Chun argues that this narration represents the standpoint of a disorderly eater who is "caught up" among the conflicting meanings society constructs through food, as she is aware of the pleasure provided by it but empowers herself by turning that awareness into refusal.⁷⁸ Lia's vacillation seems to chip away at her choice to refuse food. However, vulnerable readers may focus on how she overcomes her perceived weakness, rather than on the repressed yearnings themselves.

A similar effect is attained when Lia goes to her mother's house, when Dr. Marrigan is baking some muffins and the protagonist is particularly hungry. Some moments before taking them out of the oven, Lia displays a contradictory rationale about the physiological need to eat or not do so: "~~I'm hungry I need to eat.~~ I hate eating. ~~I need to eat.~~ I hate eating. ~~I need to eat.~~ I love not-eating" (145). Just like in the high school example, the stream of uncrossed-out thoughts is triadic and the third element overrules the previous ones. When thinking that she loves not eating, Lia idealizes her capacity to reject what her organism is in dire need of. This lie, however, is more difficult to maintain than the preceding ones. Lia's hatred towards eating is motivated by the effects it has, but convincing herself of the pleasure behind the deprivation is not so easily sustained; the physical and psychical suffering she experiences blend together in this passage: "I burn my fingertips pulling the muffins out of the oven. ~~They want to jump into my mouth. No, they want to roll themselves in butter and honey and jump into my mouth, one, two, three, four. And then some Moose Tracks ice cream and then some graham crackers and a jar of chocolate frosting and three bags of popcorn~~" (152). This is the longest application of crossed-out print throughout the novel, via which the narrator delves into a quasi-oneiric description of her yearning about eating. This set of imaginary thoughts mimics a binge-eating episode, in which subjects experience feelings of depersonalizing and a loss of control before food. This is exactly what is happening to Lia, for whom sweets and popcorn have become alive. The anthropomorphizing of food,

characterized as capable of experiencing desires (“want”), much like her “treacherous” fingers above, contributes to the depersonalization effect. Moreover, the appearance of this verb acknowledges her deceptive strategy, because it places the agency on the food, which is not willing to get inside of her. In truth, of course, Lia is the one wishing to consume it.

The typographical technique is not only exploited in passages dealing with lies about eating. Halfway through the novel, Lia decides to exercise compulsively in the middle of the night. After twelve, she is ready to go to the basement to “~~to burn away my leg muscles until the sun comes up~~ to exercise moderately for twenty minutes so I’ll sleep better” (99). Her behavior here is also paradigmatic of a disorderly relationship with the body. The compulsion to exercise is a common feature among ED patients, particularly in underweight ones. Exercising is defined as excessive when it “significantly interferes with important activities, *occurs at inappropriate times* or in inappropriate settings, or continues despite injury or other medical complications.”⁷⁹ Lia is aware of the unhealthy routine of exercise she imposes on herself. For this reason, she employs two hyperboles, the verb “burn away” and the time clause “until the sun comes up.” She knows she will not be exercising for six or seven hours and that her muscles will not literally be set on fire, so the correlation established between these two facts represents her wish to see her body emaciated and potentially obliterated entirely. The fact that this thought is stricken out is contradictory, given that the information which is not crossed out is not true, either. Lia will not work out for some minutes, but for longer, and her motivations are unrelated to sleeping, since the protagonist wants to burn calories, with the result that none of the lines of opposing thoughts is reliable at any point. Through that process, a vulnerable reader reinforces two abusive cognitions about exercise: its addictiveness and a way of justifying it as a strategy to sleep better.

