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New Criticism Int.: The Close Reader in the U.S., Brazil, and Israel

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The Close Reader in the U.S., Brazil, and Israel

By

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and the Designated Emphasis

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Professor Chana Kronfeld, Chair

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ABSTARCT

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Playing on John Crowe Ransom's iconic "Criticism Inc.," my dissertation, *New Criticism Int.: The Close Reader in the U.S., Brazil and Israel*, reveals the as yet unexplored global circulation of the North American theory of New Criticism, and its influence on international reading practices, literary production, and national identity construction. The dissertation follows the theory as it travels from North America to Brazil and Israel, where New Criticism combines with regional trends to provoke a radical institutional and cultural change. This new map provides a fresh model for understanding close reading, New Criticism's key practice, which remains the prevailing method of critical reading taught in American institutions and abroad. The New Critics, it is usually assumed, believed that close reading involved a self-enclosed aesthetic object and a detached reader who contemplates the text but takes no part in constructing its meaning. *New Criticism Int.* demonstrates by contrast that the New Critics viewed the reader as an active participant in the creation of the text as an autonomous object. Specifically, they posited the reader's mental work of attention as what allows the text to maintain its illusion of independence from the consumer. Consequently, the New Critics were highly invested in disciplining their readers into attention, and developed a sophisticated theory of the reader's mind, which my study unpacks. Against this backdrop, close reading emerges as a pedagogical tool, which—though initially designed to serve aesthetic goals—was frequently deployed by the New Critics to serve political purposes, such as contouring the reader's national identity. In other instances, the manipulation of attention was marshaled to open up ethical potentials, cultivating the reader's receptivity to alterity.

New Criticism Int. further demonstrates the vital role New Criticism played in the rise of experimental modernist literary forms and in processes of canonization within the U.S., Brazil and Israel. Though the New Critics presented close reading as suitable for any literary text, this method was in effect devised to fit specific works, which these thinkers deemed conducive to attention and therefore helped canonize. On the other hand, New Criticism also generated literary counter-reactions to the imperative of attentive reading in the form of satires that mock the close reader, or literary texts fashioned to incite *in*attentive readerly modes.

The first part of *New Criticism Int.*, dedicated to American New Criticism, focuses on the dyad of Cleanth Brooks and William Faulkner. In the first chapter, I read Brooks' *The Well Wrought Urn* alongside his seminal interpretation of Faulkner, in order to demonstrate that, for Brooks, both reader and text function as an "urn" of sorts during the reading process. Brooks imagines the literary work to be a marker of a lifeless form waiting to be animated by the reader, and he instructs the reader to turn herself via attention into an urn, an empty chamber in which the dead (literary text) could revive. For that reason, Brooks instructs his readers to

model themselves after Faulkner's protagonist in *Absalom, Absalom!*, the suicidal Quentin Compson, who embodies the voices of the antebellum dead without integrating them into his sense of self. I further show that Brooks' conceptualization of readerly attention as self-suspension opens up an ethical possibility in the spirit of Jacques Derrida's "ethics of alterity." In the second chapter, I turn to *The Sound and the Fury* in order to examine whether Faulkner indeed cultivates in the reader a ghostly ontology, as Brooks suggested. I demonstrate that not only does Faulkner conceive of his reader metaphorically as a Quentinesque echoing "empty hall," but that he takes the acoustic aspect of this depiction literally. For Faulkner, the attentive reader is one who brings the text to life by making the novel's voice heard within her.

The following part of the dissertation revolves around the Brazilian iteration of New Criticism, namely, the *nova crítica*. In the third chapter, I follow the Brazilian adaptation of "close reading" into "exact reading" (*leitura exata*). I demonstrate that the Brazilian New Critics, led by the intellectual Afrânio Coutinho, conceptualized close reading as a practice that, through its emphasis on attention, can "cure" the Brazilian subject from her "innate" tendency for distracted thought. That is, "Exact reading" is thought of as involving a politically charged procedure of extraction: the reader's uprooting of her "savage" tendencies for the sake of "accurately" engaging with the text. I then read the short story "The Mirror" ("O espelho") by João Guimarães Rosa as a parodic critique of the attempt to de-savage the Brazilian reader. In the fourth chapter, I turn to Clarice Lispector's modernist novel, *The Apple in the Dark* (*A maçã no escuro*), which sets the stage for an alternative to "exact reading." I show that the book falsely presents itself as a crime novel in order to tap into and exaggerate the reader's habits of attention so as to fatigue her and bring about what I term *exhausted reading*, a mode of engagement with the text that hinges on sloth and fatigue, rather than attention.

The final two chapters engage with the Israeli adaptation and transformation of New Critical close reading into "maximalist reading" (קריאה מכסימלית). The fifth chapter focuses on the literary circle *Likrat* and the Tel Aviv School of Poetics and Semiotics, where "Maximalist reading" is developed as an apolitical cognitive reading method. The maximalist reader is required to suspend Israeli national affiliations in order to invest her mental efforts in integrating the various elements of the text. However, I argue that the ostensibly apolitical labor of mental "integration" in fact functioned as a response to the anxiety of social *disintegration* that saturated the Israeli 1970s political sphere. I then go on to demonstrate that the implicit affinity between formal and political (dis)integration comes to the fore in A. B. Yehoshua's novel *A Late Divorce* (*גירושים מאוחרים*). The final chapter looks at Yehuda Amichai's 1961 short story collection, *In This Terrible Wind* (*ברוח הנוראה הזאת*), which predates the TA School and develops in advance an alternative to maximalist reading. I claim that Amichai concatenated his metaphors to create a constant shift in the grounds of figurative mapping. In this manner, he invites the reader to reevaluate the fundamental premise that a stable denominator is perquisite for relationality to be established, whether between members of a community or between elements in a metaphorical concatenation.

Above and beyond their differences, the three global iterations of New Criticism this dissertation follows present close reading as a method predicated on the reader's active process of holding back the "personal" while interacting with the literary text. This mental process, I show, was taken to have profound political and ethical implications since it was seen as a determining force in the formulation of the reader's very subjectivity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation, though signed under one name, is in fact the result of a collective effort and an ongoing dialogue, which started at Tel Aviv University, where I earned my B.A. and M.A., and continued during my formative graduate school years at UC Berkeley. The idea for this project first emerged in the Department of Literature at TAU, where I was fortunate to work under the loving guidance of Iris Milner and Michael Gluzman, whose sharp critical thinking I took with me to Berkeley, and with whom I continually conversed throughout graduate school. The seven years that followed at UCB were invaluable to this study. In fact, this dissertation takes its very pulse from the Department of Comparative Literature at UC Berkeley, where I was not only exposed to the most contemporary and urgent theoretical debates in the field, but encouraged to roam diverse and experimental critical venues, and guided throughout these exciting journeys. In working on my dissertation, I was privileged to have the relentless support and intellectual stimulation of my committee. My advisor, Chana Kronfeld, provided me with a model of mentoring that I could only hope to adopt myself. She has allowed me to think aloud with her in class and outside of it, and always pushed my thoughts forward; she meticulously read every word of this project, and helped me through multiple drafts; and she instilled in me a much needed sense of intellectual self-worth. Dori Hale has been not only my gateway to American literature and thought, but a persistent and extremely generous intellectual interlocutor. It was in her seminar that I first developed my critical account of New Criticism, and in her dissertation group that I regularly presented and revised my work; in fact, her sharp and creative way of thinking is now engrained within me. Judith Butler was an inspiration for me long before I came to Berkeley, but in intimate conversations and in seminar rooms I discovered in her not only a provocative thinker but also a sensitive, open-minded, and supportive teacher. Finally, with Marília Librandi I was fortunate to dive deep into the world of Brazilian letters, a world which I have long watched from afar, and have since become at home in thanks to her endless kindness. I also owe a deep gratitude to other scholars at Berkeley: Robert Alter, who guided me through challenges in and outside translation, Miriam Sas, for whom I wrote my first paper on "attention," and Candance Slater, whose seminars I frequented time and again.

Various others have helped this project come to life. The Center for Jewish Studies at UCB is the central of them, where I was given opportunities to teach and present my work, and where Erica Roberts, and later Etta Heber always extended to me a helping hand. The support of the Helen Diller Fellowship, the Regents Intern Fellowship, and the Irving and Helen Betz Foundation Fellowship was invaluable during my first years at UCB, and granted me the peace of mind necessary for intense academic work. Later on, the Townsend Center for the Humanities Dissertation Fellowship, and the Posen Doctoral Fellowship assisted me through my final research years, and, even more importantly, helped me in building a warm intellectual community. In the context of the Townsend's weekly meetings, I encountered academics from a variety of disciplines and in different stages of their academic career, many of whom have become my close colleagues and friends. In the Posen yearly conferences I had the exciting opportunity to meet scholars working in the field of Jewish Studies, and share with them the love for this intimate field. In addition, this project has been endlessly nourished by the extraordinary friends who surrounded me throughout graduate school, and read my work from its messy first drafts to the final revisions: Taylor Johnston, Eyal Bassan, Alex Brostoff, Alex Catchings, Ayelet Even-Nur, Danny Luzon, Rosie Young, Ashley Brock, Sheer Ganor, Jamille Pinheiro, Gilad Sharvit, Yahil Zaban, Ami Schiess, and Monica VanBladel. Finally, this dissertation owes its existence to my beloved parents and my very own Noam, Eitan, and Doron; without them I would have been lost.

INTRODUCTION

CLOSE READING, ATTENTION, AND POLITICAL CHANGE: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE ON NEW CRITICISM

The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well.

