RESEARCH STATEMENT
Simone Rebora

In the present cultural environment, digitization is significantly changing the way we read and write, as well as the way we study literature. These modifications cannot alter the substance of a phenomenon as extended as human history, but they can offer the opportunity of analyzing it from different points of view, still largely unexplored.

My research path profits from a background in applied science **(1)** and in literary theory **(2)**, and focuses extensively on the issues of literary reception and reader response. As an expansion of my PhD dissertation on the birth of Italian literary historiography in foreign countries **(3)**, I have developed and tested a series of computational techniques for the study of literary reception in wide historical corpora. From bottom-level processes such as optical character recognition **(4)** to high-level approaches such as sentiment analysis and stylometry **(5)**, I have focused my attention on the main constituent parts of a "computational pipeline" that can drive towards a better understanding of the historical evolution of literary reading.

This research has been supported by an investigation of the most recent theoretical debates, about the application of cognitive science to literary studies. Focusing on frameworks such as "embodied simulation" (Gallese 2013) and "extended mind" (Clark and Chalmers 1998), I have verified the relevance of cognitive approaches in comparative literary studies, from late modernity to contemporaneity **(6)**. The latest step of my research path was dedicated to the emerging phenomenon of "social reading" in online communities such as *Goodreads*, *aNobii*, and *Wattpad* **(7)**. The project, based on the empirically-validated SWAS questionnaire (Story Word Absorption Scale, see Kuijpers *et al.* 2014), enabled a computational analysis of user-generated book reviews, with the goal of estimating the levels of absorption in reference to specific literary genres, writing styles, and reading devices.

Together with the quantitative studies and methodologies described above, I have not neglected the qualitative approaches of literary criticism, through two monographs dedicated to Italian and comparative literature and with a series of studies on English and American authors such as James Joyce, Thomas Pynchon, and William Gaddis, focusing extensively on the phenomenon of "literary encyclopedism" (Mendelson 1976) and on its relationship with technological evolution **(8)**. In the conscience that collaboration and networking are among the fundamental ingredients for a fruitful academic career, I am an active member of multiple organizations, such as the International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature and Media (IGEL), the Evolution of Reading in the Age of Digitisation (E-READ) European COST Action, and the Associazione per l'Informatica Umanistica e la Cultura Digitale (AIUCD).