

Lociranje bralca ali kaj naj storimo z možem s klobukom? Metodološki pogledi in zapisi v podatkovni zbirki *United Kingdom Reading Experience Database, 1450-1945 (UK RED)*

Shafquat Towheed

Filozofska fakulteta Open University, Milton Keynes, Združeno kraljestvo
s.s.towheed@open.ac.uk

Namen razprave je s slikami bralcev in besedilnimi viri razložiti metodološko podlago podatkovne zbirke Reading Experience Database in prikazati, kako ta projekt združuje kvantitativne in kvalitativne podatke pri lociranju in obnavljanju izkušenj bralcev skozi zgodovino

Ključne besede: zgodovina branja / bralna kultura / Velika Britanija / 19. stol. / 20. stol. / likovne upodobitve / Browning, Elizabeth Barrett / Lee, Vernon / Gladstone, W. E. / empirične raziskave

UDK 028:821.111.09

To razpravo bom začel z obravnavo treh med seboj povezanih slik. Takšne slike dobro poznajo mnogi strokovnjaki za britansko, ameriško ali francosko literaturo in kulturo 19. stoletja; veljajo za nekakšne kulturne artefakte tega obdobja. A moje zanimanje zanje je bolj specifično. Kot zgodovinar branja posredno poznam materialne razmere različnih zgodovinskih obdobj in upodabljanje branja v njih. Tu so tri upodobitve tega vsenavzočega in povsem vsakdanjega pojava iz urbanih središč Evrope in Severne Amerike poznega 19. stoletja: branje na omnibusu.



Slika 1: Maurice Delondre (n. d.), Na omnibusu (ok. 1880), olje na platnu.



Slika 2: George William Joy (1844–1925), Omnibus Bayswater (1895), olje na platnu.



Slika 3: Nedeljsko jutro na omnibusu proti Peti aveniji, ameriška šola (19. stoletje), barvna litografija.

Prvo sliko je naslikal francoski slikar Maurice Delondre okrog leta 1880. Parižan, morda pol bankir pol gizdalin, s cilindrom na glavi in oblečen v plašč, je naslikan z razgrnjenim časnikom v rokah. Ga bere zatopljeno ali pa, kot nakazuje njegov pogled, ki bega po kupeju, ga le sem pa tja bežno ošvrkne in uporablja kot pripomoček za spogledovanje? Je poglobljen in zbran bralec časnika ali pa odsoten? Bere časnik zato, da bi dobil strokovne informacije, ali zgolj iz kratkočasja? Druga slika je iz Velike Britanije: Londončan, spet s cilindrom, je tokrat zatopljen bralec, ki se zbrano posveča svojemu časniku. Sliko *Omnibus Bayswater* je leta 1895 naslikal George William Joy. Tretja slika je ameriška litografija in je očiten posnetek: Newyorčan nekega nedeljskega jutra bere časnik na omnibusu proti Peti aveniji – morda pred sveto mašo? Slika je delo neznanega litografa, datum nastanka ni znan, očitna pa je imitacija Joyjeve slike iz leta 1895.

Na teh treh slikah je presenetljivo lahko locirati bralca: v vsaki upodobitvi je to spoštovanja vreden belec srednjih let s cilindrom in razgrnjenim časnikom. Toda lociranje bralca v resničnosti, bodisi v sodobnem raziskovanju ali na arhivih temelječem zgodovinskem raziskovanju, je precej težje. Bralci so mobilni, težko opredeljivi in zelo številčni; večina bralcev redko, če sploh kdaj, beleži svoje odzive na branje. Včasih berejo, ne da bi izrazili mnenje o tem, kar so prebrali; včasih berejo v skupinah, včasih naglas, drugič jim bere kdo drug. Tiskovine, ki so jih pravkar prebrali (knjige,

časnike, revije, pamflete, priložnostna gradiva), včasih obdržijo, drugič pač ne, lahko si jih neformalno podajajo naprej, tako da je nemogoče obnoviti verigo ali zaporedje bralcev in njihovih odzivov. Pomislimo recimo na najnadležnejši preddigitalni pojav, verižno pismo – proces ponavljanja in cirkulacije, ki ga v teku ohranja zgolj branje. Velika večina bralcev v resnici ni na voljo za takšno raziskovanje in obnavljanje in tega od njih niti ne moremo pričakovati. Bralci ne berejo zato, da bi bili predmet raziskovalnih projektov; resnični bralci, sedanji ali pretekli, niso kot mož s cilindrom v omnibusu na treh upodobitvah, ki smo jih obravnavali: ni jih mogoče zlahka locirati na sedežu v omnibusu, ohranjene za naslednje generacije med samim bralnim dejanjem. Četudi bi lahko naše bralce odkrili med branjem kakor moža s cilindrom, še vedno ne bi mogli zagotovo trditi, kaj berejo in kako se na prebrano odzivajo.

Morda sem naslikal precej črnogledo sliko o lociranju in interpretiranju bralcev skozi zgodovino, a resnica je precej prozaična in manj strah vzbujajoča. Medtem ko večina bralcev pusti le malo sledi o svojih bralnih navadah in ne pušča nobenih zapisov o svojih odzivih, majhna, a pomembna skupina bralcev načrtno ali naključno beleži svoje bralne izkušnje. Takšna pričevanja o branju so pogosto zapisana v osebnem dopisovanju, ki včasih izide v zbirki pisem. Raziskovalni projekti, kakršen je *UK Reading Experience Database* (Britanska podatkovna baza bralnih izkušenj) (<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/>), s pomočjo takšnih objavljenih ali neobjavljenih virov sistematično zbirajo sledi, ki jih puščajo bralci skozi zgodovino.¹ Navajam odličen primer takšne bralke – otroškega genija, ki se je pozneje razvil v eno najplodnejših pesnic viktorijanske Anglije. V tem primeru ta bralka v pismu stricu zapiše izkušnje ob branju zelo različne literature:

Prebrala sem Douglasove »Moderne Grke«. Kako zabavna knjiga ... Biglandovega »Značaja narodov« še nisem končala. Zares odlično delo ... »Pisma« Madame de Sevigne mi niso všeč; francoščina je sicer čudovita [...], a občutja so neizvirna in rapsodija stila je tako izumetničena, tako zoprna, tako povsem FRANCOSKA, da vsakokrat odprem knjigo bolj z muko kakor z veseljem – zadnji spev »Grofiča Harolda« (zagotovo najboljši od vseh) me je tako navdušil, da tega ne morem izraziti. Opis slapa je najbolj prefinjena poezija, kar sem jih kdaj brala [...]. Vsa energija, vsa sublimnost modernih verzov je zgoščena v teh vrsticah. (Elizabeth Barrett Samuelu Moulton-Barrettu, november 1818: *UK RED*, ID: 15975)

Bralka je v tem primeru deklica, ki je postala slavna angleška pesnica 19. stoletja Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861). Njeno pismo stricu dokazuje zgodnjo zrelost njenega uma (v času branja in pisanja je bila stara 12 let) in kaže, v kolikšni meri lahko zapis mnenja o pravkar prebranih knjigah pomaga oblikovati občutek identitete in lastne vrednosti.