The wish to see the body disappear, which motivates the refusal of food and compulsive exercise, is a typical attribution of body image disorder or “dysmorphia.” Hilde Bruch was one of the pioneers to tackle it. Today, the concept of dysmorphia is popular beyond its original clinical context.⁸⁰ This popular currency, however, has deteriorated its meaning as well as its connection with anorexia. Patients with anorexia do not imagine that their bodies are larger in size than they are in actuality. Their perception is subject to contextual changes, such as temporary bloating.⁸¹ Looking at a mirror, revealingly, allows subjects with a disordered body image to

verify their emaciated state.⁸² It is thus interesting to consider the passage that enlists the topic of proprioception: “I wanted to draw my thighs, each the size of a couch, on his [the shrink’s] carpet. The rolls on my butt and my gut would rumble over the floor and splash up against the walls; my boobs, beach balls; my arms, tubes of cookie dough oozing at the seams” (81-82). Lia is aware that this is not her true reflection, because she refers to it in the past and denoting a sense of volition (“I wanted to draw”). In these musings, the body fat becomes unstable; it is almost referred to in liquid terms. The verb “splash up,” for instance, alludes to an image of immense waves breaking against the rocks, emphasizing notions of size and weight. The narrator also describes the flesh of her arms in fluid terms. She continues: “The doc would have been horrified. . . . and he would have adjusted my meds again, one pill to make my self-of-steam larger, another to make my craziness small. So I drew a blobby version of me, a fraction of my real size . . .” (82). Lia seems wary of the consequences of drawing herself in an exaggeratedly large way, namely being given more medication. Significantly, Lia admits that this adjustment in treatment would be a way to reduce her “craziness.” This attests to the fact that the protagonist knows that her perception of her body *is* a distortion.

Readers are likely to become confused at the end of the passage, notwithstanding this explanation: the drawing she eventually produces is a “blobby” one, constituting “a fraction of [her] *real* size.” Opposing this to the first part of the scene, it is clear that Lia draws a version of herself closer to reality than her imagination prompts her to do. Describing it as “blobby,” however, means that the size of the drawn figure is too small and unrepresentative of her dimensions. As a stubborn character, Lia makes the effort to be right about her lies. The contrast established between her bodily distortion now and that of previous passages with regard to food and physical exercise is noteworthy, as it provokes a sense of ambiguity about what the narrator truly thinks. The strikethrough technique does not appear in this latter example, significantly. Her insistence upon knowing her “real size” calls into question all the lies left uncrossed-out next to her initial crossed-out impulses. The doctor is unaware of Lia’s thoughts; readers, on the contrary, are granted access to them in full, which complements the information they have about the narrator’s rejection of “fatness.”

Even though strikethrough is the most evident formal technique employed in *Wintergirls*, it is not the only self-triggering trait of the novel. The passages where visual indexes of this kind are missing leave Lia’s lies unspotted, which makes their reception

ambiguous. The most aggressive deception Lia resorts to occurs between pages 185 and 187. The message “Must. Not. Eat” fills them in their entirety. These pages invite a misunderstanding—are they Lia denying herself the right to eat or do they transmit an imperative to readers? Both? Indeed, Ricks believes that “while this is an unusual and interesting way to illustrate intrusive thoughts, without proper context, these pages function as a collection of destructive mantras with no counterpoint. For me, the experience . . . was akin to . . . reading ‘thinspo.’”⁸³ Whichever way it’s read, that is, the ultimate message is a celebration of the self-willingness needed to sustain food refusal.

Lying knowingly, Lia also makes use of the modal periphrasis “have to” as a means of disavowing food. In one of her visits to see her mother, Lia attempts to skip breakfast again, arguing that “You aren’t supposed to push me. I have to feel safe with food” (155). By this point, it is evident that Lia never eats food feeling safe about it. Her apparent feelings of safety are based on not eating. Beginning this excuse with the phrase “not supposed to” makes explicit the idea that Lia is aware that her discourse is a presupposition, not a fact. Her mother realizes the prefabricated nature of her daughter’s discourse, too: she calls it “the stupidest thing I have ever heard” (155). Ignoring her daughter’s lies, Marrigan gives Lia eggs, two muffins, and an orange juice. Upon seeing this, Lia thinks “The orange juice is a virus attacking my insides,” replying that she will not have any (155). Lia perceives the orange juice as dangerous, claiming that its intake will harm her; in anorexia pathology, food is often imagined as a source of illness.⁸⁴ Even though the narrator claims that the orange juice will make her ill as if she truly believed so, readers can never be sure.

