

Observations on Rereading

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One cannot step into the same river twice.

Heraclitus

In *Lectures on Literature*, Nabokov remarks, “Curiously enough, one cannot *read* a book; one can only reread it. A good reader, a major reader, an active and creative reader is a rereader. And I shall tell you why. When we read a book for the first time the very process of laboriously moving our eyes from left to right, line after line, page after page, this complicated physical work upon the book, this stands between us and artistic appreciation” (3).¹ Joyce’s *Ulysses* is a famous case in point, a book for which rereading, not reading, is crucial. Over the past century, critics have devoted much attention to the act of reading, from I. A. Richards’s *Practical Criticism* to Stanley Fish’s *Is There a Text in This Class?*, from prescriptive methodology to interpretive communities. Curiously, almost none of the discussion has focused on what really goes on within the academy: rereading. As teachers and students, we are so involved in the study of texts that we fail to realize the fundamental peculiarity of what we do; that is, while most people simply read a document, we go over and over it, pursuing our literary analysis. Of course, rereading is necessary to catch the nuances we miss the first time. We can even define a great work of literature as one that repays continual rereading—but this only begs the question: How does our perspective change after the initial experience? What distortions emerge through repetition?

To ask this question may seem subversive, since the standard view is that rereading is an additive process, wherein we perceive more

and more about a given work until we have internalized the very words. However, such continual review also dulls certain sensibilities.² The effects of plot, for instance, the Aristotelian cornerstone of drama, depend largely on uncertainty or the old puzzle of "What comes next?" Rereading has many joys, but suspense is not one of them. Anticipation has replaced it. Keats's sonnet "On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again," for instance, is couched in romantic images of expectation; e.g., "once again the fierce dispute / Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay / Must I burn through; once more humbly assay / The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearian fruit" (133).

In fact, we may argue that only after the large machinery of plot has been exposed can the reader concentrate on the subtleties of thematic motifs or image-patterns. To cite one brief example: the Bradleyan critics whom L. C. Knights famously inveighs against in "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?" have obviously read or seen their Shakespeare so many times that the characters have become unmoored from their surroundings. K. O. Newman's brief but acute study *Two Hundred and Fifty Times I Saw a Play* illustrates this point exactly. Inevitably, rereading has a warping effect, and, to rebut the bromide of "We gain something in every rereading," we may answer, "Yes, but what do we lose?" We can term this the gain-loss phenomenon in rereading.

Any writing likely to be reread may serve as an instance (though writing designed to be disposable presents an interesting exception, dealt with later in this essay). Take Shakespeare's sonnet 73, "That time of year thou mayst in me behold," as an example of what people reread. Crammed as the poem is with metaphysical conceits, the reader cannot attend to everything at once. What the reader notices first is probably fairly basic, if idiosyncratic: the image of the tree, the progression of the seasons, the ashy fire turned to a deathbed, or perhaps just the general mood of old age. The second time, perhaps, the reader perceives the essential paradoxes presented: the flame that has consumed itself, the love that grows stronger as the object of affection grows feebler. On rereading, the reader may begin to analyze the rhyme scheme of *abab cdcd efef g*, with such links as "fire . . . expire" and "west . . . rest."

After going through the poem enough times, the reader may fit such rhetorical devices as personification, hypallage, and chiasmus into a larger structural analysis. As Peter Brooks emphasizes: "To state the matter baldly: rhyme, alliteration, assonance, meter, refrain, all the mnemonic elements of literature and indeed most of its tropes are in some manner repetitions that take us back in the text, that allow the ear, the mind, to make connections, conscious or unconscious, between different textual moments, to see past and present as related or establishing a future that will be noticeable as some variation in the pattern" (99). At a still later stage, the reader may relate the sonnet to other work by Shakespeare, to a poem by Donne, or to a specific strain of metaphysical verse. Gradually, the reader constructs an exegetical network, as the subjects did in I. A. Richards's famous reading experiments, described in *Practical Criticism*, when presented with a series of four unsigned poems. At some point, too, over the course of time or through new cultural assumptions, revisionary interpretation occurs. Rudyard Kipling's verses, for instance, represented for many in the 1890s the might of the British empire, for those in the 1930s the excesses of imperialism, and for more recent readers a fascination with the alien or Other.