Prebrala je ne le primerjalno analizo Grčije z naslovom *An Essay on Certain Points of Resemblance between the Ancient and Modern Greeks* (Esej o nekaterih podobnostih med antičnimi in modernimi Grki), ki jo je spisal Frederick Sylvester North Douglas (gl. Douglas), temveč je začela brati tudi polemično zgodovino Johna Biglanda z naslovom *An Historical Display of the Effects of Physical and Moral Causes on the Character and Circumstances of Nations* (Zgodovinski prikaz fizičnih in moralnih vzrokov za značaje in razmere narodov) (gl. Bigland). Ne ena ne druga knjiga nista bili napisani za otroke; bili sta moderni izdaji, dragi za takratni čas. Elizabeth Barrett se zdijo pisma Madame de Sévigné (gl. Sévigné), sicer uveljavljen model leposlovja, osladno konvencionalna, Byronove verze – zadnji spev ravno tedaj izdanega in visoko čislane *Romanja grofiča Harolda* – pa občuduje kot izvirne in čarobne. Barrettova razlikuje med francosko izumetničenostjo in britansko izvirnostjo ter med razsvetljenskim stilom in romantično sublimnostjo. Te literarne sodbe napiše članu širše družine (svojemu stricu Samuelu Moulton-Barrettu), kar daje slutiti, da je kot ambiciozna pisateljica in dovršena bralka že čutila željo po potrditvi.

Medtem ko se njeno otroško branje blešči od zgodnje nadarjenosti, so številni dostopni zapisi bralnih pričevanj precej bolj prozaični; Elizabeth Barret navsezadnje ni bila običajna bralka. Povsem drugače in več kot stoletje kasneje je nastal zapis bralnih izkušenj petindvajsetletne Britanke Pamele Slater. V sklopu sociološkega projekta raziskovalne organizacije Mass Observation je odgovarjala na vprašalnik o branju, ki je bil maja 1940 poslan široki in raznoliki skupini običajnih bralcev. Naštela je časnike in revije, ki jih je brala (*The New Statesman* in *The Picture Post*), in priznala: »Večino svojih mnenj si ustvarim na podlagi novic iz *New Statesmana*, nobenega pa iz dnevnega časopisja ... uvodniki tako pogosto izražajo moja občutja, da mnenja urednikov izredno cenim!« (*Mass Observation Online*, odgovori na vprašalnike 1939–1942, anketiranec 1009). Njeno presojanje bralnega gradiva je precej manj samozavestno in izpopolnjeno kakor sodbe Elizabeth Barrett; bere zato, da bi si izoblikovala in okrepila mnenje s pomočjo uvodnika v svoji najljubši reviji. Pričevanje o branju je tudi zapisano v drugačnem kontekstu – tokrat ne v družinskem dopisovanju, ampak v arhivih raziskovalnega projekta –, spodbudi pa ga vodeni vprašalnik, ki je del vladnega procesa zbiranja informacij med vojno. Dejstvo, da gre za odziv na formalno prošnjo, prav lahko vpliva na bolj uklonljiv ton zapisanega pričevanja.

Medtem ko je bil zapis Pamele Slater odziv na vodeni vprašalnik, je kmetijski delavec Ronald Frank sprejel vlogo enega piscev dnevnika za projekt raziskovalne organizacije Mass Observation. V zapisih svojih dnevnih dejavnosti (tudi branja) februarja leta 1940 (*Mass Observation Online*, januar

1940–marec 1941, pisec dnevnika 5071) Frank kot svoje trenutno branje navede novo literarno revijo *Horizon*, biografsko študijo E. M. Forsterja o Goldsworthyju Lowesu Dickinsonu (gl. Forster) in avtobiografijo Beatrice Webb *My Apprenticeship* (Moje vajeništvo) (gl. Webb). Frankovo branje je očitno politično; vse tri publikacije so bile na splošno socialistične in povezane z vzponom britanskih laburistov. V nasprotju z družinskim pismom Elizabeth Barret ali naprošenim in strukturiranim odzivom Pamele Slater na vprašalnik ima Frankov zapis obliko enega najbogatejših in najbolj neposrednih virov za obnavljanje dokazov o branju: dnevnika.

Medtem ko je v dnevnikih branje vključeno v poročilo (ali razmišljanje) o drugih področjih vsakdanjega življenja, se bralni dnevniki za zapisovanje odlomkov in citatov iz knjig in zapisniki bralnih krožkov osredotočajo le na branje. Angleško-beneška pisateljica, kritičarka in umetnostna zgodovinarica Vernon Lee (1865–1935) je hranila presenetljivo podrobne bralne dnevnike, v katerih je beležila svoja branja v letih 1887–1900; ohranjenih je 12 zvezkov, skupaj okoli 1300 strani, in vsakemu je na začetku priložen seznam naslovov knjig, ki jih je prebrala v tistem obdobju.² Vernon Lee je bila pomembna intelektualka, ki je brala različne knjige z mnogih področij in v štirih evropskih jezikih (angleščini, francoščini, nemščini in italijanščini). Hranila je tudi izjemno podrobne zapise o svojem branju. Njeni zvezki popisujejo podrobno in premišljeno ukvarjanje z določenim tekstom, ne beležijo pa neposrednega prvega vtisa branja – zapisi o vtisih pri prvih sočlenjih s tekstom so pogosto zapisani v tekstih samih, v obliki pripisov ali obrobni opomb. Vernon Lee je bila ne le skrbna hranilka bralnih dnevnikov, pač pa je vselej tudi označevala svoje knjige s številnimi obrobni opombami.³ Značilen primer je njen izvod knjige *A Theory of Knowledge* (Teorija znanja) Charlesa Augustusa Stronga (gl. Strong), ki jo je prebrala v treh obdobjih med julijem 1928 in januarjem 1932; obsežne obrobne opombe v tem zvezku so več kot le pomoč spominu, ki osvetljujejo njene prvotne odzive na glavne Strongove ideje, saj oblikujejo tudi prihodnje branje teksta. Obrobne opombe in bralni dnevniki lahko orišejo bralčeve razvijajoče se odzive na tekst vse od prvega vtisa do sklepnega pogleda in presoje. Branje in odziv nista enkratna dogodka, temveč plod izpeljanega negotovega procesa.

Kot kažejo ti primeri, so viri zapisov o odzivih bralcev lahko zelo različna gradiva: osebno dopisovanje, spomini, dnevniki, bralni dnevniki in knjige s časopisnimi izrezki, posamezne in zbrane obrobne opomba v bralčevih lastnih ali sposojenih knjigah, knjige komentarjev v knjižnicah, znanstvenih društvih in javnih zavodih, pisma uredništvom časnikov in revij, zapisniki bralnih krožkov in društev, poročila o nakupu knjig učiteljskih zborov, zapiski cenzurnih komisij, odgovori na vprašalnike in ankete,

pisma oboževalcev avtorjem in še kaj. Obstajajo tudi drugi viri obnavljanja vtisov bralcev, in sicer celo tedaj, ko ti ne zapustijo svojih zapisov – v prepisih sodnih obravnav, v uradnih registrih zaporniških uprav, v zapisnikih misijonarskih društev, v regimentnih zapisih vojaških enot in v zapisnikih nadzornih dejavnosti državnih obveščevalnih služb pogosto najdemo naključne in dragocene podrobnosti o branju in odzivih nanj. Arhivi Rdečega križa in taborišč za vojaške zapornike hranijo veliko zapisov o branju, prav tako ladijski dnevnik kapitanov in zapisi medicinskih in psihiatričnih zavodov. V takšnih zapisih najdemo veliko informacij o branju v preteklosti.