–Walter Benjamin

Playing on John Crowe Ransom's iconic "New Criticism Inc.," *New Criticism Int.* is propelled by my deep sense that a critical intervention is required into the current heated debate over "close reading," namely, the formalist reading method promoted in mid-20th century by the American School of New Criticism. This scholarly discussion is of the outmost importance, given that although the theory behind close reading has long been declared "dead," it remains the prevailing operative method taught in a majority of undergraduate courses on critical reading and writing in the U.S., while also setting the tone for most MFA programs.[1] Already in the late 1970s, Evan Watkins observed that "while critical theory has achieved a much greater degree of sophistication in the last three decades, in practice, when we talk about individual poems, we still sound like New Critics"; and three decades later, Jane Gallop repeats that claim almost verbatim: "the fact is that for more than three decades and most recently in the theory era, literary studies in this country was dominated by the scholarly and especially the pedagogical practice of close reading."[2] However, what I find sorely missing from contemporary attempts to examine what it is that we do when we close read is precisely what I hope to bring to the table: a global, decentralizing perspective. That is, in the spirit of the new world literature movement, I advance a view of global intellectual circulation not as the passive regurgitation of the original by the receiving culture.[3] Instead, I

[1] As early as 1983, Robert Heilman expresses his concern "with the noises of 'Brooks is dead' (or ought to be)," which attest, in his mind, to "the homicidal tendencies of new aspirants to power" ("Cleanth Brooks and 'The Well Wrought Urn,'" *The Sewanee Review* 91, no. 2 [1983]: 323). Around the same time, Frank Lentricchia disputes the widely spread assumption that New Criticism is dead: "I must stipulate that in my view it [New Criticism] is dead in the way that an imposing and repressive father-figure is dead" (*After New Criticism* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980], xiii). Yet decades later, Nicholas Gaskill still writes about New Criticism: "my overall goal is not to dismiss these critics (no need to kick a school when it's down)" ("The Close and the Concrete: Aesthetic Formalism in Context," *New Literary History* 47, no. 4 [2016]: 506), and James Heffernan locates the "ashes of New Criticism… within the well-wrought spatiality" ("Ekphrasis and Representation," *New Literary History* 22, no. 2 [1991]: 299).

[2] Evan Watkins, *The Critical Act: Criticism and Community* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 5; Jane Gallop, "The Historicization of Literary Studies and the Fate of Close Reading," *Profession* 1 (2007), 182. Similarly, Paul de Man holds that "It can legitimately be said, for example, that, from a technical point of view, very little has happened in American criticism since the innovative works of New Criticism ("Semiology and Rhetoric," in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Rilke, and Proust* [New Haven: Yale University Press], 4); James F. English states that "neither the 'theory revolution of the late 1960s and 1970s nor the 'cultural turn' of the 1980s… has truly dislodged the framework that was put into place in the discipline's first half century… the eminently teachable method of close reading" ("Literary Studies," in *The Sage Handbook of Cultural Analysis*, ed. Tony Bennet and John Frow [London: Sage, 2008], 126-44); and Heather Love writes: "Close reading is at the heart of literary studies, a key credential in hiring and promotion, and the foundation of literary pedagogy; it is primarily through this practice that humanist values survive in the field" ("Close but Not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn," *New Literary History* 41, no. 2 [2010], 373).

[3] Though working through very different trajectories and methodologies, the key texts of the new world literature movement are David Damrosch's *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) and

examine the international travels of New Criticism with a focus on the active and dynamic role the so-called "periphery" of world literature played in originally and unexpectedly modifying the never-singular American "source" in accordance with the local languages, geographies, traditions of interpretation, and socio-political realities.

Exciting current engagements with close reading include the conceptualization of alternative modes of reading, such as "distant reading," "surface reading," "reparative reading," and "descriptive reading"[4]; New-Formalist rethinking of the method as a contemporary response to emerging digital tendencies in the humanities[5]; and much needed endeavors to undo the severance between this practice and its underlying theory by revisiting the history of New Criticism, as in works by Joseph North, Joshua Gang, and Helen Thaventhiran.[6] By and large, these interventions take as their basic assumption that New Criticism with its method of close reading was strictly an Anglo-American phenomenon. This is so much the case that while scholars of close reading ardently debate the affinity (or lack thereof) between the British predecessors of New Criticism and the school's American members, they rarely ask what occurred beyond the Anglophone orbit. In truth, as David Stewart's exceptional article on New Criticism in Taiwan has suggested, New Criticism had a wide international circulation.[7] In the same vein, my investigation focuses on Brazil and Israel. These two locations are in no way a random sample: the role New Criticism played in the Brazilian and Israeli intellectual, institutional, and literary history is remarkable. To illustrate, while the Portuguese terms for close reading (*leitura de perto*) and New Criticism (*nova crítica*) have been an inseparable part of the Brazilian humanist lexicon from the 1950s onwards, one cannot find a Hispanic equivalent for the School's name (it is usually referred to simply as "New Criticism"), and the Spanish "*lectura de cerca*" has only a modest circulation in the countries bordering Brazil. The tight Israeli and Brazilian intellectual bond with the American literary theory resulted, among other factors, from the personal border-crossing of two prominent local intellectuals: the Brazilian Afrânio Coutinho and the Israeli Benjamin Harshav

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Franco Moretti's "Conjectures on World Literature" (*New Left Review* 1 [2000]). Among the interesting recent elaborations of this theoretical lens are: Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); and Arianna Dagnino, *Transcultural Writers and Novels in the Age of Global Mobility* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2015).

[4] On surface reading, see Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," *Representations* 108, no. 1 (2009): 1-21. For distant reading, see Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review* 1 (2000): 54-69; *Distant Reading* (London: Verso Books), 2013; "Franco Moretti: A Response," *PMLA* 132, no. 3 (2017): 686-89. On reparative reading, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction is About You," in *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 1-41. On descriptive reading, see Heather Love, "Close but Not Deep," 371-91. Other interesting venues include the adaptation of Clifford Geertz's "Thick Description" into literary studies, as in the work of Stephen Greenblatt, "The Touch of the Real," *Representations* no. 59 (1997): 14-29; and, as Heather Love adds, the field of "new sociologies of literature," in the spirit of Leah Price, "Introduction: Reading Matter," *PMLA* 121, no. 1 (2006): 9-16.

[5] For an extensive discussion of the tension between New-Formalism, New Criticism, and the Digital Humanities, see Andrew Kopec, "The Digital Humanities, Inc.: Literary Criticism and the Fate of a Profession," *PMLA* 131, no. 2 (2016): 324-39.

[6] Joseph North, "What's 'New Critical' about 'Close Reading': I. A. Richards and His New Critical Reception," *New Literary History* 44, no. 1 (2013): 141-57; *Literary Criticism: A Concise Political History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Joshua Gang, "Behaviorism and the Beginnings of Close Reading," *ELH* 78, no. 1 (2011): 1-25; Helen Thaventhiran, *Radical Empiricists: Five Modernist Close Readers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[7] David M. Stewart, "New Criticism and Value in Taiwanese College English," *American Literature* 89, no. 2 (2017): 397-423.

(formerly, Hrushovski). The two traveled to the U.S. during the 1940s and 1950s respectively, studied under the guidance of New Critics, and in bringing this theory home, engendered nothing less than an institutional and cultural revolution. Coutinho ardently promoted his version of the American theory, the nova crítica, and in its spirit founded the first autonomous literature department in Brazil at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (1967); and in Israel, after returning from his Yale graduate studies under René Wellek, Harshav founded the first theory-oriented department of literature (The Department of General Literary Theory [*Ha-Chug le'Torat ha-Sifrut ha-klalit*, *החוג לתורת הספרות הכללית*] at Tel Aviv University), and within it, the renowned Tel Aviv School of Poetic and Semiotics, which was deeply engaged with American New Criticism (in Hebrew: Ha-bikoret ha-chadasha, *הביקורת החדשה*).[8] This is not to say that New Criticism was received intact in these two locations; in fact, it goes through significant alterations, aligned much more closely with positivism in Brazil and put in intense dialogue with Structuralism and Formalism in Israel. However, over and above these differences, the New Critical interpretive method is understood in the U.S., Brazil, and Israel as a technique of the self, as I will later discuss.

What is more, in both Brazil and Israel, the forceful entry of New Critical ideas into the cultural mainstream had a far-reaching influence on local literary production. The practice of close reading provoked exciting literary experiments that set the ground for, played around with, and tested the limits of the assumptions underlying this readerly practice. Several of these bold Brazilian and Israeli works went as far as to dramatize and theorize sophisticated alternatives to close reading, much before "distant" or "surface" reading were in sight. And this discovery sheds light on the link between New Criticism and literary trends in North America as well. My project, then, offers a new take on the genealogy of global modernism, and introduces a new literary archive conjoined with the New Critical creed, which includes the work of the American William Faulkner, the Brazilian João Guimarães Rosa and Clarice Lispector, and the Israeli A.B. Yehoshua and Yehuda Amichai. This archive reminds us that we should "theorize from, rather than into, the works we deem important," to ventriloquize Chana Kronfeld's paraphrase of Barbara Christian.[9] For example, as I demonstrate, Amichai meticulously fashioned his metaphors to invoke in the reader a "creative unintegrating reading" (a term I borrow from the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott), a mode of reading that was at odds with the local Israeli iteration of close reading. Unintegrating reading neither encourages the reader to integrate the various elements of the text into a coherent whole, nor afflicts her with a sense of utter disintegration; instead, it affords the reader an opportunity to linger with and enjoy the creative potentiality of disorganization, while affirming that an underlying connection does exist.

Importantly, the Brazilian and Israeli accounts of New Criticism expose essential facets of the American close reading method that have so far gone unnoticed. More specifically, the Brazilian and Israeli versions of close reading – "exact reading" (*leitura exata* or *leitura de perto*) and "maximalist reading" (*kri'a maximalit* or *kri'a tzemuda*) respectively – destabilize two deeply engrained assumptions about American New Criticism. First, that the American school viewed the literary text as independent of its consumer and was thus uninterested in the reader and her mind.[10] This stance is paradigmatically articulated by Terry Eagleton, who claims, "If the poem was really

[8] The Department's official name in English was "The Department of Poetics and Comparative Literature," but its main focus was theory rather than comparative literature.