But even with immediate rereading comes change, at the very least a loss of spontaneity, at the most a series of distortions that seem at odds with the structure of the text.³ The first losses are the surprises in the plot. During the heyday of modernism, Virginia Woolf may have been able to assert, "Plots don't matter" (*Woolf-Strachey Ltrs.* 19), but as Brooks and others have shown, they are an integral element of all literature. Many authors, such as mystery writers, deliberately inject suspense into the structures of their novels, aware that one reading is all they are likely to receive. In any event, suspense disappears after the initial reading, replaced by an increase in anticipation—a trade-off rather than an equivalency. Anyone familiar with twist-ending stories like O. Henry's "Gifts of the Magi" or Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" knows how they alter on second reading.

As Wolfgang Iser notes more precisely in *The Implied Reader*: "during the process of reading, there is an active interweaving of anticipation and retrospection, which on a second reading may turn into a kind of advance retrospection" (282). In essence, the entire

structure begins to appear proleptic, with interesting implications: the diachronic nature of the plot assumes a synchronicity, a conflation of events in the reader's mind. This synchronicity, as much an artistic stasis as a desired sempiternal aevum in religion, may in part account for Milton's preliminary Argument to each book in *Paradise Lost*: a plot summary that frees the reader from the suspense of unanticipated events, in a sense from chronology itself.

Modernism in its fascination with the workings of the mind applied this concept on a secular level. If memory is the key to what Joseph Frank described as the spatial form in modern literature, not a linear progression but a radial pattern linked by associations, then rereading is the best access to it. In a rereading of *Mrs. Dalloway*, for example, the very tint of the prose is colored by the foreknowledge of Septimus's death. In fact, the ending itself often pulls the work together in a way not apparent throughout the first reading. As Woolf herself remarks of Flaubert's "*Un Coeur Simple*":

And now the impressions begin to arrive. We accept them, but we do not use them. We lay them aside in reserve. Our attention flickers this way and that, from one to another. Still the impressions accumulate, and still, almost ignoring their individual quality, we read on, noting the pity, the irony, hastily observing certain relations and contrasts, but stressing nothing, always awaiting the final signal. Suddenly we have it. . . . A sudden intensity of phrase, something which for good reasons or for bad we feel to be emphatic, startles us into a flash of understanding. We see now why the story was written. . . . And then it is finished. All the observations which we have put aside now come out and range themselves according to the directions we have received. Some are relevant; others we can find no place for. On a second reading we are able to use our observations from the start; and they are much more precise. . . . ("Re-reading" 125)

Woolf's observations of effects are both impressionistic and exact.⁴ But is the linearity of the first reading a hindrance or an aid to rhetorical

effects? The point is that it is both: rereading heightens certain aspects of the text and blunts others.

One of the credos of academia is that a great work can be reread indefinitely; it seems to offer something new each time. Nonetheless, a law of diminishing returns pertains. In Iser's semantic-gap model of reading, the reader inserts him or herself in the interstices between words, phrases, and descriptions, appropriating the text or aligning it to fit his or her own mental configurations (283). On the second reading and beyond, the reader presumably accomplishes more of this alignment, made all the easier because part of the reader is now the text itself, internalized. What changes is the reader, not the invariant text. What this implies for successive rereadings is obvious: a lessening of new perceptions or change, to the point where the *n*th reading seems identical to the *n*th + 1. Anyone who has lectured on a text for the *n*th + 1 time is all too familiar with this state of affairs. Even a consummate rereader like Anatole Broyard confesses near the end of his life: "Anyway, how many times can you read a book—even a great book? In my own experience I have found that the fourth reading is almost always disillusioning. I don't know why this should be—it's the same book. Yet I found myself getting tired of Tietjens in 'Parade's End' and taking sides with Sylvia against him" (36). In a sense, Broyard is tiring not so much of Tietjens or of the author Ford Madox Ford, but of his usual reactions in reading *Parade's End*. Because Broyard has an inventive and polemical mind, he contrives to disagree with his earlier self in order to inject some interest into the latest rereading.