V 21. stoletju je zapisov o branju, ki nastanejo neprostoovoljno, še precej več, a jih preredko uporabimo v humanističnih raziskavah. Televizijski posnetki zaprtega kroga nenehno in sistematično dokumentirajo branja v javnih prostorih, avtomatično zbrani podatki GPS in drugi uporabniški podatki pa prek mobilnih digitalnih omrežij beležijo nalaganje in uporabo elektronskih knjig in drugih tekstov. Zbrani omrežni podatki Amazonevega Kindla ali Sonyjevih e-bralnikov bi dali podrobno sliko o trenutnih bralnih navadah. Množična digitalizacija knjig, izdanih pred 20. stoletjem, ki jo opravljata Google prek projekta Google books in Archive.org, nas opozarja na nakopičen tovor obrobni opomb bralcev v izposojenih knjigah. Najočitnejši primer pa je v zadnjem času izredna rast digitalnih družabnih omrežij (Facebook, Twitter, blogosfera ipd.), ki raziskovalcem ponujajo bogate in vse številčnejše podatke o ukvarjanju bralcev s teksti.

V resnici je v zgodovini nastajalo ogromno podatkov o branju in odzivih nanj, a ti podatki so razdrobljeni in jih je včasih težko obnoviti. Pri spoprijemanju z razdrobljenimi zapisi posameznih bralcev in bralnih skupin skozi stoletja so zgodovinarji branja pogosto pozorni bodisi na obširne študije, ki temeljijo na tekstu ali obdobju, bodisi na usmerjene študije, osredotočene na posameznega bralca in odvisne od njega. Na obdobjih temelječe študije, med katerimi so *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Provincialni bralci v Angliji v 18. stoletju) Jana Fergusa (gl. Fergus), študija viktorijanskih bralk z naslovom *The Woman Reader, 1837–1914* (Bralka v letih 1837–1914) Kate Flint (gl. Flint), študija Ronalda J. Zborayja in Mary Saracino Zboray o prebivalcih Nove Anglije pred osamosvojitvijo in po njej z naslovom *Everyday Ideas* (Vsakdanje ideje) (gl. Zboray in Saracino Zboray) in politična ekonomija branja *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Bralni narod v obdobju romantike) spod peresa Williama St Claira (gl. St Clair) vsebujejo veliko podatkov o določenem zgodovinskem obdobju in geografskem okolju, saj črpajo iz obsežne zbirke virov. In obratno, na bralca osredotočene študije so usmerjene na pojasnjevanje imaginativnega sveta posameznega bralca, pri

tem pa omogočajo podroben pogled v kulturno zgodovino obdobja, navadno skozi izčrpno študijo posameznega arhiva. Takšni primeri so *Sir in črvi* Carla Ginzurga (gl. Ginzburg), *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Reading* (Samuel Johnson in življenje branja) Roberta DeMarie (gl. DeMaria), *Hitler's Private Library* (Hitlerjeva zasebna knjižnica) Timothyja Rybacka (gl. Ryback), *The Road to Monticello: The Life and Mind of Thomas Jefferson* (Pot v Monticello: življenje in um Thomasa Jeffersona) Kevina Hayesa (gl. Hayes) in *Reading Gladstone* (Brati Gladstona) Ruth Clayton Windscheffel (gl. Windscheffel). Tradicija raziskovanja zgodovine branja ima dva nasprotujoča si pristopa: makro- in mikroanalitičnega. Nemožnost, da bi posameznik prebral vsaj majhen del kumulativne produkcije knjig, nas posredno sili k ukvarjanju s širšo problematiko zbiranja kvantitativnih statističnih zapisov branja, tj. k metodologiji, s katero lahko preučujemo splošne trende v bralnih praksah in osmislimo osupljiv obseg obstoječih naslovov in njihovih morebitnih bralcev. Medtem ko nam ukvarjanje z individualnim bralcem pove bore malo o splošnih trendih in vzorcih recepcije določenega teksta, lahko zbiranje različnih merljivih podatkov – na primer o nakladah, knjižnih cirkulacijah, pismenosti, cenah knjig, povprečnih dohodkih, distribucijskih mrežah in oglaševanju – natančno obnovi okolje, v katerem so brali v določenem obdobju in prostoru.

Morda je najboljši način za spopadanje s preobilico podatkov in virov v zgodovini branja oblikovanje raziskovalne inkluzivne, a jasno definirane podatkovne zbirke, ki bi omogočala hitro iskanje podatkov in enakovredno tehtanje posameznih informacij, hkrati pa tudi kvalitativno in evalvacijsko analizo. Projekt *United Kingdom Reading Experience Database (UK RED)*, ki načrtno upošteva različne metodologije, je bil ustanovljen leta 1996, leta 2007 pa je začel delovati kot spletni digitalni vir. Pri zbiranju potrebnih podatkov je enakovredno upošteval tako makro- kakor mikroanalitični pristop. *UK RED*, ki ima center na Open University, zbira zapise o branju britanskih bralcev doma in v tujini pa tudi tujcev v Veliki Britaniji med letoma 1450 in 1945, obenem pa natančno določa vrsto in natančnost zabeleženih podatkov (deli jih na okrog 150 področij) in skrbi za to, da je pri iskanju zapisov o branju upoštevano in pregledano veliko različnih virov. V projektu *UK RED* je »bralna izkušnja« opredeljena kot »zabeleženo ukvarjanje s pisanim ali natisnjenim tekstom, ki presega posedovanje teksta« (<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/experience.htm> [ogled 23. marca 2011]). *UK RED* ima danes več kot 30.000 vnosov, in sicer predvsem iz obdobja med letoma 1800 in 1900, ko se je v Britaniji uveljavila množična pismenost. Podrobna in združljiva merila iskanja uporabnikom omogočajo, da na celovito in iznajdljivo pregledajo zbrane podatke in jih filtrirajo glede na spol, starost, kraj, socialno skupino, žanr itn. *UK RED* je

prostodostopen vir, namenjen družbenemu konstruiranju vednosti; vsakdo lahko dostopa do podatkov ali prispeva k raziskovalnemu projektu. Z zadostnimi podatki bo *UK RED* sčasoma lahko začel mapirati splošne trende britanskih bralnih navad skozi stoletja.

Medtem ko bomo s projektom *UK RED* dobili dragocene podatke o britanskih bralnih navadah v različnih obdobjih, knjige in njihovi bralci postajajo vse bolj razširjeni po prostoru. Da bi si *UK RED* olajšal preučevanje nekaterih perečih vprašanj o branju po svetu in internacionaliziral svoja prizadevanja za obnavljanje zapisov bralcev, sodeluje z raziskovalnimi partnerji iz štirih različnih držav. Partnerski projekti že potekajo v Avstraliji, Kanadi, na Nizozemskem in v Novi Zelandiji, njihov namen pa je obogatiti skupen trud, zagotavljati povezljivost podatkovnih zbirk in raziskovati prihodnje usmeritve in možnosti nadaljnjih raziskovalnih sodelovanj na področju zgodovine branja. *UK RED* bo s štirimi partnerskimi podatkovnimi zbirkami povezan z novo spletno infrastrukturo *The Reading Experience Database (RED)*, ki bo služila kot integriran iskalni vmesnik (<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/>). Nove partnerske zbirke bralnih izkušenj bodo zbirale drugačne podatke kakor *UK RED*, izkoriščale vsaka svoje prednosti virov, zadovoljevale potrebe vsake posamezne družbe in uveljavljale najboljše prakse digitalne humanistike.