In a parallel situation, Lia says that “the measuring spoons want to stick sugar and butter and molasses into my mouth. I pretend I am allergic to the ingredients. One taste and my lips and tongue will swell up and I will choke to death” (198). Lia’s anthropomorphization technique is used here to grant spoons the capacity to poison. Nonetheless, the protagonist is aware that their infectious properties are a product of her own imagination. The narrator hyperbolizes her self-deception, simulating she is allergic to sugar, butter, and molasses, when she associates tasting them to suffering an episode of anaphylaxis. This final image of death, though fantastic, provokes a powerful sense of aversion.

Disturbed beliefs of the kind hitherto reviewed permeate at least “ninety-five percent of the book,” according to one reviewer, and many critics argue that these beliefs can be exploited by anorexic

readership.⁸⁵ For critics such as Greta Olson, scenarios like these invite readerly vigilance: “the narrator will be diagnosed with pathological untrustworthiness, and the reader will choose the therapeutic strategy of reading against the grain.”⁸⁶ Contra Olson, I submit that this is only the case for those who have the analytical and psychological tools to remain impervious to Lia the liar. The protagonist’s self-willingness to avoid eating is only questioned at the end of the novel. In her distorted stream of consciousness, Lia muses: “I can’t remember what it’s like to eat without planning for it, charting the calories and the fat content and measuring my hips and thighs to see if I deserve it and usually deciding no, I don’t deserve it, so I bite my tongue until it bleeds and I wire my jaw shut with lies and excuses while a blind tapeworm wraps itself around my windpipe . . .” (209). Verbs related to rationality—planning, charting and measuring—contrast with her illogical sense of volition: Lia is conscious that not eating is part of her specious decision-making, based on “lies and excuses.” The fact that she resorts to the image of her sealed mouth and the bitten tongue captures the immense suffering she feels when self-imposing such permanent food refusal.

Here Lia begins to realize how fragile her network of lies is. To demarcate the shift, the novel introduces a set of images dealing with snow and ice: cold and/or rigid, but capable of transformation. During a passage when her mother desperately asks her to eat because otherwise she will die, Lia replies that she is exaggerating. However, as if it were an epiphany, she takes a spoon with soup and starts remembering the same recipe her grandmother used to prepare. Lia muses, “but I can’t let me taste it. The first sip would melt through the sheet of ice that is keeping me suspended over an open hole” (233). For the first time, lies are represented as brittle, but also as composed of a certain materiality which encourages the reader not to discard them, because truth is “an open hole,” a terrifying abyss for those who approach it. Still, Lia soon decides to confess her illness to a new psychiatrist, Dr. Nancy Parker. She had never admitted her condition to anyone before, and her resolution to do so consists in giving up the lies strengthening the illness.

To start to follow clinicians’ instructions instead of her own lies is the beginning of Lia’s rehabilitation. I agree with Karlin that the end of the novel, where the protagonist admits that she is “melting,” is a positive image of recovery, which suggests the destruction, at least partially, of the unreliable narrator.⁸⁷ However, it is problematic to claim that this ending inspires readers to initiate recovery themselves, as Oatman does.⁸⁸ The narrative space given to the perspective of the unreliable narrator is far more relevant than the

space granted to Lia's initial stages of healing.⁸⁹ There is no time for the unreliable narrator to become reliable, nor for her to metamorphose into a role model, having romanticized anorexia for more than fifty chapters. As Olson insists, unreliable narrators tend to remain unreliable throughout a book. More importantly, perhaps, is the role of the reader, once again: when they finish a book, unreliable readers will have based their reading on deceptive motivations. In the case of anorexic readers, they will have read a story with the intention of keeping their disorder afloat.⁹⁰