[9] Chana Kronfeld, *The Full Severity of Compassion*: *The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 145; Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory," *Cultural Critique* 6 (1987): 51-64.

[10] As a political choice, I will refer to the reader in the feminine throughout the chapter (as I do in the dissertation as a whole), even when discussing thinkers who obviously imagined the reader to be a hegemonic white male.

to become an object in itself, New Criticism had to sever if from both author and reader."[11] This standpoint indeed jibes with the New Critics' explicit declarations (rather than implicit, as I will show) that literary criticism must "exclude personal registrations, which are declarations of the effect of the art-work upon the critic as reader. The first law to be prescribed to criticism… is that it shall be objective, shall cite the nature of the object rather than its effects upon the subject."[12] The second assumption challenged by these decentered iterations of the school is that close reading is either apolitical or rigidly conservative. This bifurcated assumption presents two sides of the same coin: the New Critics' presentation of the literary work as a pseudo-religious autonomous object (a "verbal icon") that should thus be read apolitically (without "extrinsic" information like historical or cultural background) is continually conceived as revealing these theorists' conservative ideology, their "wish for a social and intellectual world and a literature that expresses belief in… the ultimate union of warring dualism in the Word of God and the metaphor of poetry."[13] The Brazilian and Israeli interpretations of the American theory and practice call for a drastic qualification of these two assumptions. They do so by exposing the import of a central concept in the New Critical body of work that has largely passed under the scholarly radar: the concept of "attention."

As I will demonstrate in detail, the New Critics' image of the "attentive reader" is everywhere to be found, and it reveals an implicit theory of mind that consistently undergirds these critics' work, over and above their differences. While the New Critics explicitly described the poem as a unified object containing an immanent and stable meaning, they implicitly conceptualized the poem's "independent" status as, paradoxically, utterly dependent on the reader's active participation in its creation as such. More specifically, the American New Critics understood "attention" as an active internal process of temporary self-effacement, or, to use their terms, a cognitive effort on the reader's part to suspend the "personal" aspects of her subjectivity – bodily sensations, "private" memories, "idiosyncratic" associations – in order to invest her "analytical" faculties in the "integration" of the text, thus reinforcing the illusion that the literary work indeed presented itself to her as a "self-sufficient whole."[14] Readerly attention, then, was

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[11] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1996), 41; In a similar vein, Edward Wasiolek argues that the New Critics "cut off poetry not only from the world of meaning outside it but also from the inner world of the poet and reader" (Edward Wasiolek, "Introduction," in *The New Criticism in France*, by Serge Doubrousky, trans. Derek Coltman [Chicago: University of Chicago Press], 197).

[12] John Crowe Ransom, "Criticism, Inc*." VQR* 13, no. 4 (1937), https://www.vqronline.org/essay/criticism-inc-0.

[13] Grant Webster, *Republic of Letters*, 63; qtd. in John Paul Russo, *The Future Without a Past: The Humanities in a Technological Society* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 281. In the same spirit, Karen O'Kane argues that "the formalist precepts of the New Criticism" served as "a cover for their [the Nashville Group] Agrarianism's proto-fascism" ("Before the New Criticism: Modernism and the Nashville Group," *The Mississippi Quarterly* 51, no. 4 [1998]: 683). Moreover, against the backdrop of the questionable perception of New Criticism as apolitical, the 1970s-1980s cultural turn with its imperative to "always historicize" was understood as a backlash against the New Critical creed: "the New Critics would find it distressing in the extreme to witness the return of the politicized mode of criticism they thought they had successfully taught us to repress," writes Daniel Green ("Literature Itself: The New Criticism and Aesthetic Experience," *Philosophy and Literature* 27, no. 1 [2003]: 64). My argument calls for a reexamination of these ossified assumptions.

[14] A paradigmatic example of the New Critics' elevation of the "public" at the expense of the "private" and "idiosyncratic" is to be found in W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy." They write: "There is a difference between the internal and the external evidence for the meaning of a poem. And the paradox is only verbal and superficial that what is: (1) internal is also public: it is discovered through the semantics and syntax of the poem, through our habitual knowledge of the language, through grammar, dictionaries, and all the literature which is the source of dictionaries, in general through all that makes a language a culture; while what is (2) external is private and idiosyncratic; not a part of the work as a linguistic fact" (*The Sewanee Review* 54, no. 3 [1946]: 477).

taken to function as a condition for the emergence of the poem as autonomous. And as a consequence, the New Critics were invested in training and disciplining their readers' mental interaction with the literary text. Importantly, the Brazilian and Israeli intellectuals affiliated with New Criticism perceptively identified this latent yet steadfast pedagogical impulse, and accordingly conceptualized close reading as a tool for subject formation and readerly re-education. Thus, the Brazilian Afrânio Coutinho referred to I.A. Richards' didactic title *How to Read a Page* as best expressing the New Critical overall project (viewing the American theory as inseparable from its British roots, a topic I'll return to later on);[15] and the Israeli Tel Aviv School went as far as insisting that there is no inherent contradiction between the New Critical creed and Reader Response theories.[16]

These shrewd global interpretations of New Criticism, facilitated by the Israelis and Brazilians' command of both hegemonic and non-Western bodies of knowledge, do not only disclose the American scholars as being highly invested in exploring the reader's mind, and especially the reader's faculty of attention; their pedagogical preoccupation has had a deep political and ethical valence in the Israeli and Brazilian context, revealing that valence in turn in the American context as well. The New Critics' implicit theory of mind indicates that they perceived the reader's cognition as a vehicle for political change, one much more nuanced – at times bluntly leftist – than their biographical affiliation with Agrarianism might suggest.[17] The New Critics' conceptualization of the political is quite unusual, but this does not imply, of course, that it does not exist. For the American New Critics, and later on for the Brazilian and Israeli scholars as well, cognition is thought of as a political space: since the subject's mind plays a central role in organizing, and designing reactions to, the social reality around her, intervening in the reader's psyche constitutes a political intervention. In that spirit, Allen Tate, a central figure in the initial Vanderbilt core group of New Critics, sees no obstacle in drawing a direct link between the mental and the political realms in his depiction of the malaise of modernity, which is, he claims, "an intolerable *psychic* crisis expressing itself as a *political* crisis [emphasis in original]."[18] It follows, then, that modifying the singular mind might alter the political. For Tate, the mind is not an enclosed domain of bourgeois individualism. On the contrary, it is an open sphere that is constantly affecting and affected by the social: "What happens in one mind may happen as influence or coincidence, in another; when the same idea spreads to two or more minds of considerable power, it may eventually explode, through chain reaction, in a whole society; it may dominate a period or an entire epoch."[19] Tate's comment – as a paradigmatic example of what I will demonstrate is a pervasive New Critical assumption – qualifies John Fekete's claim that during the latter part of the

[15] Afrânio Coutinho, *Correntes cruzadas; questões de literatura* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora A Noite, 1953), 10.
[16] It is my view that the TA School astutely recognized that there is a link rather than a discontinuity between New Criticism and Reader-Response, which allowed the Israeli scholars to develop a reader-oriented approach prior to and in tandem with such thinkers as Wolfgang Iser and Robert Jauss. Charlotte Beck and John Roades make a similar claim in the American context by displaying the affinity (rather than rivalry) between Cleanth Brooks and his student, Stanley Fish ("'Stanley Fish Was My Reader': Cleanth Brooks, the New Criticism, and Reader-Response Theory," in *The New Criticism and Contemporary Literary Theory: Connections and Continuities*, eds. William J. Spurlin and Michael Fischer [New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995], 211-27).
[17] For an in-depth examination of the affinity between the New Critics and Southern Agrarianism, see D. Pickering, "The Roots of New Criticism," *The Southern Literary Journal* 41, no. 1 (2008): 93-108; Angie Maxwell, *The Indicted South: Public Criticism, Southern Inferiority, and the Politics of Whiteness* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 144-65.
[18] Allen Tate, "The Man of Letters in the Modern World," in *Essays of Four Decades* (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1968), 6.
[19] Tate, "The Man of Letters," 4.

1930s, the New Critics renounced "all sanction for the possibilities of reshaping the exterior world… to gain social sanction for the perfection of the interior world, the sensibility, through the strictly literary experience of life."[20] The reader's "sensibility," which I claim the New Critics conceptualized in terms of "attention," indeed became a locus of interest for the New Critics. But to differentiate from Fekete's stance, I believe these scholars did not renounce the "possibilities of reshaping the exterior world"; on the contrary, the mind, and specifically the capacity to self-divest via attention, became the vehicle for such intervention.

The New Critics in all three locations shaped their theory of mind in light of what they understood to be the most urgent political, and especially national, crisis. This is particularly salient in the Brazilian case, where *leitura exata* (to later circulate as *leitura de perto*) is explicitly presented as a mental "cure" to a national "disease." Coutinho and his followers internalize the demeaning colonial view of the Brazilian as a "savage" incapable of analytic thinking, and – inspired by New Critical vocabulary – frame this national problem in terms of "attention" and "distraction." These scholars perceived the practice of close reading, which enhances "attention," as a tool for battling the Brazilian "innate" tendency for distracted thought; through leitura exata they could educate the reader in suspending her "faulty" internal dispositions during her engagements with literature, in the hope that this training would later shape her interactions with the social world around her more generally. In that sense, the Brazilian case is emblematic of the multifaceted political dynamics that accompanied the understanding of close reading as a tool for subject formation; while it deepened racial stereotypes in Brazil, it also generated a striking revival in the field of Brazilian literary studies and literary production.