Of course, the reader may unconsciously alter over the course of a few years, by which time a rereading may again prove fruitful. As Robertson Davies remarks:

The great sin, as I have said, is to assume that something that has been read once has been read forever. As a very simple example I mention Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. People are expected to read it during their university years. But you are mistaken if you think you read Thackeray's book then; you read a lesser book of your own. It should be read again when you are thirty-six,

which is the age of Thackeray when he wrote it. It should be read for a third time when you are fifty-six, sixty-six, seventy-six, in order to see how Thackeray's irony stands up to your own experience of life. (76)

What is true during an individual lifespan is collectively true of a changed era of readers, providing the basis for literary hermeneutics. On the level of criticism, as Jane Tompkins observes: "the goal of literary criticism becomes the faithful description of the activity of reading, an activity that is minute, complicated, strenuous, and never the same from one reading to the next" (xvii). In fact, the degree of self-awareness necessary to criticism makes rereading almost imperative, requiring at the very least a circumspect first reading.

One does not have to be a reader-response critic to agree with this model of progression and change over rereadings. Those who argue that the burden of meaning lies entirely with the reader, as Fish does in *Is There a Text in This Class?*, may define the act of perception as identical to interpretation and construction, but insofar as perception is eidetic and influenced by experience, rereading is additive, up to a point. Those who postulate a universe of textuality, those who view all literary works as glosses or commentaries on each other, should note that the reread text is a nearly perfect gloss on the original, explaining, filling in, and stressing. And if all texts contain structural cues as to how they may be read, rereading is simpler—or more programmatic—because the reader has already read the rulebook, so to speak. Even critics like Terry Eagleton who postulate a Marxist determinism in the creation (and thus re-creation or rereading) of a text must include a model of a reader who may change ideologically over the course of successive readings.

These effects may be seen in group responses or on the level of the individual. A curious example of this phenomenon is in the memorization of poetry, still practiced in many schools. This process seems to involve three stages: first, when the reader is learning the poem through rereading; second, when the reader knows the poem by heart; and third, when the reader has internalized the poem to the point of inserting other words in place of the poet's, "correcting" the original version. This effect of rereading, almost over-reading in a

sense, may be responsible for such distortions as "Alas, poor Yorick, I knew him well" instead of "I knew him, Horatio," "The road to hell is paved with good intentions" where that road is a reconstruction, or "Play it again, Sam" with "again" silently added.

These distortions also suggest a new entry into the argument over the reader's role versus the writer's role: if the reader is the prevailing authority, can one at least be said to have overstepped that authority when altering the very words on the page? Or is this simply a natural part of even the first reading? As Newman writes about repeatedly viewing the same play: "Plays are in many ways like people one meets. After we have become well acquainted with them, we cannot remember truly, how they impressed us on the first occasion . . . the play itself—a fixed sequence of words—begins to assume an independent life and evolves and develops like an animated being, a strange mirage of the mind" (7).

Of course, views of rereading depend largely on how one views the text. Early textual models tended to emphasize the performative aspect of the material, specifically its bearing on the audience, as in the rhetoric of effects described by Aristotle's *Poetics*. Medieval and Renaissance readers concerned themselves with multiple meanings, from anagogical to allegorical, privileging the religious or moral sense. Admittedly, these two emphases were mainly tied to drama and later the Bible. For many critics, on the other hand, the standard textual model stems from the Enlightenment: a repository of data from which one can draw a variety of inferences. New Historicist, Marxist, and feminist criticism stress external contexts, whereas the deconstructive view attempts to show, as Derrida remarks, that there is nothing outside the self-contained universe of the text. But as a generation of reader-response critics have noted, reading is an experience, not merely an act of retrieval, and repetition does more than deepen experience.⁵