Wintergirls: Keep Away from Vulnerable Readers

This paper has explained some of the problems with relying on authorial intention to anticipate audiences' interpretations of their texts. This issue has been debated for decades, from the rise of reader-response through postmodernism and reaching into cognitive literary studies. An advantage of this last approach is to consider the role of readers in relation to psychological variables of study, thus allowing for the systematic exploration of the effects of literature on specific people. More particularly, it enables critics and researchers to explore the therapeutic or iatrogenic potential of fiction. While the author (and several critics) of *Wintergirls* view it as an aid to readers, offering them hope of recovery, this analysis has concluded that there is almost nothing therapeutic here for vulnerable readers. Instead, it has revealed features of the text which are potentially iatrogenic, particularly to exacerbate food refusal. Strikethrough, in its ambivalent portrayal of the protagonist's denial of hunger, contributes to creating an unreliable narrator of great authority among vulnerable readers. (While Lia may be hesitant about her unreal thoughts, she is stalwart in the stubborn refusal of food based on this mental farce.) This narration overshadows any gleam of truth, even at the end of the novel when Lia reforms her unreliability. It can be thus concluded that *Wintergirls* is a novel with self-triggering capacity for readers vulnerable to or suffering from eating disorders.

NOTES

1. Rosenblatt, "Towards a Transactional Theory," 36.
2. Eliot, "Hamlet and His Problems," 1-5.
3. Rosenblatt, "Towards a Transactional Theory," 37.
4. Rosenblatt, "Towards a Transactional Theory," 37.

5. Barthes, "Death of the Author." See Rock, "Designer as Author," n.p. For an updated view on Barthes, see Freshwater, "Reading Mixed Methods," 136.
6. Templeton, "Sociology and Literature," 26.
7. Templeton, "Sociology and Literature," 26.
8. Bortolussi and Dixon, *Psychonarratology*, 8.
9. See Lauer, "Going Empirical," 1, and Richter, "I cannot endure," 75.
10. Troscianko, *Kafka's Cognitive Realism*, 9.
11. Hauss, "Rezeptionsästhetik-Zwischenbilanz," 325.
12. See Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*; Nünning, "Reconceptualizing the Theory," 35.
13. Nünning, "Reconceptualizing the Theory," 47.
14. Potter, "Pragmatic Research," 601.
15. See Mar, Oatley and Peterson, "Exploring the Link," 408.
16. See Savarese and Zunshine, "Critic as Neurocosmopolite," and Baena, "Recognition and Empathy," 1.
17. Troscianko, "Feedback in Reading," 170.
18. Edwards and Usher, *Postmodernism and Education*, 26.
19. Hynes and Hynes-Berry, *Biblio/Poetry Therapy*, 2.
20. Troscianko, "Literary Reading and Eating Disorders".
21. Seaber, "Reading Disorders," 485.
22. Seaber, "Reading Disorders," 485.
23. Thomas et al., "Evaluating the Effects," 423.
24. Seaber, "Reading Disorders," 485.
25. Heywood, *Dedication to Hunger*, 7.
26. Ellmann, *Hunger Artists*, 58.
27. Bray, "Anorexic Body," 421.
28. Pascual, "Depathologizing Anorexia," 47.
29. For instance, even though fiction about suicide has been claimed to be consumed by suicidal subjects, no empirical data supports a correlation between reading suicide fiction and increased suicide risk; see Patnoe, "Fiction, Reality," 10.
30. Troscianko, "Literary Reading and Eating Disorders," 14. For examples of this posture, see McAllister et al., "Things You Can Learn," 553, and Tapia, "(Don't) Think Pig!" 7.
31. Goss, *Bodily Harm*, 6.
32. Troscianko, "Literary Reading and Eating Disorders," 1.
33. Troscianko, "Literary Reading and Eating Disorders," 6.
- Willems, "What Is Normal," 6.
34. Amazon, "Wintergirls," par. 1.
35. For a review of this figure, see Olson, "Reconsidering Unreliability."
36. Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction*, 4.
37. Herman, *Emergence of Mind*, 10.
38. In Oatman, "Images of Hope," 64.