The readerly imperative of self-effacement held an ethical potentiality for the New Critics globally, as well. They viewed the mental process of attention-as-self-suspension as democratizing, striping all readers of their particularity – including differences in education or socio-economic status – thus leveling the reading process. More profoundly, the labor of attention was understood as an ethical gesture towards the literary text as an Other. Instead of approaching the text in an attempt to own it, to wholly wrap one's head around it, or to capitalize on its status or knowledge for the benefit of enlarging the self, the New Critics advanced an encounter with literature guided by respect for what they saw as an alterity, an encounter in which the now partly-effaced reader attempts to animate the text without seizing or consuming it. In sum, the circulation of close reading forces to the fore the delicate and ongoing dialogue that took place globally between New Criticism as an academic theory, the pedagogical instruction of close reading, the political and ethical subject formation of readers, and the development of local modernist aesthetics in these specific social and cultural contexts.

▪ CLOSE READING AND ATTENTION-AS-SELF-SUSPENSION

That the affinity between close reading and attention has so far gone unexamined could very well be the result of habituation. The two are presented together not only in the writings of the New Critics, but also, and more explicitly so in a variety of undergraduate guides to critical reading and writings and in sophisticated accounts of literary theory. In all these manifestations, however, "attention" appears undefined, and the source of the association between this readerly practice and mental state goes unquestioned. Thus, for example, the undergraduate guide *Falling in Love with Close Reading* instructs its readers that "the more carefully we pay attention, the closer we read,

[20] John Fekete, *The Critical Twilight: Explorations in the Ideology of Anglo-American Literary Theory from Eliot to McLuhan* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1977), 45.

the more that can be revealed," and *Writing Analytically* guarantees that its two basic heuristics will "retrain your focus and your attention from the global (general) to the local."[21] Similarly, the *California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy* states, "the Standards also lay out a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century… Students who meet the Standards readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature."[22] Even Paul de Man, the guru of deconstruction, echoes this terminology when he defines close reading as a method in which "delicate attention is paid to the reading of forms," and Terry Eagleton claims that "paying due attention to the text" is the core of the New Critics' technique.[23] Finally, in *Close Reading: The Reader*, Andrew DuBois goes as far as to establish attention as the condition of possibility for the practice: "Paying attention: almost anyone can do it; and it's not requisite for reading, but for reading well? … As a term, *close reading* hardly seems to leave the realm of so-called common sense, where it would appear to mean something understandable and vague like 'reading with special attention.'"[24] The truth of the matter is that attention is indeed "requisite" for close reading, but there is nothing simply "understandable" or "commonsensical" about the New Critical subtle definition of this "special" mental state.

Attention is a central concept that can be traced throughout the writings of I. A. Richards, William Empson, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, René Wellek, Austin Warren, William Wimsatt, and Monroe C. Beardsley, to name but a few. In all these instances, attention is made to explicitly signify a mental labor that allows the subject to distinguish between "relevant" and "irrelevant" textual meanings, the former defined as ones that independently arise from the text, and the latter as rooted in the private and "irrelevant" experience of the reader. One of the clearest iterations of this stance is Wimsatt and Beardsley's seminal "The Intentional Fallacy": "Judging a poem is like judging a pudding or a machine… Poetry succeeds because all or most of what is said or implied is relevant; what is irrelevant has been excluded, like lumps from pudding and 'bugs' from the machinery."[25] Wimsatt and Beardsley present "irrelevant" meanings as already absent when the reader encounters the text, excluded earlier on either by the writer or by the very nature of poetry ("what is irrelevant *has been* excluded"). This view, however, is constantly undermined by the New Critics themselves, who imply that this process of differentiation in fact comes about through the reader's active and learned ability to mentally put on hold her subjectivity while engaging with the literary text. In that vein, Wimsatt and Beardsley go on to add: "For all the objects of our manifold experience, for every unity, there is an action of the mind which cuts off roots, melts away context"[26]; this "action of the mind" is attention, the ability of the reader to "melt away" her individual presence – the "context" of reception – in order to become an empty space in which the work could reverberate. In René Wellek and Austin Warren's words, this process constitutes "loving attention":

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[21] Christopher Lehman, and Kate Roberts, *Falling in Love with Close Reading: Lessons for Analyzing Texts and Life* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2013), 15; David Rosenwasser, and Jill Stephen, *Writing Analytically*, 6th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Publishing, 2011), 23.

[22] California State Board of Education, *California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy*, California Department of Education, 2013, 2.

[23] Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1986, 27; Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, 41.

[24] Andrew DuBois, "Close Reading: An Introduction," in *Close Reading: The Reader*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Andrew DuBois (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 4.

[25] Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," 469.

[26] Ibid., 480.

> [The aesthetic experience] is connected with feeling… and the senses; but it objectifies and articulates feeling – the feeling finds, in the work of art, an "objective correlative," and it is detached from sensation and conation by its object's frame of fictionality. The aesthetic object is that which interests me for its own qualities, which I do not endeavor to reform or turn into a part of myself, appropriate, or consume. The aesthetic experience is a form of contemplation, a loving attention to qualities and qualitative structures.[27]

As Wellek and Warren's terminology evinces, the New Critical process of training attention is dialectical, simultaneously driven by a disciplining Foucauldian thrust and a countervailing ethical impulse. The reader is taught to actively and violently make her individual presence invisible ("an action of the mind which *cuts off roots*"; "[The aesthetic experience] is *detached* from sensation and conation"), but this self-erasure is also understood as a form of ethical interaction with the literary text as an alterity that deserves its own autonomy within the reading subject; the literary work is an aesthetic object which "I do not endeavor to reform or turn into a part of myself, appropriate, or consume," a topic I'll return to later on. In that respect, Wellek and Warren's emotional terminology might seem perplexing, presenting the aesthetic experience as connected with the reader's "feeling" and "the senses"; but the task of "attention" is precisely to put off the subject's senses. The reader opens up to the feelings that arise from the "object" (Eliot's "objective correlative") by shutting down her own via attention; she lends herself to the work of art which "objectifies" her feelings and cognizes the aesthetic experience into a "form of contemplation" rather than feeling. The "loving" attribute associated with attention, then, refers less to the subject's love as desire and more to the ethical dimension of affection, the willingness to surrender oneself to the text as an alterity at the price of momentary self-erasure.

This common understanding of attention does not in any way eliminate the differences between the American New Critics and their British precursors, or among the American scholars themselves; yet it does call into question recent attempts to draw a solid line of demarcation between the reading method proposed and practiced by the Cambridge scholars and their Vanderbilt colleagues on the other side of the Atlantic. A vocal proponent of this view, Joseph North, claims that Richards and Empson, the "Cambridge League-of-Nations liberals, internationalist, cosmopolitan, and secularist," put together "an incipiently materialist practice of close reading, based on an instrumental or (loosely speaking) pragmatic aesthetics, directed towards an advanced utilitarian model of aesthetic and practical education," that is, a practice intended to "intervene in the context of reception… the minds of actual, living readers" and to "use literature as a tool of aesthetic education for the improvement of people's lives."[28] By contrast, he depicts the American New Critics as "Southern U. S. Christian political and cultural conservatives" who "remade and institutionalized [close reading] as a thoroughly idealistic practice, based on a neo-Kantian aesthetics of disinterest and transcendent value, directed towards religious cultural conservatism."[29] North contends that in this process of transition and adaptation from the utilitarian to the autonomous model of aesthetics, what was truly neglected from the original British understanding of the close reading practice was the reader. He writes: "From this point onwards, 'aesthetic value' was to be thought of as residing, not in anything the text could be used to achieve

[27] René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 3rd edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 251.
[28] Joseph North, "What's New Critical," 141, 142, 146. Reissued in North's *Literary Criticism*, 26-55.
[29] North, "What's New Critical," 142.

in the mind of the reader, but somehow solely in the text itself."[30] Yet this diametrical opposition requires reevaluation. If the American New Critics, as I suggest, did in fact develop a theory of mind in order to enhance their readers' capacity to attend, as I suggest, then it is hardly the case that they were not interested in educating "the minds of actual, living readers." And this purported opposition is further called into question if one considers the British scholars' project as more complex than it might appear, expressing not only a will to "improve people's lives" but also a desire to control and manipulate readers in order to mitigate anxieties not altogether "liberal."

As Isobel Armstrong persuasively argues, Richards' investment in readerly affect was "intended not… for *recognizing* affect and responding to it, but for *controlling* it [emphasis in the original]."[31] Though she does not discuss attention specifically, Armstrong makes a strong case for the regulating aspect of Richards' theory and practice. I would add that a similar strand runs through Empson's work as well. As Richards declares in the opening to his celebrated *Practical Criticism*, his new approach to reading is designed to,

> modify our procedure in certain forms of discussion… the sphere of random beliefs and hopeful guesses… poetry is a central and typical denizen of this world… it serves, therefore, as an eminently suitable *bait* [emphasis in original] for anyone who wishes to trap the current opinions and responses in this middle field… I hope not only to present an instructive collection of contemporary opinions, presuppositions, theories, beliefs, responses and the rest, but to make some suggestions towards a better control of these tricksy components of our lives."[32]

Richards is not only preoccupied with improving his readers' lives through poetry, but with controlling their reactions in order to protect poetry from them (from their "random beliefs and hopeful guesses"). That is, poetry is a "bait" through which he can "trap" and discipline his readers' patterns of "opinions and responses." Richards harkens back to "control" when he depicts his "new technique" in further detail: it is to instill in the reader "something comparable to a 'perspective' which will include and enable us to *control* and 'place' the rival meanings that bewilder us in discussion and hide our minds from one another."[33] When discussing poetry, Richards claims, "rival" meanings arise in different readers' minds due to their subjective differences (their minds are singular and thus "hidden" from, and not easily legible to, others); in order to "control" that aesthetic discussion and establish the impression that the text embeds a meaning visible to all, his technique will make the readers' minds more public, less secluded. In other words, if the reader learns to govern her "irrelevant" subjective associations, then she can render herself transparent. To do so, she must mentally suspend her subjectivity:

> Making up our minds about a poem is the most delicate of all possible undertakings… What we "make up," that momentary trembling order in our minds, is exposed to countless irrelevant influences. Health, wakefulness, distractions, hunger and other instinctive tensions, the very quality of the air we breathe, the humidity, the light, all affect us. No one

[30] Ibid., 154.
[31] Isobel Armstrong, "Textual Harassment: The Ideology of Close Reading, or How Close Is Close?," *Textual Practice* 9, no. 3 (1995): 404.
[32] I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1950), 5-6.
[33] Ibid., 9.