Avstralski projekt bo obravnaval precej krajše obdobje, zato bo v podatkovno zbirko vključil tudi vizualne (fotografske) zapise branja in ustne zgodovinske vire (avdio gradivo) o spominih na branje, ki so nastali do leta 2000. Projekt *Australian Reading Experience Database (AusRED)* gosti Griffith University v Brisbanu v okviru vodilnega avstralskega digitalnega vira za raziskovanje na področju humanistike AustLit (<http://www.austlit.edu.au/>). *AusRED* je že zbral obsežno podatkovno zbirko, ki bo kmalu javno dostopna. Pri vključevanju avdio-vizualnega gradiva in ustne zgodovine se projektna skupina *AusRED* očitno naslanja na pionirsko delo Martyna Lyonsa in Lucy Taksa, tj. na njuno prelomno študijo o avstralskem popularno-kulturnem spominu z naslovom *Australian Readers Remember* (Avstralski bralci se spominjajo) (gl. Lyons in Taksa). Kanadski projekt, *Canadian Reading Experience Database / Banque de données sur le pratique de lecture (CanRED-LEC)*, domuje na Dalhousie University v Halifaxu na Novem Škotskem in bo nekakšno dvojezično stičišče za francosko in angleško govoreče uporabnike. *CanRED-LEC* se bo osredotočil na zgodovino branja priseljencev. Z geografskimi informacijskimi sistemi bo grafično prikazal širjenje bralcev po širokih prostranstvih Kanade, hkrati pa bo na spletnih straneh družabnih omrežij iskal zapise o branju v Kanadi. Nizozemski projekt, *Netherlands Reading Experience Database (NL-RED)*, bo potekal na Univerzi v Utrechtu v sodelovanju z inštitutom Huygens

Instituut KNAW v Haagu (<http://www.red-nl.huygens.knaw.nl>). *NL-RED* bo zajemal najdaljše obdobje (okvirno zamejeno z letoma 1000 in 2000) in se bo naslonil na obilico informacij, ki so že dostopne v rokopisih in zgodnjih natisih iz Nizozemske, vključil pa bo tudi leposlovne primerke branja. Novozelandski projekt, *New Zealand Reading Experience Database* (*NZ-RED*), katerega sedež je na Victoria University v Wellingtonu (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/wtapress/NZ-RED/>) bo zastavljen bikulturalno in bo združeval anglofonske in maorske koncepte branja in odzivanja nanj, hkrati pa bo zgodovinsko bolj specifičen, saj se bo prva faza zbiranja podatkov osredotočila le na obdobje prve svetovne vojne. *NZ-RED* bo še posebej inovativen pri pridobivanju in vpisovanju podatkov, saj bo aktiviral množično zunanje izvajanje (*crowdsourcing*). Sčasoma bo omogočeno zaporedno iskanje po podatkih vseh petih projektov prek enotnega portala in s tem preverjanje pravilnosti hipotez o branju v veliko širšem kontekstu. Takšen tesno povezan, večdisciplinaren in nadnacionalen pristop bo spodbujal nova raziskovalna vprašanja in odkrival nove kontekste.

Če kvantitativna analiza zahteva, da se v podatkovnih zbirkah, preden lahko te ustvarijo pomenljive podatke o trendih, nabere kritična masa podatkov, potem je jasno, kaj to pomeni za omenjene projekte: preden se lahko lotimo velikih vprašanj o zgodovini branja skozi stoletja, moramo večkratno razširiti obseg shranjenih podatkov. Toda koliko podatkov je zares dovolj za vzorčen prerez dolgega zgodovinskega obdobja? Kako dolgo moramo čakati, da bomo lahko poskusili odgovoriti (četudi še tako spekulativno) na osrednja vprašanja zgodovine branja, denimo ali se je *Leserevolution* res zgodila v poznem 18. stoletju? In ali je reprezentativnost, kakor mož s cilindrom v omnibusu, res zgolj priročna fikcija? Podrobna kvalitativna analiza zapisov poglobljenega branja, ki jih najdemo v dnevnikih, obrobni opombah, rokopisnih gradivih in dopisovanju, nam pogosto ponudi najbolj zgoščene podatke o zgodovini branja, pa naj bo bralec še tako neobičajen. Kljub številnim vzornim, izjemnim, nenavadnim ali genialno samozadostnim bralcem si zgodovinarji branja še naprej pomagajo s tistimi redkimi posamezniki, ki so svoje branje podrobno zabeležili. Morda je edini zadovoljiv odgovor, ki se nam ponuja iz vseh podatkovnih zbirk bralnih izkušenj, v tem, da storimo oboje: se zakopljemo globoko v arhive in hkrati prečesemo veliko število različnih vrst gradiv in informacijskih virov skozi stoletja.

Naj končam še z dvema slikama, za kateri se mi zdi, da ilustrirata oba problema obnavljanja zapisov in interpretiranja branja, o katerih sem pisal v tej razpravi: prvič, arbitrarno naravo tega, *kako*, *zakaj* in *kje* se beležijo zapisi o branju, in, drugič, problematiko reprezentativnosti obnavljanja takih zapisov. Podnaslov moje razprave je »Kaj storiti z možem s klobukom?«, a

odgovor na to vprašanje se včasih glasi »Ne prav dosti«, saj je mož s klobukom emblematičen prikaz bralca, ki morda sploh ne predstavlja različnosti dejanskih bralcev v katerem koli zgodovinskem obdobju. Prva od zadnjih dveh slik je morda najslavnejša vizualna upodobitev branja v omnibusu iz 19. stoletja, *Londonsko življenje v omnibusu* (1859).



Slika 4: William Egleby (1826–1916), *Londonsko življenje v omnibusu* (1859), olje na platnu.



Slika 5: Alfred Morgan (fl. 1862–1904), *Vožnja z omnibusom do Piccadilly Circusa: g. Gladstone potuje z običajnimi potniki* (1885).

Perspektiva Egleyjeve slike namenoma poudarja prenaseljeno velemestno okolje z ljudmi, blagom in različnimi potniki, natrpanimi v zelo majhnem prostoru. V prostor kukajo še drugi obrazi in iščejo proste sedeže. Na sliki sta vsaj dva bralca: prva je mlada ženska, zadnja sedeča oseba na desni strani omnibusa, ki je namenoma zatopljena v branje svoje knjige (ki je najbrž knjiga s trdimi platnicami, morda iz knjižnice) in se tako verjetno ogiba nepotrebnemu očesnemu stiku z moškimi sopotniki. Drugi verjetni bralec je rdečelasi moški, ki gleda v omnibus, njegov pogled pa je videti usmerjen v knjigo mlade ženske. V omnibusu so še drugi potencialni bralci, saj je notranjost polepljena z oglasi pa tudi s teksti, ki jih potniki ne morejo prezreti; pogled ženske z rdečim šalom je usmerjen na tekst na reklamni deski nasproti. Na Egleyjevi sliki možje s klobuki (takšni so štirje) v omnibusu ne berejo, vsaj dve ženski pač; razlogi za to, da so se ženske v javnih prevoznih sredstvih v 19. stoletju z branjem ogibale pogledom moških sopotnikov, so jasni, prav tako razlogi, zakaj takšne bežne bralne izkušnje večinoma niso zabeležene in jih tako ne moremo zlahka obnoviti s pomočjo arhivov (ljudje ne zapisujejo rutinsko, kaj so prebrali na oglašnih deskah ali v izposojenih knjigah).