39. Koss and Wilson, "Who I Was," 58; Karlin, "How to Be Yourself," 72; DaCosta, "Romantic Relationships," 56; Stevenson, "Wintergirls (review)," 195; Bodart, "Young Adult Authors," par. 20.
40. Karlin, "How to Be Yourself," 85, 79.
41. See Oatman, "Images of Hope," 64.
42. Oatman, "Images of Hope," 67.
43. Oatman, "Images of Hope," 67.
44. Oatman, "Images of Hope," 67.
45. DaCosta, "Romantic Relationships," 5.
46. Quoted in "Madwoman in the Forest," par. 1.
47. Pascual, "Depathologizing Anorexia," 345.
48. Anyway, "therapeutically speaking, reading about people with eating disorders may elicit similar responses from readers regardless of the framing of them as fictional or factual, whether because readers ignore the framing or because even when cognitively salient to readers, it is irrelevant to health-related processing and outcomes" (Troscianko, "Literary Reading and Eating Disorders," 14).
49. Pascual, "Depathologizing Anorexia," 344.
50. Osgood, *How to Disappear*, 26.
51. Fogg, "Sublime Madness," 55.
52. Bales, "Intention and Readers' Responses," 13, emphasis in original.
53. Williamson et al., "Cognitive Bias," 143.
54. Ricks, "'Wintergirls' by Laurie Halse Anderson," par. 1.
55. Fogg, "Sublime Madness," 53.
56. Fogg, "Sublime Madness," 57.
57. Ricks, "'Wintergirls' by Laurie Halse Anderson," par. 6.
58. Anderson in "Madwoman in the attic," par. 16–17 and par. 31, capitalized in original.
59. Vandereycken, "Denial of Illness," 352.
60. Glenn, *Laurie Halse Anderson*, 111.
61. Olson, "Reconsidering Unreliability," 97.
62. Nünning, "Unreliable, Compared to What?," 66–69.
63. Anderson, *Wintergirls*, 28. Further references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text.
64. Troscianko, "Literary Reading and Eating Disorders," 14. Additionally, see Baker-Pitts, "Going Hungry," 447.
65. ED therapist Valente "believe[s] [young adults] don't yet have the cognitive stability, experience, or intellectual discernment to be able to sort through what's really happening in that novel" (quoted in Ricks, "'Wintergirls' by Laurie Halse Anderson," par. 13).
66. Warin, *Abject Relations*, 114.
67. See Orbach, *Hunger Strike*; Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 139.
68. For examples of this psychoanalytical approach, see Chernin, *Hungry Self*, 117–18; MacSween, "Anorexic Body," 59; Heywood, *Dedication to Hunger*, 25; and Orbach, *Hunger Strike*, 48. See also Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity," 102.
69. Brumberg, "Fasting Girls," 102.

70. Zucker, "Emotional Experience," 333.
71. Watkins and Teasdale, "Adaptive and Maladaptive," 2.
72. Glenn, *Laurie Halse Anderson*, 112.
73. For other uses, see Karlin, "How to Be Yourself," 85.
74. Kia Jane Richmond interprets the use of strikethrough in this passage as a censoring strategy (*Mental Illness*, 136) while DaCosta also believes that Lia is divided between two selves, inasmuch as "the characters' mental illnesses comprise a second voice" ("Romantic Relationships," 32).
75. Willems, "What Is Normal," 73. Ricks, "'Wintergirls' by Laurie Halse Anderson," par. 4.
76. Ricks, "'Wintergirls' by Laurie Halse Anderson," par. 18.
77. Glenn, *Laurie Halse Anderson*, 108.
78. Chun, "Girls Who Do Not Eat," 47. Orbach defends the idea that anorexia can actually empower women (*Hunger Strike*, 16). Additionally, recall Goss's notion of "self-destructive agency."
79. El-Ghoch et al., "Appearance vs. Health," 5150–1, emphasis added.
80. See Bruch, "Perceptual and Conceptual Disturbances," 199.
81. Espeset et al., "Link Between Negative Emotions," 518.
82. Espeset et al., "Link Between Negative Emotions," 525.
83. Ricks, "'Wintergirls' by Laurie Halse Anderson," par. 10.
84. Just like during the Middle Ages, when miasma theory was en vogue, in anorexia it is common to imagine that food, particularly the fat it contains, infects the organism through mere contact with it. See Warin, *Abject Relations*, 120.
85. Fogg, "Sublime Madness," 52. See also Seaber, "Reading Disorders," 490 and Willems, "What Is Normal," 86.
86. Olson, "Reconsidering Unreliability," 94.
87. Karlin, "How to Be Yourself," 85.
88. Oatman, "Images of Hope," 64. See also Karlin, "How to Be Yourself," 79.
89. This conclusion is supported by Fogg, who advocates for granting further space to "post-recovery-enlightenment—i.e., the character's realization of the truth and decision to pursue health" ("Sublime Madness," 52). See also DaCosta, "Romantic Relationships," 7; and Troscianko, "Literary Reading and Eating Disorders," 14.
90. Olson, "Reconsidering Unreliability," 95.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amazon. "Wintergirls." Amazon, 2020.
<https://www.amazon.com/Wintergirls-Laurie-Halse-Anderson/dp/014241557X>.
- Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Wintergirls*. New York: Viking, 2009.
- Baena, Rosalia. "Recognition and Empathy in Illness and Disability
 Memoirs Christina Middlebrook's *Seeing the Crab* and Harriet