> at all sensitive to rhythm, for example, will doubt that the new pervasive, almost ceaseless, mutter or roar of modern transport, replacing the rhythm of the footstep or the horses' hoofs, is capable of interfering in many ways with our reading of verse."[34]

The body's reaction to air, humidity, and light, its health, wakefulness and hunger, get in the way of the reading process. To put this in Wimsatt and Beardsley's terms, these "influences" might threaten the workings of the poem as a perfect machine by afflicting it with external "irrelevant bugs" (Richards himself, after all, considered books "machines to think with").[35] For that reason, an "action of the mind" must "cut off roots" for Wimsatt and Beardsley, or act as a counterforce to "distraction" for Richards; the mind must suspend the intervention of so-called subjective experiences in the reading of the text. Richards' paragraph also suggests that for him these distractions are not an ahistorical problem, but a specifically modern one. It is the "new," "pervasive," and "almost ceaseless" mutter of mechanized modern life with its artificial rhythms that "interferes" with the "our reading of verse." No new techniques might have been necessary had "the footstep or the horses' hoofs" still been the soundtrack for the reading process; not very "internationalist" or "cosmopolitan" this! With a similar critique of modernity, Empson in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* laments the "alarming" changes occurring to the English language which hence "needs nursing by the analyst very badly indeed."[36] Consequently, he states, "the machinery I have been using upon poetry is going to become increasingly necessary if we are to keep the language under control."[37] The "machinery" and "control" that resound through Richards and Wimsatt's language, with its overtones of conservative anxiety, puts their interest in "the minds of actual, living readers" in a new and much more disciplining light; it thus challenges North's categorical political binary, derived mainly from biography.

Richards makes manifest the link between mental "control" generally and "attention" specifically in *How to Read a Page*, where he explains that meaning comes into being through "exclusive attention."[38] This process allows readers to distinguish the "things capable of abstraction" from personal "wishes," "impulses," or the "cargo of emotions," another version of Wimsatt and Beardsley's "relevant" and "irrelevant" meanings:

> In reading we discern meaning from a passage with its various parts (the words) seeming to have forms of sense of their own… the meaning as interpreted by exclusive attention in such forms I will term "Proper Meaning"… They [these forms of sense of meaning] are

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[34] Richards, *Practical Criticism*, 298-9.

[35] I. A. Richards, *How to Read a Page: A Course in Effective Reading*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1961), 10.

[36] William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (New York: New Directions, 1966), 236.

[37] Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, 237.

[38] There is a critical consensus that I. A. Richards' "science of criticism is underpinned by psychology" (West, 4). A lively debate is currently underway as to the specific branch of psychology Richards was most affiliated with. In that vein, Joshua Gang claims that behaviorism was at the basis of Richards' literary theory; David West also emphasizes behaviorism, but discusses philosophical psychology, neurology, and experimental psychology as well; and Chanita Goodblatt along with Joseph Glicksohn identifies Gestalt psychology as Richards' main theoretical and methodological orientation. I do not intend to take sides in this debate beyond suggesting a reexamination of Richards' ongoing investment in "attention" as perhaps indebted to his mentor and teacher James Ward, whose psychological theory centered on this concept. See David West, *I.A. Richards and the Rise of Cognitive Stylistics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Gang, "Behaviorism and the Beginnings of Close Reading," 1-25; Chanita Goodblatt, and Joseph Glicksohn, "From Practical Criticism to the Practice of Literary Criticism," *Poetics Today* 24, no. 2 (2003): 207-36.

> different to our wishes, being just themselves, namely the realization of things capable of abstraction from that instance of actuality with its cargo of emotion. "Proper Meaning" is devoid of impulse. Reading is the triumph of abstraction in educated human experience… How can…Proper Meaning be devoid of impulse?… the point… is that *which* cargo (what impulse) it has in it does not depend (or should not) on *our* wishes and attitudes as momentary readers [emphasis in the original]… Thus even with emotion we abstract all the time and put a barrier between our attitudes to the page and the feelings the page carries.[39]

Exclusive attention is the triumphant result of education ("the triumph of abstraction in educated human experience"), which allows the reader to distinguish between her own emotional cargo ("*our* wishes and attitudes as momentary readers") and the "emotional cargo" embedded in the text itself. Attention, in other words, functions as a "barrier"; it is a way of holding certain parts of the reader back while interacting with the ostensibly independent "feelings the page carries." In another rendition of this idea, Richards writes that "exclusive attention" is how "Reason… fights with pressure groups among the desires which try to make us misread." And this realization is of the highest importance for him, since understanding and "improving" the way "Reason" works as we read can determine "not only how we read but what we who read will be." For Richards, then, and as I argue for the New Critics more generally, enhancing attention-as-self-suspension during the reading process is a form of subject formation.[40]

On the other side of the Atlantic, the allegedly "idealist" Southern critics echo Richards quite clearly on the need to educate readers in mentally creating a barrier between themselves and the page. More importantly, they depict a complex picture in which worthy literature is that which facilitates the reader's work of attention and in that manner helps her in ways unrelated to literature. Very much like the British theorists, then, the American New Critics are highly invested in what "the text could be used to achieve in the mind of the reader." Allen Tate phrases this idea as a question: "Is the purpose of teaching imaginative works to provide materials upon which the critical faculty may exercise itself in its drive towards the making of critical systems, which then perpetuate themselves without much reference to literature?"[41] The "critical faculty" Tate has in mind is, as I argue, closely linked with the process of self-depletion:

> If criticism undertakes the responsibility and the privilege of a strict theory of knowledge, the critic will need all the humility that human nature is capable of, almost the self-abnegation of the saint. Is the critic willing to test his epistemology against a selfless

[39] Richards, *How to Read a Page*, 91-3.

[40] It is along these lines that Frances Ferguson offers her criticism of Richards, when she writes: "A. Richards, setting out to put criticism on a solid basis, banished all the things about which readers might have opinions before and after they read a particular text. They were henceforth irrelevant associations because they obtruded the personal in a fashion that would make it hard to arrive at reading for a generality. All the beliefs that readers cared about in the lives they live when they didn't focus their attention on a novel or a poem particularized them, made them persons who thus disqualified themselves to speak about literature conceived in universalizing terms." Paradigmatically, Ferguson does not linger on her use of "attention" with regards to Richards and his practice of close reading ("they obtruded the personal… when they didn't *focus their attention* on a novel"); yet she deftly identifies that focusing one's attention on the text signified for Richards not only the bettering of "people's lives" in North's terms, but also the erasure of "the personal," namely, the reader as a "particularized" subject whose "opinions" or "associations" are "irrelevant" to the universalized meaning of the text ("Now It's Personal: D.A. Miller and Too Close Reading," *Critical Inquiry* 41, no. 3 [2015]: 524).

[41] Allen Tate, "Is Literary Criticism Possible?," in *Essays of Four Decades* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1968), 35.

> reading of *The Rape of the Lock*, *War and Peace*, or a lyric by Thomas Nashe? Or is his criticism merely the report of a quarrel between the imagined life of the work and his own "philosophy"?[42]

Tate obviously advocates for "self-abnegation" and a "selfless reading" even whilst he's aware of the acute "epistemological" effort such a take would require ("what critic has ever done this?" he writes in concluding his discussion).[43] And this advocation for selflessness, Tate makes clear, is not only driven by a will to guard the text from the reader's subjectivity, but also an attempt to sketch a more general ethical alternative for interacting with literature as alterity, a capacity that then might "perpetuate… without much reference to literature."[44] Likewise, Cleanth Brooks delineates self-suspension as an almost unachievable ideal which nevertheless should mark the critical horizon of expectation. He asks, "Should all criticism, then, be self-effacing and analytic?" and answers "of course not," since "in practice, the critic's job is rarely a purely critical one." However, above and beyond practicality, "it will do the critic no harm to have a clear idea of what his specific job as a critic is." That is, in its purity, "the specific job" of the critic indeed involves an endeavor of "self-effacing." That these critics are aware of the distinction between an ideal critic-as-reader and the actual perceiver of literature does not turn their project less pedagogical; they are presenting the reader with self-negation via attention as a goal, which one can aspire to, even if not reach. To wit, the New Critics, like their British predecessors, understood the endeavor to develop a reading method as inextricably intertwined with the need to develop a readerly theory of mind and educate the reader in efficiently utilizing her faculty of attention during and after the reading process. In that spirit, Tate presents his critical project as an alternative to what he believes is an inadequate theory of mind that governs the pedagogy of literature. "The happy theory of spontaneous understanding," he explains, assumes that presenting enough objects of literature to the "student's mind" – a "miraculous combination of the *tabula rasa* and innate powers of understanding" – will automatically activate "spontaneous intelligence" and educate the mind "without thought."[45] By contrast, Tate views the reader's mind neither as a "*tabula rasa*" nor as "innately" disposed for the reading process; he takes the mind to require training, a process which should be inseparable from the New Critical project. Graduate students, he claims, must be told, "it might be possible, after severe application, to learn how to read."[46]

Frank Lentricchia points out the imperative of self-depletion recorded in the New Critical creed without relating it to attention specifically or to mental education more generally. He does

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[42] Tate, "Is Literary Criticism Possible?," 42.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Tate's call for self-abnegation might seem to have a religious undertone to it, especially if we recall that Tate's contribution to the infamous *I'll Take My Stand* was titled "Remarks on the Southern Religion." But, in principle, Tate was more concerned with form than with religion, as Bruce Bawer notes, which reconciles his explicit political conservatism with his admiration of experimental modernism ("Religious Atheist: The Case of Allen Tate," *The Hudson Review* 55, no. 1 [2002], 167-75). Similarly, David Marno's recent work on John Donne points out that the New Critics' interest in Donne's devotional understanding of "attention," was not fueled by theological preoccupations but with an interest with literary form. Though Marno does not specify what "attention" meant for the New Critics, he makes clear that their view was different from Donne's, who designed his poems to provoke "holy attention" in the reader as a "preparation for prayer" (*Death Be Not Proud: The Art of Holy Attention* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017], 28, 2). To continue in Marno's line of thought, my sense is that the New Critics understood attention in terms of cognitive self-control rather than as a preparation for a potential encounter with the divine.