Applied to rereading, none of these paradigms is quite satisfactory. The additive element of rereading seems incontrovertible, but in what manner is this process accomplished? Perhaps reading is a series of grasps or gestalts, and maybe this is what Rabelais has in mind when he talks of cracking open the bone of the text to suck the substantive marrow. But what use is a gestalt on second grasp, or sucking an empty bone? Maybe reading more resembles eating per se, a view

espoused by Victor Nell in his cognitive psychological study *Lost in a Book*. Amid all his scientific scales and charts, Nell includes a section entitled "Reading as Eating" (98ff.). *De gustibus non disputandum*.

Perhaps rereading is like doing a jigsaw puzzle, fitting more and more pieces together to form a complete picture. With the reader as an element in the pattern, Iser's semantic-gap model of reading applies, the rereader piecing together an ever-increasing amount of his or her psyche with the words on the page. But does one fill in more gaps on rereading, or refill differently? The reader is not in fact the same as the rereader. A model drawn from Wittgenstein's *Investigations* would show that rereading is in a sense suspect, since one cannot prove that the reader of Day One is the same as the rereader of Day Two.⁶ They are, in fact, experientially different, and if one follows the logical implications of this point, one reaches an absurdity: rereading is impossible, at least in the sense of the same reader picking up the text for the second time.

In *The Reader and the Text* (4), Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman revive the dramatic model as a way out of this dilemma: reading as performance, though this definition only begs the question as to what the aspects of a repeated performance are. Of course, one aspect is change. In "Writing and Rewriting Poetry" (69), Linda Jeffrey argues that repetition in both writing and recalling poetry is really a process of subtle variation, of *revision* in the etymological sense of the word. But if, as De Man has argued (9), we are all prisoners of our ideology, how do we ever alter our perspectives? David Bleich stresses this point: "if response is necessarily evaluative, deeper self-involvement brings with it more pronounced value judgments" (Tompkins 139). Yet literature can alter the reader's view, so maybe the right way to look at a piece of writing is as persuasion. One could argue that people reread only what they like and already agree with, but as a professor who has assigned Henry James's *The Wings of the Dove* to a doctoral seminar, I know this is not always true.

Perhaps the most salient example of forced rereading occurs in Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust*, in which the hapless protagonist Tony Last ends up in the African jungle rereading Dickens to old Mr. Todd for the rest of his life. Tony's discomfiture as rereader is matched only by Mr. Todd's enjoyment of the endless repetition: "The

old man sat astride his hammock opposite Tony, fixing him throughout with his eyes, and following the words, soundlessly, with his lips. Often, when a new character was introduced he would say, 'Repeat the name, I have forgotten him,' or 'Yes, yes, I remember her well. She dies, poor woman'" (292-93). Given Tony's Dickensian view of the world, out of step with Britain in the 1930s, this is poetic justice of a high order.

Still, even if one is assigned to reread a work that one doesn't like, the mind's defensive strategies often rework the original appraisal. The unconscious resolution of cognitive dissonance, for instance, may cause the rereader to think the poem is good in order to avoid the position of subordinacy; i.e.: "Here I am, going over a passage I don't like, under orders from a pedagogical authority. This is not a situation pleasant to contemplate; I would rather think that I am rereading this work for my own reasons, of my own choosing. It's really not so bad, after all." In essence, individuals attempt to reconcile perceived disparities between their opinions and behavior.

Apart from external constraints, however, why do people reread texts? This is the realm of what Nell (7) terms "ludic reading," which is how most people start as readers. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (18), Freud discusses the mechanism of repetition compulsion, providing an etiology based on fixation at some earlier stage of life. That is, one repeats an action to reexperience the original psychological affect. Beyond this causation, Freud claims that "repetition, the re-experiencing of something identical, is clearly in itself a source of pleasure" (36). Finally, Freud descends to the level of instinct, observing an inertia or will to return that is linked to the death drive. Repetition for Freud is thus ineluctable and not entirely explicable.