Slika Alfreda Morgana iz leta 1885 ima naslov *Vožnja z omnibusom do Piccadilly Circusa: g. Gladstone potuje z običajnimi potniki*. Tudi na njej moški s klobukom (tokrat ne s cilindrom) drži časnik, britanski premier William Ewart Glaston, kot vedno oblečen v črno, pa med vožnjo namerno ne

bere, ampak odločno strmi v daljavo. Velika ironija je, da je bil Gladstone eden najbolj vnetih bralcev 19. stoletja. V svoji zasebni knjižnici je imel več kot 32.000 knjig, med katerimi so mnoge popisane z obrobniimi opombami, pogosto je prebral tri knjige v enem samem dnevu in v pismih je redno omenjal svoje branje. Gladstonovo branje je sistematično obnovil projekt Gladstone Catalogue (<http://www.st-deiniols.com/library-collection/glad-cat/>), z njim pa so se ukvarjali tudi različni strokovnjaki, na primer Ruth Windscheffel v študiji *Reading Gladstone*; mož s klobukom, ki stiska biološko razgradljiv časnik za enkratno uporabo, pa je povsem zginil iz zgodovinskih zapisov.

Prevedel Peter Lamovec

OPOMBE

¹ Več informacij o projektu *UK RED*, njegovi zgodovini, metodološki utemeljitvi in prihodnjih usmeritvah je na spletni strani »About UK RED« (<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/about.php>) in v članku Simona Eliota »The Reading Experience Database« (ogled obeh 23. marca 2011).

² Raziskovalni dnevniki Vernon Lee so shranjeni v posebnem arhivu Vernon Lee (Colby College Special Collections, Colby College, Waterville, Maine, ZDA). Zapisi iz tega vira se vpisujejo v *UK RED*.

³ Knjige Vernon Lee hranijo v posebnih zbirkah knjižnice Harold Acton na The British Institute of Florence. Od 425 obstoječih knjig jih ima 299 obrobne opombe, večina je jasno označenih. Zapisi iz tega vira se vpisujejo v *UK RED*.

LITERATURA

Bigland, John. *An Historical Display of the Effects of Physical and Moral Causes on the Character and Circumstances of Nations*. London: Longman & Co., 1816.

Bridgeman Education. Dostopno na: <http://www.bridgemaneducation.com/> (23. marec 2011).

DeMaria, Robert. *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Reading*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997.

Douglas, Frederick Sylvester North. *An Essay on Certain Points of Resemblance between the Ancient and Modern Greeks*. London: 1813.

Eliot, Simon. »The Reading Experience Database, Or What Are We to Do About the History of Reading?«. Dostopno na: <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/redback.htm> (23. marec 2011).

Fergus, Jan. *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.

Flint, Kate. *The Woman Reader, 1837–1914*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993.

Forster, E. M. *Goldsworthy Loves Dickinson*. London: Edward Arnold, 1934.

Ginzburg, Carlo. *Sir in črni*. Prev. Tomaž Jurca. Ljubljana: Studia humanitatis, 2010.

Hayes, Kevin J. *The Road to Monticello: The Life and Mind of Thomas Jefferson*. New York: Oxford UP, 2008.

The Horizon: A Magazine of To-Day for the Men and Women of To-Morrow. London: 1940.

- Lyons, Martyn, in Lucy Taksa. *Australian Readers Remember: An Oral History of Reading 1890–1930*. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1992.
- Mass Observation Online. Dostopno na: <http://www.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/Mass-Observation-Online.aspx> (23. marec 2011).
- The New Statesman and Nation*. London: Statesman and Nation Publishing Company, 1940.
- Picture Post*. London: Hulton Press, 1940.
- Ryback, Timothy W. *Hitler's Private Library: The Books that Shaped His Life*. London: Bodley Head, 2009.
- Séguin, Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, Marquise de. *Lettres*. Paris: Pierre Gosse, 1757.
- St Clair, William. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Strong, Charles Augustus. *A Theory of Knowledge*. London: Constable & Co., 1923.
- Webb, Beatrice. *My Apprenticeship*. London: Longmans, 1926.
- Windscheffel, Ruth Clayton. *Reading Gladstone*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- The UK Reading Experience Database. Dostopno na: <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/Reading/UK/> (23. marec 2011).
- Zboray, Ronald J., in Mary Saracino Zboray. *Everyday Ideas: Socioliterary Experience among Antebellum New Englanders*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2006.

Locating the Reader, or What do We do With the Man in the Hat? Methodological Perspectives and Evidence from the *United Kingdom Reading Experience Database, 1450–1945 (UK RED)*

Shafquat Towheed

Faculty of Arts, The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK
s.s.towheed@open.ac.uk

Using images of readers and textual sources, this essay explains the methodological basis for the Reading Experience Database and international partners. It shows how the RED projects can combine quantitative and qualitative data to locate and recover the experiences of readers through history.

Keywords: history of reading / reading culture / Great Britain / 19th cent. / 20th cent. / visual representations / Browning, Elizabeth Barrett / Lee, Vernon / Gladstone, W. E. / empirical research

UDK 028:821.111.09

I want to start this essay by closely examining a series of three inter-linked images. Images like these will be very familiar to many scholars working on nineteenth-century British, American or French literature and culture, and are readily recognised as cultural artefacts of the period. However, my interest in these images is a more specific one. As a historian of reading, I am implicitly aware of the material conditions and representations of acts of reading through history. Here are three representations of that most ubiquitous and everyday occurrence in the late nineteenth century urban centres of Europe and North America: reading on the omnibus.



Image 1: Maurice Delondre (n.d.), 'On the Omnibus' (c.1880), oil on canvas.



Image 2: George William Joy (1844–1925), 'The Bayswater Omnibus' (1895), oil on canvas.



Image 3: 'Sunday Morning on a Fifth Avenue Omnibus', American School (nineteenth century), colour lithograph.

The first image, painted by Maurice Delondre, is French, and dates from around 1880. A Parisian man, part banker, part *flâneur*, perhaps, dressed in a top hat and coat is depicted holding open a newspaper. Is he engrossed in reading it, or is he, as his gaze suggests, fitfully attentive, frequently glancing across the compartment, and using his newspaper as a tool for flirting? Is he an absorbed and immersed intensive newspaper reader, or is he distracted? Is he reading the paper for professional information, or merely to pass the time? The second image is British: a London man, again in a top hat, this time an immersed reader, concentrating on his paper. 'The Bayswater Omnibus' is painted by George William Joy in 1895. The third image is an American lithograph, and is quite clearly derivative: a New York man, reading the newspaper we are told, on a Sunday morning on Fifth Avenue – before church, perhaps? It is the work of an unknown lithographer, and undated, though clearly imitative of Joy's 1895 painting.

