The journal of the Scientific Study of Literature (SSOL) is planning a special issue dedicated to empirically exploring the relationship between literature and empathy. In proposing this special issue we have three main interests: 1) The integration of literary, aesthetic and philosophical theories concerning literary reading and empathy with existing empirical findings; 2) The application of key distinctions from psychology and the neurosciences that highlight the multidimensionality and distinctness of the concept ‘empathy’ to the explication and understanding of literary reading 3) The systematic empirical examination of the textual characteristics such as style, narrative form, character description, and genre that contribute to empathic responses in literature.

We invite contributions addressing one or more of the following themes:

1. The multidimensionality of the construct ‘empathy’ and related constructs, as well as phenomena from which it must be differentiated in the context of literary reading;
2. The role of textual/poetic characteristics in the relationship between literary reading and empathy;
3. Individual differences between (types of) readers and situational constraints on readers’ empathic responses;
4. Methodological aspects of researching the link between empathy and literature;
5. Novel interpretations of empirical findings on ‘empathy’ (and related constructs) in light of recent theoretical developments at the nexus of the neurosciences and philosophy, philosophy of mind, psychology, etc.

Contributor guidelines:
Please follow the journal’s submission guidelines for authors:
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Deadline for submission of papers: 15 October 2015.

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