Though Freud's inferences about repetition are based on observable data, other interpretations are equally possible. On a phenomenological level, as Jacques Attali writes, "Repetition constitutes an extraordinary mutation of the relation to human production. It is a fundamental change in the relation between man and history, because it makes the stockpiling of time possible" (101). If art preserves life, rereading enables the impossible, time travel—not just an excursion to the world and era of the text, but a near repetition of the reader's experience of earlier readings. (This is not to say that rereaders as

a whole reread to progress no further. Many may delight equally in continuity and change.)

One may therefore also reread for the sense of surety it provides: in a world of uncertainty, here is something that will not disappoint. If particular books are old friends, rereading allows a communion of sorts. As Nell observes: "It seems likely that rereading old favorites renders the formulaic even safer and that readers who do a great deal of rereading have especially high needs for this kind of security" (250). These preferences are particularly notable in children, who love to have their favorite books reread to them, insisting that no word be changed. In addition, one may reread to achieve a sense of mastery: to know a text well is an accomplishment that can be demonstrated, taught to others, flaunted. And since enjoyment often comes from greater appreciation, in the original sense of the word, greater discernment is intrinsically desirable. Greater discernment, as opposed to passionate engagement, also enables the reader to rise above the tyranny of the text. "It is clear that in their play children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life, and that in doing so they abreact the strength of the impression and, as one might put it, make themselves master of the situation" (Freud 16–17). Regarding adult rereading, one may note Wordsworth: the child is father of the man.

As Barthes has shown in *The Pleasure of the Text*, reading—and, by extension, rereading—also has other rewards. If uncovering layers of meaning follows the text's fetishistic lure, then rereading is a kind of titillation once-removed. "I take pleasure in hearing myself tell a story *whose end I know*. I know and I don't know, I act toward myself as though I did not know . . ." (47). Barthes expands on this idea in his masterpiece of rereading, *S/Z*: "A second reading, the reading which places behind the transparency of suspense (placed on the text by the first avid and ignorant reader) the anticipated knowledge of what is to come in the story . . ." (165). Earlier in his analysis, he states: "rereading is no longer consumption, but play" (16). It provides a stimulation that the rereader has learned to count on, with anything ranging from biblical passages to pornography.

This craving may become quite intense. In *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800–1900*,

Richard D. Altick reprints this confession of a Norwich clergyman's daughter who read and reread *A Merchant of Venice*: "I drank a cup of intoxication under which my brain reeled for many a year. . . . I revelled in the terrible excitement it gave rise; page after page was stereotyped upon a most retentive memory, without an effort, and during a sleepless night I feasted on the pernicious sweets thus hoarded in my brain . . ." (112–13). As in Plato's step-by-step ascension in the *Symposium*, however, what starts out as a desire for stimulation may result in genuine love for the text.

If reading influences one's personality, as it certainly can, then rereading is a less abrasive process as the text and reader become more simpatico, like a couple that has grown together. The sexual metaphor extends even to parturition: as Norman Holland notes, "all of us, as we read, use the literary work to symbolize and finally to replicate ourselves" (Tompkins 124). But not all couples are compatible, and just as all readers are not necessarily rereaders, not everyone desires to reproduce him or herself. As the character Ted exclaims in John Osborne's *Try a Little Tenderness*: "Again! I'm always amazed at people who 'go through' books again. It sounds like going through childbirth again." His wife's friend Debbie voices the standard response of the rereader: "It's great fun doing it for the second or third time. Like visiting an old friend over and over again. You both seem to change every time you visit them" (81).