In one sense, locating the reader in these three images is disturbingly easy: in each representation, it is the respectable, middle aged white man in a top hat holding open a newspaper. But locating readers in reality, whether in contemporary or archive based historical research, is a much more difficult proposition. Readers are mobile, elusive and extraordinarily numerous; most readers rarely, if ever, record their responses to reading. They may also read and not pass any judgement on what they read; they may engage

with the printed word collectively, may read it out aloud or have it read to them. They may or may not keep the printed matter (books, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, ephemera) that they have just read, or they may circulate it informally, with no way of recovering the chain or sequences of readers and their responses. Think for example of that most annoying of pre-digital textual phenomena, the chain letter – a process of iteration and circulation which is perpetuated entirely through the act of reading. The vast majority of readers are not in fact easily amenable subjects for this kind of excavation and recovery, nor should we expect them to be. Readers do not exist for the convenience of research projects, and real readers, whether now or in the past, are not like the man in the top hat in the omnibus in the three representations discussed above: they cannot be readily located in a seat on the proverbial omnibus, captured for posterity in the act of reading. And even if, like the man in the top hat, we could locate our readers during the act of reading, we still might not be able to easily identify what they were reading, and how they might have responded to it.

I might have painted a rather impossible picture about how we might locate and interpret readers through history, but the truth, I think, is rather more prosaic and less daunting. While the majority of readers leave little trace of their reading habits and no extant record of their responses, a small but significant minority of readers, whether intentionally or accidentally, record their reading. Often this kind of evidence of reading is recorded in personal correspondence, which may end up published in a volume of letters. Research projects such as the *UK Reading Experience Database* (<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/>) have drawn upon such published and unpublished resources to systematically gather together the evidence left behind by readers in history.¹ Here is a perfect example of such a reader – a child prodigy who grew up to be one of Victorian Britain's most prolific poets. In this instance, she records her reading of a range of literature in a letter to her uncle:

I have read 'Douglas on the Modern Greeks.' I think it a most amusing book ... I have not yet finished 'Bigland on the Character and Circumstances of Nations.' An admirable work indeed ... I do not admire 'Madame de Sevigne's letters,' though the French is excellent [...] yet the sentiment is not novel, and the rhapsody of the style is so affected, so disgusting, so entirely FRENCH, that every time I open the book it is rather as a task than a pleasure -- the last Canto of 'Childe Harold' (certainly much superior to the others) has delighted me more than I can express. The description of the waterfall is the most exquisite piece of poetry that I ever read [...]. All the energy, all the sublimity of modern verse is centered in those lines. (Elizabeth Barrett to Samuel Moulton-Barrett, November 1818: *UK RED*, ID: 15975)

The reader here is the child who will grow up to become the famous British nineteenth-century poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861), and this letter to her uncle shows both the precocity of her intellect (this is the reading and writing of a 12 year old), and the extent to which recording a judgement on books that have just been read can help fashion a sense of identity and self-worth. Not only has she been reading Frederick Sylvester North Douglas’s comparative analysis of Greece, *An Essay on Certain Points of Resemblance between the Ancient and Modern Greeks* (Douglas), but she has started John Bigland’s polemical history, *An Historical Display of the Effects of Physical and Moral Causes on the Character and Circumstances of Nations* (Bigland); neither of these books were written for children. Both were recent publications, and expensive to buy for the standards of the time. For Elizabeth Barrett, Madame de Sévigné’s letters (Sévigné), an established model for belles-lettres, are cloyingly conventional, while Byron’s verse – the last canto of the just published and highly acclaimed *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (Byron) – is original and captivating. Barrett contrasts French affectation with British originality, and Enlightenment style with Romantic sublimity. This literary judgement is expressed in a letter to a member of her extended family (her uncle, Samuel Moulton-Barrett) and suggests that she already craved recognition as an aspiring writer and accomplished reader.

While Barrett Browning’s childhood reading glitters with precocious genius, many extant records of reading evidence are altogether more prosaic; Barrett Browning, after all, was no ordinary reader. In contrast and over a century later is the British 25 year old woman Pamela Slater’s record of her reading in response to the Mass Observation sociology project’s questionnaire about reading in May 1940, which was sent to a large and diverse group of ordinary readers. She lists her newspaper and journal reading (*The New Statesman* and *The Picture Post*) and admits that ‘I take most of my opinions on news from the *New Statesman*, none from a daily paper ... the editorial columns so often express what I feel that I naturally appreciate the editors views considerably!’ (*Mass Observation Online*, Directive Replies 1939–1942, respondent 1009). Slater’s judgement of her reading material is significantly less confident and accomplished than that of Elizabeth Barrett; she reads to have her views formed and confirmed by the editorial line of her favourite journal. The evidence is also recorded in a different context – this time not in family correspondence, but in the archives of a research project and prompted by a directed questionnaire, which was part of the process of government information gathering during wartime. The fact that this is a response to a formal request may also have contributed to the rather acquiescent tone of the recorded evidence.

While Pamela Slater's record was in response to a directed questionnaire, the male agricultural worker Ronald Frank agreed to become one of the Mass Observation project's diarists. Recording his daily activities (including reading) during February 1940, Frank lists the new literary magazine *Horizon*, E. M. Forster's biographical study of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (Forster) and Beatrice Webb's autobiography *My Apprenticeship* (Webb) as his current reading (*Mass Observation Online*, January 1940 to March 1941, Diarist number 5071). Frank's reading is overtly political; all three publications were broadly Socialist and identified with the rise of the British Labour party. Unlike Barrett's family letter, or Slater's solicited and structured questionnaire response, Frank's account is in the form of one of the richest and most immediate sources for recovering the evidence of reading: the diary.

Whereas diaries embed reading within accounts of (and reflections upon) other aspects of daily life, commonplace books and the records of reading groups concentrate solely on reading itself. The Anglo-Florentine novelist, essayist, critic and art historian Vernon Lee (1856–1935) kept prodigiously detailed commonplace books that recorded her reading from 1887 to 1900; there are 12 volumes of commonplace books totalling some 1,300 pages, and each volume has a list of the titles read during that period appended to the front.² Vernon Lee was a formidable intellectual and read widely in many disciplines and in four European languages (English, French, German and Italian). She also kept exceptionally detailed records of her reading. While her commonplace books record detailed and considered engagements with a specific text, they do not register the immediate first impact of the act of reading – the evidence of readers' initial engagement with texts is often recorded in the texts themselves, in the form of notes or marginalia. Vernon Lee was not only a conscientious keeper of commonplace books about her reading, but she also compulsively marked books that she had possessed and read with considerable marginalia.³ A typical example of this is her copy of Charles Augustus Strong's *A Theory of Knowledge* (Strong), a book that she read on three separate occasions between July 1928 and January 1932; the extensive marginal notes in this volume serve not only as an aid to memory, highlighting her initial responses to Strong's main ideas, but also serves to fashion future re-reading of the text. Marginalia and commonplace books can outline the developing responses of a reader to a text, from initial engagement to concerted reflection and deliberation. Reading and response is not a singular event, but a negotiated and contingent process.

As these examples indicate, we can find the evidence of readers' responses in a wide range of material: personal correspondence, memoirs,

diaries, commonplace books and scrap books, individual and collective marginal marks in owned and borrowed books, in the comment books of libraries, learned societies and public institutions, in the letters to the editor sections of newspapers and magazines, in the minutes of reading groups and societies, in the book acquisition reports of school boards and the notes of censorship committees, in responses to questionnaires and surveys, in fan mail sent to authors, and so on. There are other ways of recovering the evidence of readers, even when the readers themselves have left no record of their own. For example, court room trial transcripts, the official records of prison authorities, the minute books of missionary societies, the regimental records of army units and the surveillance activities of state intelligence services often provide incidental and valuable details of reading and response. Red Cross and prisoner of war camp archives provide considerable evidence of reading, as do ships' captain's log books and the records of medical and psychiatric institutions. Records such as these provide a vast amount of information about reading in the past.