- McBryde Johnson's *Too Late to Die Young*." *Diegesis* 6, no. 2 (2017): 1–13.
- Baker-Pitts, Catherine. "Going Hungry: Writers on Desire, Self-denial, and Overcoming Anorexia." *Eating Disorders: The Journal of Treatment & Prevention* 17, no. 5 (2008): 445–47.
- Bales, Kent. "Intention and Readers' Responses." *Neohelicon* 40, no. 13 (2013): 178–94.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Contributions in Philosophy* 83 ([1967] 2001): 3–8.
- Bartky, Sandra. "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power." In *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, edited by Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby, 61–86. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988.
- Bodart, Joni Richards. "Young Adult Authors as Trusted Adults for Disconnected Teens." *The Alan Review* 38, no. 1 (2010): 16–22.
- Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Bortolussi, Marisa, and Peter Dixon. *Psychonarratology: Foundations for the Empirical Study of Literary Response*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Bray, Abigail. "The Anorexic Body: Reading Disorders." *Cultural Studies* 10, no. 3 (1996): 413–29.
- Bruch, Hilde. "Perceptual and Conceptual Disturbances in Anorexia Nervosa." *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 24, no. 6 (1962): 187–94.
- Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. "Fasting Girls: Reflections on Writing the History of Anorexia Nervosa." *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 50, no. 4/5 (1985): 93–104.
- Chernin, Kim. *The Hungry Self: Women, Eating and Identity*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1994.
- Chun, Hsin Tseng. "The Girls Who Do Not Eat: Food, Hunger, and Thinness in Meg Rosoff's *How I Live Now* and Laurie Halse Anderson's *Wintergirls*." *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 6, no. 1 (2014): 36–55.
- DaCosta, Indigo. "Romantic Relationships in Mental Illness Young Adult (YA) Novels." *Summer Research* 307 (2018): 1–46. https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/summer_research/307.
- Edwards, Richard, and Robin Usher. *Postmodernism and Education: Different Voices, Different Worlds*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- El-Ghoch, Marwan, Fabio Soave, Simona Calugi, and Riccardo Dalle Grave. "Appearance vs. Health Motives for Exercise and for Weight Loss." *Nutrients* 5, no. 12 (2016): 5140–60.
- Eliot, T. S. "Hamlet and His Problems." In *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, by T. S. Eliot, 1–5. Martino Fine Books: 1920.