But if rereading depends on the reader, it just as clearly depends on the nature of the text. To put it bluntly, not all texts repay rereading. It depends on the avowed purpose of the text: most newspapers are thrown out the day after they are read. It depends on the presumed simplicity of the text: most people do not reread the STOP sign their car is approaching. But beyond these obvious examples—and in both instances one could imagine exceptions—what are the criteria for disposable texts? In a puckish essay written for *New Library World*, "Put Down That Cornflake Packet," Mike Pearce points out that triviality is no guarantee of escaping readerly notice. On the other hand, as Valentine Cunningham observes (301), those in the 1930s who believed in poetic simplicity had somehow to justify their claim that complex poets like Auden and Herbert Read repaid a fifth reading. Cultural gatekeepers might insist that the literary value of

the text determines its rereadability quotient, but this definition has two problems. First, it is teleological, since one recognizes literature as that which endures, i.e., that which can be reread. Second, it turns out to be false, as anyone knows who has seen an audience returning to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* for the tenth time.

In the absence of any fixed rules, one may nonetheless observe some guidelines. On the simplest terms, one may reread because one has missed something the first time around. This may function as a motive even in the realm of purely ludic rereading. In this case, rereading would seem to pertain to texts of a sufficient density or ambiguity to require complex assimilation. This remark must be qualified in terms of the reader, however, since what poses an interpretational mare's nest for one reader may seem perfectly straightforward to another. Nonetheless, certain texts are arguably beyond anyone's first grasp: the Bible, *King Lear*, *Finnegans Wake*.

Some texts, moreover, enact rereading within themselves. Gertrude Stein's repetitive syntax, in an attempt to disrupt the linear, chronological progression of narrative, has such an effect that the reader is rereading even on first perusal. In a work such as "Patriarchal Poetry," for instance, the line "Never to be what he said" occurs four times in succession (121). The thought-provoking process of repetition here forces one to reexamine the syntax, question the meaning, and search out nuances much in the way one does when rereading. And what some see as a verbal waste is in fact an ingenious kind of conservation. As Brooks notes: "Repetition, remembering, re-enactment are the ways in which we replay time, so that it may not be lost" (111). Stein's textual pattern thus accomplishes a strange effect: change through stasis.

Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* presents another instance of rereading's effects on first reading, though with a postmodern circularity that has become vicious, as opposed to Stein's optimistic modernism.⁷ When Beckett's nameless speaker repeats "you must go on," "I can't go on," and "I'll go on," the reader traces a closed loop with no beginning and no end in a forced rereading: stasis through change. Similarly, as Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler* passes through its seventh open-ended narrative chase, the author notes approvingly: "In short, you seem to be a Reader who Rereads"

(146). This is the kind of postmodern rereading project that John Barth pokes fun at in his brief story "Frame-Tale," with ten words meant to be cut and pasted into a Möbius strip that will forever read, "ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STORY . . ." (1-2). In a post-structuralist world, rereading begins to resemble sheer stasis and repetition, which may be one reason that the popularity of deconstruction in the academy has begun to wane. If the humanities are to show something akin to progress in the sciences, they must focus on texts and criticism in which rereading functions by addition rather than by erasure.⁸

In fact, what the academy prescribes to reread, amid disputes over canon formation, resembles the issue of what the academy requires to be read. Peter Widdowson's *Re-reading English* from a decade and a half ago, for example, far from being any kind of an examination of rereading, is an unabashed plug for the "classics" in the English curriculum. Many scholars today tend to be, if not more eclectic than previous generations, more contemporaneous in their choice of texts, which may be taught for the first time in their classrooms. Some of the benefits are obvious, not the least of which are fresh approaches to old conundrums, formerly repressed voices speaking out, and an immediately relevant message that Spenser may be incapable of delivering. The disadvantages, apart from ruffling feathers and ignoring tradition, are less apparent, but are intimately connected with rereading. To wit, some of the texts assigned may yield little upon rereading. Their value may be polemical or based on a novel perspective, but the reader readily apprehends their message after reading the text—and then what? In classes where a teacher is fortunate if the students read even once, these texts may provoke a rousing discussion, but at more advanced levels, where does one go from there?