In our own twenty-first century, there is an even greater excess of evidence of reading that is being gathered involuntarily, and is still underutilised in humanities research. Closed-circuit television footage relentlessly and systematically records reading in public spaces, while automatically gathered GPS and other usage data offered through mobile digital networks accurately records the download and use of electronic books and other texts. The collected network data of Amazon's Kindle or Sony's e-reader would provide a detailed picture of current reading habits. The mass digitisation of pre-twentieth century library holdings by Google through the Google books project and Archive.org is bringing to our notice the cumulative freight of readers' marginal marks in borrowed books. And most obviously, the recent extraordinary rise of digital social networking (Facebook, Twitter and the blogosphere, to name a few) offers researchers rich and continuously evolving data about how readers engage with texts.

In fact, there is an extraordinary amount of data of reading and response that has been generated, but the problem is that this data is disaggregated, and not always easily recovered.

Grappling with the disaggregated evidence of both individual readers and reading communities throughout the centuries, historians of reading have often divided their attention between broad text or period based studies, or those which are reader-centred, focussed and highly contingent. So for example, period based studies such as Jan Fergus's *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Fergus), Kate Flint's exemplary study of Victorian women readers, *The Woman Reader, 1837–1914* (Flint), Ronald

J and Mary Saracino Zboray's study of pre- and post-independence New Englanders, *Everyday Ideas* (Zboray and Saracino Zboray) and William St Clair's political economy of reading, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (St Clair) have amassed considerable data for a particular historical period and geographical space by harnessing a wide range of source material. Conversely, reader-centred studies have concentrated on fleshing out the imaginative universe of a single reader, and thereby offering us a detailed insight into the cultural history of a period, usually through the exhaustive study of a single material archive. Examples include Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* (Ginzburg), Robert DeMaria's *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Reading* (DeMaria), Timothy Ryback's *Hitler's Private Library* (Ryback), Kevin Hayes's *The Road to Monticello: The Life and Mind of Thomas Jefferson* (Hayes) and Ruth Clayton Windscheffel's *Reading Gladstone* (Windscheffel). Indeed, there have traditionally been two opposing approaches to telling the history of reading: the macro-analytical, and the micro-analytical. The impossibility that any individual could read even a small proportion of the cumulative human output of books implicitly urges us to engage with the broader issue of collecting the quantitative, statistical evidence of reading, a methodology that allows us to examine broader trends in reading practices, and make sense of the mind-boggling weight of extant titles and their possible readers. While an individual reader's engagement can tell us little about the broader trends and patterns of *how* a particular text was consumed, collating a range of quantifiable data, such as that offered by print runs, library circulation records, literacy figures, sale prices, average incomes, distribution networks and advertising, can accurately reconstruct the environment for reading in a particular period and territory.

Perhaps the best way of dealing with the plethora of data and sources in the history of reading is to create a searchable, inclusive, yet defined database, allowing us to weigh individual pieces of data equally, while still providing for qualitative and evaluative analysis. Consciously a methodologically inclusive project, the *United Kingdom Reading Experience Database* (UKRED) was set up in 1996, and unveiled as an online digital resource in 2007. In gathering data for the project, it has welcomed both macro- and micro-analytical approaches with equal enthusiasm. Housed at the Open University, UKRED gathers the evidence of reading of British subjects at home and abroad, as well as visitors' reading in Britain, between 1450 and 1945. It does so while carefully defining the type and accuracy of the data it records (we have some 150 individual data fields), as well as making sure a wide variety of sources can be consulted and harvested for evidence of reading. For the purposes of the project, UKRED defines a 'reading experience'

rience' as a 'recorded engagement with a written or printed text – beyond the mere fact of possession' (<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/experience.htm> [accessed 23 March 2011]). *UK RED* now has well over 30,000 entries, the majority of them in the period from 1800–1900, an era which coincides with the establishment of mass literacy in Britain. Detailed and combinable search criteria allow users to interrogate the cumulative data in complex and imaginative ways, with filters for gender, age, place, socio-economic group, genre, and so on. *UK RED* is an open access resource committed to the social construction of knowledge; anyone can access its data, or contribute to the research project. Given enough time and data, *UK RED* will be able to start mapping broad trends in British reading habits over the centuries.

While *UK RED* will be able to offer us valuable information about British reading practices through time, books as well as their readers are increasingly mobile across space. In order to start addressing some of the pressing questions about reading across the world, *UK RED* is currently working with research partners in four different countries to internationalise this effort in recovering the evidence of readers. Partner projects have started in Australia, Canada, the Netherlands and New Zealand to multiply the collective effort, ensure interoperability between databases and explore future directions and possibilities for further research collaboration in the history of reading. *UK RED* and its four new partner databases will be linked through a new web infrastructure, *The Reading Experience Database* (RED), which will serve as an integrated search interface (<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/>). The new partner reading experience databases will all be doing something different from *UK RED*, capitalising upon the respective strengths of resources, and needs of each particular society, as well as pursuing best practices in the Digital Humanities.

With a much shorter historical period, Australia will be including visual (photographic) records of reading, and oral history records (audio material) of remembered reading, gathering evidence up to the year 2000. The *Australian Reading Experience Database* (*AusRED*) is housed at Griffith University in Brisbane, and will be constituted within Australia's premier digital resource for research in the Arts, AustLit (<http://www.austlit.edu.au/>). *AusRED* has already gathered a considerable body of data, which will be made publicly available soon. In including audio-visual material and oral history, the *AusRED* project team are clearly building upon the pioneering work of Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa in their landmark study of Australian popular cultural memory, *Australian Readers Remember* (Lyons and Taksa). The Canadian project, the *Canadian Reading Experience Database / Banque de données sur les pratiques de lecture* (*CAN-RED-LEC*) is housed at

Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and will present a bilingual interface for French and English speaking users. *CAN-RED-LEC* will have a particular interest in the history of immigrant reading, and therefore will utilise geographical information systems to plot the spread of readers across Canada's vast terrain. It will also mine social networking sites for contemporary evidence of reading in Canada. The Dutch project, the *Netherlands Reading Experience Database (NL-RED)* will be housed at the University of Utrecht, with the collaboration of the Huygens Instituut KNAW in The Hague (<http://www.red-nl.huygens.knaw.nl>). *NL-RED* will have the widest historical sweep (c.1000AD–2000), drawing upon the wealth of information already available on manuscript culture and early printing in the Low Countries, and it will also include fictional representations of reading. The New Zealand project, the *New Zealand Reading Experience Database (NZ-RED)* is housed at Victoria University Wellington (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/wtapress/NZ-RED/>). *NZ-RED* will offer a bi-cultural project, bringing together Anglophone and Māoritanga concepts of reading and response, but it will also be historically specific, with a first phase of data collection concentrating on the First World War. *NZ-RED* will be particularly innovative in their data acquisition and entry by utilising crowd sourcing. Eventually all five projects will be successively searchable through a single entry portal, and will allow us to begin testing hypotheses about reading in a much wider context. New research questions and contexts will be generated by such a deeply interconnected, interdisciplinary and transnational approach.