[45] Tate, "Is Literary Criticism Possible?," 33.

[46] Ibid., 34.

so from a point of view of disdain towards the ahistorical thrust of New Criticism, which he believes persists in American literary criticism, notwithstanding the theory's ostensible rejection by later critical trends. He argues that Georges Poulet's phenomenology was so positively received in the U.S. since it coincided with the New Critical image of "the critical reader becoming a transparency who presents the thought of others without distortion," an "objective, nonideological reader" who is engaged in "self-effacement, and perfect openness to the Other."[47] Not only do I agree with Lentricchia about the New Critics' view of the (educated) reader as a "transparency," I also share his view that it resonates with later post-structuralist theories. However, I take issue with his negative value judgment of this ideal attentive reader.

As I will discuss in the two opening chapters of the dissertation, the New Critics' drive to mold a reader who is mentally "open to the Other" unexpectedly foreshadows Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist "ethics of alterity" and concept of "hauntology" (his portmanteau of "haunting" and "ontology"). In destabilizing the Freudian preference for "mourning" over "melancholia," Derrida suggests that a melancholic approach to the Other holds an ethical valence. While in "mourning," the lost Other is fully integrated into the self (decataxis), in the melancholic state the Other occupies the subject as an internal "foreign enclave," at the price of self-depletion; that is, the hauntological Other acts as an autonomous entity within the subject, a position which leaves "the other [its] alterity." For the New Critics, the literary text functions not unlike Derrida's "other." This is already evident in Wellek and Warren's abovementioned definition of the aesthetic experience as an encounter with literature devoid of the "endeavor to reform or turn [it] into a part of myself, appropriate, or consume," and in Tate's petition for "selfless reading." A similar stance arises from Ransom's "Poetry: A Note on Ontology," where he defends his predilection for Physical Poetry (focusing on the material object) over Platonic Poetry (centering, like science, on ideas). According to Ransom, Platonic poetry assumes that "we can lay hold of image and take it captive," but thus leads us to lose "the power of imagination, or whatever faculty it is by which we are able to contemplate things as they are in their rich and contingent materiality."[48] Counterintuitively – the conventional association of attention with scientific thought notwithstanding – the "faculty" Tate believes Platonic poetry does *not* enhance is "attention": while "scientific predication concludes an act of attention," Ransom claims, Physical Poetry "initiates one."[49] Attention is what allows for the suspension of subjectivity along with its "impulse" of "Platonism" which makes us believe that "by the force of reasoning we shall possess it [nature]"; in this manner, attention paves the way for the reader "to approach the object as such, and in humility":

> The aesthetic moment appears as a curious moment of suspension; between the Platonism in us, which is militant, always scientific and devouring, and a starved inhibited aspiration towards innocence which, if it could only be free, would like to respect and know the object as it might of its own accord reveal itself.[50]

Close reading, for Ransom, entails actively resisting the will to "capture" and "devour" the text; instead, it is contingent on the ability of "the mind" – which is "unexpectedly stubborn in its

[47] Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism*, 70.
[48] John Crowe Ransom, "Poetry: A Note on Ontology," in *Close Reading: The Reader*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Andrew DuBois (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 45-6.
[49] Ransom, "Poetry: A Note on Ontology," 60.
[50] Ibid., 53.

determination not really to be hardened in Platonism" – to "respect and know the object" in its autonomy, "as it might of its own accord reveal itself." For that reason, Ransom concludes his argument with the endorsement of Metaphysical Poetry as a kind of Physical Poetry that "suggests to us that the object is perceptually or physically remarkable, and we had better attend to it": attending is the ability to entertain the object in its "remarkability" without trying to "possess" it; it is the capacity to leave "the other [its] alterity" within the self.[51]

Both Heather Love and Ian Hunter have recently claimed close reading to advance an ethics expressed via an "ascetic-pedagogical dimension," that is, the understanding of "the reading of literature [as] the privileged site of moral education and self-making."[52] Yet, for them, this ethics is "humanist"; in Love's words, "it is primarily through this practice [close reading] that humanist values survive in the field [of literature]."[53] To differentiate, I take the ethics of New Critical close reading to be anti- or post-humanist, instructing the reader in deadening herself, in becoming a self-deprived ghost in which the enlivened text could play itself out.[54] That is, close reading as the very bedrock of the discipline of literature has much more in common with deconstruction's "ethics of alterity," in my mind, than with either humanism or Kantian idealism.

▪ AN AESTHETICS OF ATTENTION

On the whole, close reading is taught today as a practice fit for any literary text, regardless of genre classification or period and region of publication. This pedagogical convention is a result of the neutralization of the method from its underlying theory, making it even more universal and ahistorical than the New Critics sought to present it. Even in Routledge's highly self-aware *Engagements with Close Reading*, Annette Federico, who begins by depicting this method as one of many, formulated in a specific time and place, ends up favoring close reading, since she believes it "supersedes" any specific theory or literary form: "close reading… [is] the end or goal of the theorizing – it's what we *do* with literature [emphasis in original]…So throughout this book I offer many examples by formalist, subjective, and ethical critics to show the different ways close reading may be done."[55] However, as Chana Kronfeld deftly notes with regard to the Israeli

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[51] Ibid., 60.

[52] Love, "Close but Not Deep," 372; Ian Hunter, "The History of Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 33 (2006): 78-112.

[53] Love, "Close but Not Deep," 373.

[54] More specifically, Hunter argues that while New Criticism and the literary theory that displaced it both have an intensely "ascetic-pedagogical dimension," in New Criticism "this takes the form of a routinely ruthless exposure of literary seminarians to the inner chagrin of an impossibly concrete meaning"; in literary theory, by contrast, "it takes place as a more self-conscious ascesis of the transcendental *epoché*, which requires a fundamental act of self-forbidding as a condition of obtaining the fleeting sense of transcendental openness" (Hunter, "The History of Theory," 107). In my mind, self-forbidding and self-openness form inseparable parts of the hermeneutics of the self both in New Criticism and in Deconstruction.

[55] Annette Federico, *Engagements with Close Reading* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 6. Catherine Gallagher adds that this neutralization permitted "what came to be thought of simply as techniques of 'close reading' or 'practical criticism'" to be used uncritically in literary interpretations guided by "Freudian and Jungian Psychoanalysis, existentialism, archetypal analysis, Marxism, and structuralism" ("The History of Literary Criticism," *Daedalus* 126, no. 1 [1997]: 140). It is important to note that Federico distinguishes between the New Critical technique of close reading and the close reading she will be presenting in her book: "Close Reading: traditionally, a mode of literary engagement that *concentrates* on the operations of language in a text, to the exclusion of historical or biographical context; here, a strategy that emphasizes the point of contact between the reader and the text in order to *concentrate* on a work's formal elements; on the reader's role in creating meaning; and on the ideas and values implied in the work" (185; emphases added). This distinction notwithstanding, both versions of close reading include the mental

adaptation of New Criticism, close reading must be examined in relation to its contemporaneous literary trends since it was developed to fit and promote these models.[56] This corrective was pointed out self-consciously by John Crowe Ransom, who wrote, "The poetry which deals with things was much in favour a few years ago with the resolute body of critics [the New Critics]. And the critics affected the poets. If necessary, they became the poets, and triumphantly illustrated the new mode."[57] Investigating the fundamentals of close reading, then, one must take into account the literary production ("the new mode") that surrounded the New Critics globally, the writers and literary trends they were "in favor" of, and the works they deemed less worthy of inquiry or even, as Ransom writes, "worthy of imitation." In the rare cases in which this affinity is discussed (almost exclusively in the context of American literature), it is repeatedly assumed to be one-directional; the New Critics are accused (or rarely praised) for forcing their aesthetic and ideological criteria on the body of literature they encountered. John Guillory's "The Ideology of Canon Formation: T. S. Eliot and Cleanth Brooks" is paradigmatic in this regard, asserting that the canon which first "emerged in T. S. Eliot's earlier criticism, was presented as canon by Cleanth Brooks in *The Well Wrought Urn*, and has since become institutionalized to a greater or lesser degree in the curricula of university English departments."[58] According to Guillory, the ideology of New Criticism neutralized the reason that "*some* literature" is seen as "worth preserving" and "*innately* superior" [emphasis in the original].[59] As prominent cultural figures, The New Critics clearly had an impact on processes of canonization worldwide, but the relationship between literary theory and literary production, and between New Criticism and High Modernism specifically, is much more layered and reciprocal in nature, informed as well by complex processes of translation, international affiliations, and disciplinary institutionalization.