- Ellmann, Maud. *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing and Imprisonment*. London: Virago, 1995.
- Espeset, Ester M. S., Kjersti S. Gulliksen, Ragnfrid H. S. Nordbø, Finn Skårderud, and Arne Holte. "The Link Between Negative Emotions and Eating Disorder Behaviour in Patients with Anorexia Nervosa." *European Eating Disorders Review* 20, no. 6 (2012): 451–60.
- Fogg, Megan. "Sublime Madness: An Exploration of Anorexia, God, and Aesthetic Sublimity." *LURe: Literary Undergraduate Research* (2019): 43–59.
- Freshwater, Dawn. "Reading Mixed Methods Research Contexts for Criticism." *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1, no. 2 (2007): 134–46.
- Glenn, Wendy J. *Laurie Halse Anderson: Speaking in Tongues*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009.
- Goss, Melanie. *Bodily Harm, Bodily Power: Representations of Self-Destruction in Young Adult Literature*. Normal: Illinois State University, 2013.
- Hauss, Hans Robert. "Rezeptionsästhetik-Zwischenbilanz: Der Leser als Instanz einer neuen Geschichte der Literatur." *Poetica. Zeitschrift für Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* 7, no. 3–4 (1975): 325–44.
- Herman, David. *The Emergence of Mind: Representations of Consciousness in Narrative Discourse in English*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011.
- Heywood, Leslie. *Dedication to Hunger: The Anorexic Aesthetic in Modern Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Hornbacher, Marya. *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia*. London: Flamingo, 1998.
- Hynes, Arleen McCarty, and Mary Hynes-Berry. *Biblio/Poetry Therapy: The Interactive Process. A Handbook*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Karlin, Dorothy. "How to Be Yourself: Ideological Interpellation, Weight Control, and YA Novels." *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 6, no. 2 (2014): 72–89.
- Koss, Melanie D., and Nance S. Wilson. "Who I Was, Who I Am, Who I Want to Be: An Analysis of Emotional Survival in Young Adult Literature." In *Frontiers in American Children's Literature*, edited by Dorothy Clark and Linda Salem, 47–63. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016.
- Lauer, Gerhard. "Going Empirical: Why We Need Cognitive Literary Studies." *Journal of Literary Theory* 3, no. 1 (2009): 145–54.
- MacSween, Morag. "The Anorexic Body: A Feminist and Sociological Perspective on Anorexia." PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 1989.
- MacSween, Morag. *Anorexic Bodies: A Feminist and Sociological Perspective on Anorexia Nervosa*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Madwoman in the Forest. "Wintergirls Q&A." *Madwomanintheforest*, no date. <https://madwomanintheforest.com/wintergirls-qa/>.
- Mar, Raymond A., Keith Oatley, and Jordan B. Peterson. "Exploring the Link between Reading Fiction and Empathy: Ruling out Individual

- Differences and Examining Outcomes.” *Communications* 34 (2009): 407–28.
- McAllister, Margaret, Donna Lee Brien, Trudi Flynn, and June Alexander. “Things You Can Learn from Books: Exploring the Therapeutic Potential of Eating Disorder Memoirs.” *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing* 23 (2014): 553–60.
- Nünning, Ansgar. “Reconceptualizing the Theory, History and Generic Scope of Unreliable Narration: Towards a Synthesis of Cognitive and Rhetorical Approaches.” In *Narrative Unreliability in the Twentieth-Century First-Person Novel*, edited by Elke D’hoker and Gunther Martens, 29–76. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008.
- Nünning, Ansgar. “Unreliable, Compared to What? Towards a Cognitive Theory of Unreliable Narration: Prolegomena and Hypotheses.” In *Grenzüberschreitungen: Narratologie im Kontext / Transcending Boundaries: Narratology in Context*, edited by Walter Grünzweig and Andreas Solbach, 53–73. Tübingen: Narr, 1999.
- Oatman, Linda. “Images of Hope in the Work of Laurie Halse Anderson and an Interview with the Author.” *The Alan Review* 38, no. 1 (2010): 64–72.
- Olson, Greta. “Reconsidering Unreliability: Fallible and Untrustworthy Narrators.” *Narrative* 11, no. 1 (2003): 93–109.
- Orbach, Susie. *Hunger Strike: The Anorectic's Struggle as a Metaphor for Our Age*. London: Karnak, 2005.
- Osgood, Kelsey. *How to Disappear Completely: On Modern Anorexia*. London: Duckworth Overlook, 2014.
- Pascual, Nieves. “Depathologizing Anorexia: The Risks of Life Narratives.” *Style* 35, no. 2 (2001): 341–53.
- Patnoe, Elizabeth. “Fiction, Reality, and Female Suicide.” PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1997.
- Potter, Rosanne. “Pragmatic Research on Reader Responses to Literature with an Emphasis on Gender and Reader Responses.” *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 69, no. 3 (1991): 599–617.
- Richmond, Kia Jane. *Mental Illness in Young Adult Literature: Exploring Real Struggles through Fictional Characters*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2018.
- Richter, Virginia. “I cannot endure to read a line of poetry: The Text and the Empirical in Literary Studies.” *Journal of Literary Theory* 3, no. 3 (2009): 375–86.
- Ricks, Ellen. “'Wintergirls' by Laurie Halse Anderson Made My Eating Disorder Worse—And I'm Not The Only One.” *Bustle*, January 14, 2019. <https://www.bustle.com/p/wintergirls-by-laurie-halse-anderson-made-my-eating-disorder-worse-im-not-the-only-one-15649710>.
- Rock, Michael. “The Designer as Author.” *Eye Magazine* 20 (2001): 1–6.
- Rosenblatt, Louise Michelle. “Towards a Transactional Theory of Reading.” *Journal of Literacy Research* 1, no. 31 (1969): 31–49.
- Savarese, James, and Lisa Zunshine. “The Critic as Neurocosmopolite; Or, What Cognitive Approaches to Literature Can Learn from