True, cultural overlays and dissonances invariably complicate the reading process, which may in part account for the rise of so much cultural criticism: it permits another rereading of what otherwise might be an exhausted text. Metacriticism, on the other hand, may even free one from the obligation to reread. At times, it seems as if some branches of criticism are abandoning the hermeneutic tradition in favor of disposable text, work that does not repay rereading. Or

are they merely shifting the exegetical burden from the feckless comic book or cult film to the complex, rereadable society that has produced it?

Obviously, much study remains to be done, which is why this essay resembles more an introduction than a definitive analysis. The study of rereading, like rereading itself, challenges previous assumptions. Even Denis Donoghue's comfortable assertion, "Literature claims to be worth reading twice" (46), is subject to review—and, on second reading, one sees a possible hedging of bets in the verb "claims," or a question raised as to whether more than twice is too much of a good thing. And though rereading may be as basic as repetition, new technology is increasingly complicating the situation: rereading as re-viewing in film and other media, or interactive computer-and-user generated texts that are actually different each time. Will these innovations help or harm the old common reader, and what of the academy? About the only safe assertion at this point is that rereading is rethinking, and we lose this facility at our peril.

Notes

1. Though Nabokov's point about reading is well taken, rereading also involves the physical labor that he claims obstructs aesthetic appreciation. Perhaps the artistic enjoyment Nabokov is after occurs only in retrospect, like Wordsworth's pursuit of poetry: emotion recollected in tranquility.
2. As Freud notes: "If a joke is heard for a second time it produces almost no effect; a theatrical production never creates so great impression the second time as the first; indeed, it is hardly possible to persuade an adult who has very much enjoyed reading a book to re-read it immediately" (35). Borges, on the other hand, raises a contradistinction point on the level of phenomenology: "Hume identified our habitual idea of causality with the experience of temporal succession. Thus a good film seen a second time seems even better; we tend to take repetitions for absolutes" (1136).
3. This is not the place for a full discussion of textual intentionality. Suffice it to note that W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley's "intentional fallacy" does not state that works have no intentionality, simply that the artist's intentions are irrelevant and often unavailable (3). As Roman Ingarden has written, "Works of art have a right to expect to be properly apprehended by observers who are in communion with them" (43); cf. M. H. Abrams's interpretational middle ground of

author, text, and reader in essays such as "What's the Use of Theorizing about the Arts?" or D. W. Harding's "Reader and Author." Thus, if a reader is scanning *Macbeth* solely for its imagery of blood, perhaps with an eye toward writing a paper on the subject, one can argue that this rereading is a distortion of sorts.

4. Note E. M. Forster's description of Woolf's modus operandi in reviewing: "The first time she abandoned herself to the author unreservedly. The second time she treated him severely and allowed him to get away with nothing he could not justify. After these two readings, she felt qualified to discuss the book" (8).
5. See Tompkins's "The Reader in History: The Changing Shape of Literary Response" (Tompkins 201–32) for a background of these epochal shifts.
6. The disjunction of experience is based on Wittgenstein's paradigm in *Investigations* (92–93) of a man who jots down a capital "E" every time he registers the sensation that corresponds to it—but how does he know that today's "E" means the same as yesterday's?
7. One should nonetheless keep in mind David Lodge's caveats on repetition in *Language of Fiction* (82–87): it does not have to be a conscious intent on the part of the artist, nor does it have to be consciously apprehended by the reader, nor is it a matter of statistics (i.e., the number of times the same word crops up).
8. This motive is not unique to any one school of criticism, however. As Fish notes in "Anti-Professionalism," the humanities have for years been on a level with the sciences in their pressure to come up with discoveries, even if some academics decry the practice, and rereading through new critical eyes has become a time-honored tradition. It's also worth noting that certain critical movements are best paired up with their congruent literatures. It cannot be mere historical coincidence that, despite Derrida's Platonism, deconstructionism works most satisfyingly with post-structuralist texts.

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