If quantitative analysis requires a critical mass to be accumulated by a database *before* it can generate any meaningful trend data, then the implications for these projects are obvious: we must expand the volume of stored data many times, before attempting to answer the bigger questions about the history of reading through the centuries. But when is enough data really sufficient to be representative across a long historical period? How long can we wait before asking and trying to answer (however speculatively) the key questions in the history of reading, such as whether a *Leserevolution* really took place in the late-eighteenth century? And is representativeness, like the man in the top hat sitting in the omnibus, nothing more than a convenient fiction? The detailed qualitative analysis of the close reading recorded in dairies, marginalia, manuscript material and correspondence often provides the greatest density of data in the history of reading, however anomalous the reader might be. Indeed, despite dozens of claims for exemplary, outstanding, remarkable or brilliantly self-sufficient readers, historians of reading have continued to draw upon these rare individuals who kept a detailed record of their reading. Perhaps the only satisfac-

tory answer, as we currently see in all these reading experience database projects, is to do both: to delve deep into the archive, but also to sweep broadly across many different types of material and sources of information from across the centuries.

I want to end with two final images, which I think illustrate some of the issues of recovering evidence and interpreting reading that I have discussed in this essay: first the often arbitrary nature of *how*, *why* and *where* the evidence of reading is recorded, and second, the issue of representativeness in recovering such a record. My essay is subtitled ‘what do we do with the man in the hat?’, but the answer to this question may sometimes be, not very much, for while the man in the hat is an emblematic representation of a reader, he may not be at all representative of the diversity of actual readers in any given historical period. The first of my two final images is perhaps the most famous visual representation of reading in the omnibus in the nineteenth-century, William Egley’s ‘Omnibus Life in London’ (1859).



Image 4: William Egley (1826–1916), ‘Omnibus Life in London’ (1859), oil on canvas.



Image 5: Alfred Morgan (fl.1862–1904), 'An Omnibus Ride to Piccadilly Circus, Mr Gladstone travelling with ordinary people' (1885).

Egley's perspective deliberately accentuates the crowded metropolitan scene, with people and goods, and all manner of passengers, crammed into a particularly small space. Additional faces can be seen peering in, looking for somewhere to sit. There are at least two readers (and possibly more) depicted in Egley's painting: first of all, a young woman, the last figure seated on the right hand side of the omnibus, who is studiously engrossed in reading her book (it looks like a hardback, and possibly a volume from a lending library), and thereby presumably avoiding unnecessary eye contact with her fellow male passengers. The second possible reader is the red-haired man peering into the omnibus, his gaze seemingly focussed on the young woman's book. There are other potential readers in the omnibus, for the interior walls are plastered with advertisements, including text that the passengers could not help but read; the gaze of the woman in the red shawl is intently focussed on the text of the advertising hoarding opposite her. In Egley's painting, the men in hats inside the omnibus (there are four of them) are not engaged in reading, while at least two of the women inside the carriage possibly are; there are obvious reasons why women in public transport in the nineteenth-century would want to use reading material to avoid the gaze of male passengers. There are also evident reasons why such transient reading experiences have by and large not been recorded, and cannot be easily recovered from the archives (people

do not routinely keep records of their reading of advertising hoardings in situ, or of borrowed library volumes).

The second is a painting by Alfred Morgan from 1885 titled ‘An Omnibus Ride to Piccadilly Circus: Mr Gladstone travelling with ordinary passengers’. Once again, a man in a hat (not a top hat, in this case) is clutching a newspaper, while the British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone dressed as ever in black is resolutely not reading during his journey, but purposefully staring into the distance. The extraordinary irony here is that Gladstone was one of the most prolific readers ever recorded in the nineteenth-century. He owned over 32,000 books in his private library, many of which he marked with marginal notes, frequently read 3 books in a single day, and constantly referred to his reading in his correspondence. Gladstone’s reading has been systematically recovered by the Gladstone Catalogue project (<http://www.st-deiniols.com/library-collection/glad-cat/>), and by scholars such as Ruth Windscheffel in her study *Reading Gladstone*; but the man in the hat clutching his disposable and biodegradable newspaper, one of his reading countrymen, has vanished entirely from the historical record.

NOTES

¹ For more information about the background to *UK RED*, its history, methodological rationale and future directions, please see the ‘About UK RED’ webpage (<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/about.php>) and the background article by Simon Eliot, ‘The Reading Experience Database’ (Eliot), both accessed 23 March 2011.

² Vernon Lee’s commonplace books are housed in the Vernon Lee archive, Colby College Special Collections, Colby College, Waterville, Maine, USA. Evidence from this source is being entered into *UK RED*.

³ Vernon Lee’s books are housed in the Special Collections of the Harold Acton Library, The British Institute of Florence. Of the 425 extant books, 299 have marginalia, with the majority featuring considerable marking. Evidence from this source is being entered into *UK RED*.

WORKS CITED

- Bigland, John. *An Historical Display of the Effects of Physical and Moral Causes on the Character and Circumstances of Nations*. London: Longman & Co., 1816.
- Bridgeman Education*. Available at: <http://www.bridgemaneducation.com/> (23 March 2011).
- Byron, George Gordon. *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage. A Romaunt*. London: John Murray, 1818.
- DeMaria, Robert. *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Reading*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997.
- Douglas, Frederick Sylvester North. *An Essay on Certain Points of Resemblance between the Ancient and Modern Greeks*. London: 1813.
- Eliot, Simon. ‘The Reading Experience Database, Or What Are We to Do About the History of Reading?’. Available at: <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/redback.htm> (23 March 2011).

- Fergus, Jan. *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.
- Flint, Kate. *The Woman Reader, 1837–1914*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993.
- Forster, E. M. *Goldsworthy Loves Dickinson*. London: Edward Arnold, 1934.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. *The Cheese and the Worms: the Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980.
- Hayes, Kevin J. *The Road to Monticello: The Life and Mind of Thomas Jefferson*. New York: Oxford UP, 2008.
- The Horizon: A Magazine of To-Day for the Men and Women of To-Morrow*. London: 1940.
- Lyons, Martyn, and Lucy Taksa. *Australian Readers Remember: An Oral History of Reading 1890–1930*. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1992.
- Mass Observation Online*. Available at: <http://www.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/Mass-Observation-Online.aspx> (23 March 2011).
- The New Statesman and Nation*. London: Statesman and Nation Publishing Company, 1940.
- Picture Post*. London: Hulton Press, 1940.
- Ryback, Timothy W. *Hitler's Private Library: The Books that Shaped His Life*. London: Bodley Head, 2009.
- Sévigné, Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, Marquise de. *Lettres*. Paris: Pierre Gosse, 1757.
- St Clair, William. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Strong, Charles Augustus. *A Theory of Knowledge*. London: Constable & Co., 1923.
- Webb, Beatrice. *My Apprenticeship*. London: Longmans, 1926.
- Windscheffel, Ruth Clayton. *Reading Gladstone*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- The UK Reading Experience Database*. Available at: <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/Reading/UK/> (23 March 2011).
- Zboray, Ronald J., and Mary Saracino Zboray. *Everyday Ideas: Socioliterary Experience among Antebellum New Englanders*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2006.