More specifically, I argue that the New Critics did not only affect canonization, and were informed by existing literary trends, but that their model of readerly subjectivity inspired literary production as well, creative attempts to rethink – and at times drastically combat – the notion of attentive reading. To illustrate the dialogue between close reading and modernism experiments, I read the short-story "The Mirror" (*O espelho*) by the Brazilian Jõao Guimarães Rosa as an acidic parody of the self-effacing "exact" reader. Rosa sardonically challenges the assumption that the "savage" properties of the Brazilian reader indeed hinder analytic thinking. As I mentioned above, I also identify works that astutely and delicately theorized alternatives to close reading and strove to provoke in the reader counter-attentive states of mind; such is the case with Clarice Lispector's "exhausted reading," and Yehuda Amichai's "unintegrating reading." To clarify, I do not assume that these writers necessarily set out to deliberately carve a literary response to New Criticism, only that the figure of the close reader had such a strong presence in the culture of their time that it, perhaps unwittingly, entered and shaped their oeuvre in significant ways. In addition, I follow texts that were written in tandem with, or shortly before, the rise of New Criticism, and were in turn adopted by proponents of New Criticism in its three iterations as perfect examples for an aesthetics that promotes attention, a perception that drastically and indefinitely changed these works' reception. This is the case with the work of William Faulkner, whose endorsement by the

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state of "concentration," which brings home my argument that from its very inception close reading is undergirded by a presupposition about the attentive mental state of the reader.

[56] Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 125.

[57] Ransom, "Poetry: A Note on Ontology," 44.

[58] John Guillory, "The Ideology of Canon-Formation: TS Eliot and Cleanth Brooks," *Critical Inquiry* 10, no. 1 (1983): 173.

[59] Ibid., 174.

New Critics is usually – and mistakenly, in my mind – taken to be independent of their aesthetic theory and practice. Consequently, I ask what attributes of Faulkner's novels were identified by the American (and later on, the Israeli) New Critics as enhancing close reading.

My investigation focuses on prose-fiction, a decision which might seem imprudent given that the New Critics were globally more invested in poetry.[60] But this apparent inadequacy is precisely what motivated my choice. I have consistently found that New Critical engagements with prose-fiction, albeit infrequent, push the method's boundaries to their limits and consequentially bring to the fore the basic contours of close reading. This is quite visible, for example, in the Israeli case, where Yehuda Amichai's poetry is celebrated by the critics affiliated with New Criticism, since they believed it incited readerly attention in its local iteration. Amichai's prose-fiction, on the other-hand, published alongside his verse, was received with resounding silence by the same theorists. The reason, I demonstrate, is that in Amichai's prose-fiction, the distracting thrust of his famous metaphoric constructions comes fully into view. Amichai's oeuvre, then, provides us with a sort of Israeli attention-scale, demonstrating where literary form became too "wild" or "loquacious" to fit close reading in the eyes of the local critics.

As in the case of Amichai, the concept of "attention" figures prominently in both the positive and negative global New Critical evaluation of the short literary works my dissertation analyzes. That is, works admired by the American New Critics and their international affiliates are often presented as enhancing attention-as-self-suspension, while the works found lacking are charged with provoking "distraction." However, this conceptualization is unstable in the New Critical body of work, especially within the U.S., leaving ambiguous the agency of the reader in relation to attention. At times, valuable literature is defined as one whose form elicits attention in the reader as a passive recipient. In other instances, attention is presented as a readerly skill that can be actively applied to any literary text whatsoever. And every so often, works will be presented as holding universal value, utterly independent of the reader's mental response. This internal tension is evident, for example, in the writings of Ransom, who refers in "Criticism Inc." to T. S. Eliot's objection to romanticism as exemplary of the formalist criticism he tries to advance: "the literary critic also has something to say about romanticism, and it might come to something like this: that romantic literature is imperfect in objectivity, or 'aesthetic distance,' and that out of this imperfection comes its weakness of structure." In this iteration, the value of the work appears universal, and the critic-as-reader identifies its inherent "weak[ness]" of "structure," notwithstanding its capacity to provoke attention. This view is in line with Ransom's above quoted statement that literary criticism must "exclude personal registrations, which are declarations of the effect of the art-work upon the critic as reader." On the other hand, in his *New Criticism*, Ransom discusses the intensity of the reader's psychological reaction of attention as a measure of the poem's worth:

> I believe my readers will be familiar with a kind of aesthetic experience which seems the most promising thing possible, and yet turns out wholly unprofitable… we have opened our sensibilities… only, unfortunately… our sensibilities act as sieves, and nothing is

[60] For that reason, R. P. Blackmur feels the need in 1949 to make a plea for rethinking close reading in relation to the novel: "The novel needs precisely the kind of attention… that in the last twenty years or so we have been giving to poetry" ("For a Second Look," *The Kenyon Review* 11, no. 1 [1949]: 9). In following what indeed happened to the New Critical concept of "attention" as it was applied to prose-fiction generally, and the novelistic form specifically, I respond to the question and challenge outlined by Nicholas Dames: "What… is the precise quality of the attention a novel asks of us?… we know comparatively little about the ways we are asked to *attend* to it [the novel]" ("Reverie, Sensation, Effect: Novelistic Attention and Stendhal's 'De l'Amour,'" *Narrative* 10, no .1 [2002]: 47).

> caught and held, everything passes through… there is a psychological way of putting this… a completely unexpected situation, if it is strong enough, will compel attention, and so will the opening image of the poem; but attention comes immediately to mean that we are straining to understand it, and to see it placed in its context….but we do not like the feeling of irresponsibility and passiveness that comes from such an aimless succession of experiences; or at any rate fatigue sets in and the pitch of our attention is quickly lowered. This is what must not happen in the poem.[61]

In this formulation, the reader's reaction of attention is of the outmost importance; it is the reader's central indication of the work's worth. Still, this readerly reaction appears to be passive, "compelled" by the text. A good poem is one that both "activates" and "sustains" attention, and the reader's "fatigue" or decline in attentive "pitch" signals the work's failure: "this is what *must not* happen in the poem." Later on, Ransom also describes the specific aesthetic quality he believes brings about, or "compels," attention:

> The first phrase startles us into attention… but we read on and find it engaging grammatically with still other phrases, and steadily building the larger context.[62] Under these circumstances the pitch of attention rises… and the little acts of attention remain uncompleted and provisional till we can grasp it [the context]... [the purpose of suspense is] to obtain the closer attention upon the items of context, knowing that as long as we do not yet know the values of the items for the final structure we shall look at them harder in order to have the right values ready when they can be used… again, the structure must be there, and we must feel constantly that we are coming to it, and finally that we have got it; otherwise attention is not proceeding normally, and we leave it off, or else, if we continue it, we feel finally that we have been cheated.[63]

A version of Ransom's rule of thumb appears in all three sites I examine, such that "suspense" is considered an attribute advantageous to attention-as-self-suspension. As Ransom elucidates, the New Critics took a "suspenseful" work to mean one that presents the reader with a small enough amount of information to make her strain her mind in probing the "items," while finally leading her to an encompassing "context": "we must feel constantly that we are coming to it [the structure], and finally that we have got it; otherwise attention is not proceeding normally." Interestingly, even though the New Critics linked "suspense" with form rather than plotline, the writers who were trying to conform with or push against the imperative to read attentively frequently turned to "suspenseful" genres. In that spirit, for example, the Brazilian Clarice Lispector manipulates the genre conventions of the crime novel specifically in order to cause attention to "proceed [ab]normally" and thus challenge exact reading. She constructs her 400 page-long novel, *The Apple in the Dark* (*A maçã no escuro*), as a readerly ruse, devising her first chapter to raise the expectation that the novel will revolve around a murder mystery, only to then abandon this mystery altogether. This deceit provokes the reader to "look at them [the details] harder in order to have the right values ready when they can be used," until she indeed feels that she has "been cheated."

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[61] John Crowe Ransom, *The New Criticism* (Norfolk: New Directions, 1941), 271-2.

[62] Ransom refers here to an intra- rather than extra-textual "context." That is, when he described a reader who attempts to configure a "larger context," he has in mind an overarching image, a plotline, or a formal structure; not a historical or biographical context.

[63] Ransom, *The New Criticism*, 272-4.

But by that time, Lispector has made sure that the reader is tired enough to surrender to an alternative "exhausted" rhythm of engagement with the text.

The question remains, nevertheless, whether readerly attention was seen by the New Critics as provoked by the text, actively inflicted on it, or simply unimportant in the interaction with the literary work. The answer lies in between. This is best put expressed by Wellek and Warren in *Theory of Literature*, where close reading is revealed as reciprocal in nature; it comes about through the encounter between a reader sufficiently trained in attention-as-self-suspension and a literary text whose aesthetics reinforces that kind of attention:

> This brings us to the question concerning the locus of aesthetic values. Is it the poem, or the reader of the poem, or the relation between the two?... What a formalist wants to maintain is that the poem is not only a cause, or a potential cause, of the reader's "poetic experience" but a specific, highly organized control of the reader's experience, so that the experience is most fittingly described as the experience of the poem… the values exist potentially in the literary structures: they are realized, actually valued, only as they are contemplated by readers who meet the requisite conditions.[64]

As Ransom offered above, the aesthetic value of literature lies in its "literary structure"; yet, Wellek and Warren make clear, this formal quality only exists "potentially" and must be "realized" by a reader. Initially it seems that this realization is altogether governed by the poem, which functions not only as a "cause… of the reader's 'poetic experience' but a *specific, highly organized control* of the reader's experience." This implies that aesthetic value is contingent upon the measure of control the poem can exercise over the reader's experience. The better the work, the more it can "organize" and manipulate the reader's realization of its internal structure. But this final sentence further complicates this conceptualization. The poem can assert its control only over a reader who meets "the requisite conditions," which, I suggest, center on the disposition to attend. In sum, then, an interdependent triangulation is necessary: an attentive reader must engage with a text whose (suspenseful) structure then exerts its control over her realization of its "literary structures" in order for close reading to come about. To paraphrase Donald Winnicott's much-quoted psychoanalytic dictum, "there is no such thing as a baby without a caretaker"; for the New Critics, there is no such thing as close reading without an attentive reader, and no close reader without an attention-provoking literary work.