- Disability Studies: Lisa Zunshine in Conversation with Ralph James Savarese." *Narrative* 22, no. 1 (2014): 17–44.
- Seaber, Emma. "Reading Disorders: Pro-Eating Disorder Rhetoric and Anorexia Life-Writing." *Literature and Medicine* 34, no. 2 (2016): 484–508.
- Stevenson, Deborah. "Wintergirls (review)." *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* 62, no. 7 (2009): 276–77.
- Tapia, Valeria. "(Don't!) Think Pig": Jacqueline Wilson's Novel *Girls Under Pressure* as Bibliotherapy for Eating Disorders." *White Rabbit: English Studies in Latin America* 9 (2015): 1–13.
- Templeton, Alice. "Sociology and Literature: Theories for Cultural Criticism." *College Literature* 19, no. 2 (1992): 19–30.
- Thomas, Jennifer J., Abigail M. Judge, Kelly D. Brownell, and Lenny R. Vartanian. "Evaluating the Effects of Eating Disorder Memoirs on Readers' Eating Attitudes and Behaviors." *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 39, no. 5 (2006): 418–25.
- Troscianko, Emily. "Feedback in Reading and Disordered Eating." In *Cognitive Literary Science: Dialogues between Literature and Cognition*, edited by Michael Burke and Emily Troscianko, 169–95. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Troscianko, Emily. *Kafka's Cognitive Realism*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Troscianko, Emily. "Literary Reading and Eating Disorders: Survey Evidence of Therapeutic Help and Harm." *Journal of Eating Disorders* 6, no. 8 (2018): 1–17.
- Vandereycken, Walter. "Denial of Illness in Anorexia Nervosa—A Conceptual Review: Part 2, Different Forms and Meanings." *European Eating Disorders Review* 14 (2006): 352–68.
- Warin, Megan. *Abject Relations: Everyday Worlds of Anorexia*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009.
- Watkins, Ed, and John D. Teasdale. "Adaptive and Maladaptive Self-focus in Depression." *Journal of Affective Disorders* 82, no. 1 (2004): 1–8.
- Willems, Laureanne. "What Is Normal, What Is Healthy? A Comparative Study of Anorexia Nervosa Through the Lens of Autobiographical Illness Narratives." MA Thesis, Utrecht University, 2018.
- Williamson, Donald A., Lori Perrin, David C. Blouin, and Jane M. Barbin. "Cognitive Bias in Eating Disorders: Interpretation of Ambiguous Body-related Information." *Eating and Weight Disorders* 5, no. 3 (2000): 143–51.
- Wimsatt, William K., and Monroe Beardsley. "The Intentional Fallacy." *The Sewanee Review* 54, no. 3 (1946): 468–88.
- Zucker, Nancy. "Emotional Experience and Regulation in Eating Disorders." In *Family Therapy for Adolescent Eating and Weight Disorders: New Applications*, edited by Katharine L. Loeb, Daniel Le Grange and James Lock, 328–59. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Zunshine, Lisa. *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006.