My choice to cite Winnicott is not arbitrary. Throughout the dissertation, I frequently turn to psychoanalysis in considering the New Critical conceptualization of attention, and the counter-attentive modes of reading that arise from several of the literary texts I analyze. As mentioned, I address the New Critics' ethics of attention in terms of Derrida's notion of hauntology, which itself developed out of his dialogue with Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia*. On the flipside, I find psychoanalysis greatly helpful in thinking through the theories of non-attention offered by the literature that was generated in tandem with, or read within the climate of, the New Critical imperative of attentive reading. Though exciting scholarly attempts have been made recently to imagine what non-attention might mean, by Paul North or Natalie Phillips for instance, and the Frankfurt School notably provided extensive explorations of "distraction," I find that psychoanalysis offers an exceptionally fecund tradition of investigations into the potentiality of non-attentive mental states. Beginning with Freud's 1912 "Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psychoanalysis," the concept of "Evenly-Suspended Attention" becomes a cornerstone

[64] Wellek and Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 261.

of psychoanalytic thought. Freud urged his physicians to immerse themselves during the therapeutic scene in this dream-like state of mind, a mode similar to drowsiness or hypnosis, which he believed would be conducive to imaginative thought and interpretation. This theorization subsequently led to Wilfred Bion's provocative dictum: "no memory, no desire," which I discuss in the fourth chapter of the dissertation (dedicated to Clarice Lispector), and to Winnicott's notion of "creative unintegration," which, as mentioned earlier, guides my sixth chapter on Yehuda Amichai. However, methodologically I should clarify that the theoretical basis for my investigation of attention arose implicitly from the texts I explore, that is, from the theoretical New Critical writings and from the literary works themselves. Psychoanalysis simply provided me with a terminology and a set of tools to conceptualize the mental possibilities literature can afford.

- **THE POLITICS OF CLOSE READING AND CHAPTER BREAKDOWN**

As is well known, the founders of the American New Criticism – John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Cleanth Brooks – affiliated themselves early on with the politically conservative movement of Agrarianism. The question persists, then, to what extent did the political agenda of Southern Agrarianism inform the theory and practice developed in the context of New Criticism. In the concise words of Edward Pickering, "merely saying that New Criticism was shaped by Southern Agrarianism is a generality that levels complexity as it illuminates. Precisely how great an influence Agrarianism had on New Criticism remains a vexed question."[65]

There is no doubt as to the biographical affiliation between the American New Critics and Agrarianism, as affiliation which was thoroughly researched; but I insist on differentiating the biographical from the textual. A narrow approach that would inspect the politics of close reading only through reference to the explicit ideology of the New Critics is at risk of missing the more complex politics that arises from their critical writings as well as the nuanced agenda advanced through these scholars' theory of mind. In that sense, I fully agree with Mark Jancovich when he contends that "the New Critics did not define the text as a fixed object… their position was that if students were to be taught to understand the workings of these broader [historical and political] processes, it was necessary to focus their attention on the texts which mediated between the contexts of production and consumption."[66] My investigation thus begins with Jancovich's final sentence: I argue that the imperative to "focus… attention" constitutes a political and ethical act. And indeed, the international circulation of close reading demonstrates that the New Critics developed a tool for subject formation, which was then mobilized to achieve a variety of political and ethical goals utterly unrelated to Southern Agrarianism. Close reading was thought to function as a technique for instructing readers in self-suspension, in putting a "barrier" between the "personal" and the "analytic" capacities of the mind, and in promoting a specific kind of interaction with alterity. And these attributes were viewed in the U.S., Brazil, and Israel as potentially serving highly different goals.

The politics that emerged from such a conceptualization of the reading process was based on the abovementioned assumption that the nature of the subject's cognitive interaction with her environment can bring about a political change. For that reason, the politics of close reading I delineate is necessarily general in nature. It does not advance highly specified political modifications, but tries to intervene in the more comprehensive social and cultural crises which the local New Critics believed surrounded their readers. Consequently, the six chapters of this

[65] Pickering, "The Roots of New Criticism," 93.
[66] Mark Jancovich, *The Cultural Politics of the New Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 5.

dissertation examine the complex relations among four parameters: (1) the local iteration of close reading and the definition of "attention" it implied, under the overarching understanding of this mental state as an act of self-depletion; (2) the political and cultural conditions that gave rise to the specific understanding of readerly attention, and the political role this mental state was thought to serve; (3) the aesthetic criteria that emanated from the encounter between the definition of attention and the local literary production; and (4) the cultural responses to the figure of the attentive reader in the form of translation projects and literary production, which were geared towards promoting close reading or inciting counter-attention.

The dissertation is comprised of three parts, each dedicated to the trajectory of close reading in a different geo-cultural site. Each part includes two chapters, the first dedicated to the local intellectual history of close reading, its accompanying definition of attention, and the literary styles the local thinkers canonized or viewed as a model for close reading. The second chapter looks carefully at the literature itself to examine how specific authors manipulated literary form to enhance readerly attention, what literary avenues other works took to push against the imperative to attend, and what conceptualization of the reading process emerged from both options.

The opening part of the dissertation focuses on American New Criticism, and specifically on the dyad of Cleanth Brooks and William Faulkner. In the first chapter, entitled "**William Faulkner, Cleanth Brooks, and the Living-Dead Reader of Close Reading**," I read Brooks' tour de force of close reading, *The Well Wrought Urn*, alongside his seminal two-volume interpretation of William Faulkner, traditionally understood as unrelated to the scholar's New Critical aesthetic project. Reading them in tandem, I challenge the prevailing assumption that in *The Urn*, Brooks strikes a note of "balance and ease" as remote as possible from Faulkner's Gothic style;[67] instead, I demonstrate that *The Urn* speaks in a deeply morbid vocabulary, and that Brooks understands the figure of the "urn" to signify not only the New Critical view of the literary text as a self-enclosed object of study, but as a burial vessel as well. For Brooks, both reader and text function as an urn of sorts in the course of the reading process: he imagines the poem to be a marker of a lifeless form waiting to be animated by the reader, and he instructs the reader to turn herself via attention into an urn, an empty chamber in which the dead (poem) could revive. This readerly self-erasure is continually associated, for Brooks, with death, mourning, and loss, but it is not a solely negative process in his mind, since the labor of acute attention rewards the reader with an intimate and profound encounter with the literary text as an alterity that is allowed to autonomously reside within the self.

This model is elaborated in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country*, where stories of the past take the place of the poem as alterity. There, Brooks surprisingly instructs the reader to model herself after the suicidal Quentin Compson of *Absalom, Absalom!*, whose liminal ontology allows (or compels) him to embody the voices of the antebellum dead without integrating them into his sense of self. While Quentin is driven by affect, the close reader is instructed to deaden herself via cognitive effort; but their affinity suggests that Brooks had in mind a self-deadening reader who would be able to ethically interact with history as alterity, and more specifically, with the deadly American history of slavery. In the second chapter, "**'The Music of Prose Takes Place in Silence': Faulkner's Negative Audition**," I turn to *The Sound and the Fury* without the mediation of Brooks' close readings to examine whether Faulkner indeed cultivates in the reader a ghostly ontology, encouraging her to let the text live vicariously through her emptied self. I demonstrate that not only does Faulkner conceive of his reader metaphorically as a Quentinesque echoing "empty hall," but that he takes the acoustic aspect of this depiction literally. For Faulkner,

[67] Heilman, "Cleanth Brooks and 'The Well Wrought Urn,'" 323.

the reader's work of attention signifies a labor of sonic imagination; the attentive reader is one who brings the text to life by producing its soundtrack, by literally making the novel's voice heard within her.

The second part of the dissertation is dedicated to the Brazilian iteration of New Criticism, namely, the nova crítica, and its adaptation of close reading into "exact reading." At the center of the first sub-section, "**The Nova Crítica and Exact Reading: João Guimarães Rosa and the Imperative to Extract the Savage**," stands Afrânio Coutinho, for many the scholar whose work marks the origin of modernization of the field of Brazilian literary studies. In 1948, Coutinho returns to Brazil from his studies in the U.S. and initiates a literary campaign to integrate Anglo-American New Criticism into Brazilian literary institutions. However, his ardent promotion of close reading, I demonstrate, was also oriented towards shaping no less than a new Brazilian reader. In describing the Brazilian subject, Coutinho and his followers express a profound internalization of the colonial identification of Indigeneity as intellect's Other and embark on a civilizing mission; the Brazilian reader, they claim, suffers from a "savage degeneracy," a mental tendency towards distraction, which leads to a systematic "inaptitude of our race for speculative meditation." The "cure," they suggest, is the New Critical method of interacting with literature, which both instructs the reader in self-suspension and enhances her faculty of attention. In order to prove the West wrong and showcase the Brazilian as capable of analytic thinking, the reader must learn to drain herself of her "innate," "savage" tendencies for the purpose of cognitively focusing on the text. For that reason, the scholars of the nova crítica refer to close reading as "exact reading," today known in Brazil as leitura de perto (literally, reading from close by). As in English, the adjective "exact" (*exato*) refers to an action performed with great care and rigor, and the verb "to exact" indicates a driving or forcing out, as in the English idioms to exact revenge or exact a promise from someone. Along these lines, the "exact" reader is thought to engage in a politically charged procedure of extraction, uprooting her detrimental tendencies in order to "accurately" engage with the text. This sub-chapter goes on to follow the short story "The Mirror" by the modernist João Guimarães Rosa, written in the height of the nova crítica (1961), as a parodic critique of the attempt to de-savage the Brazilian reader. The story depicts a positivist who is determined to train himself in extracting all the "primitive" layers of his self (bestial, immature, emotional) from his reflected image, in order to discover his own "true form." Yet this process ends uncannily: once the "primitive" is eliminated from the self, nothing is left to be seen in the mirror; the exact reader becomes a no-reader at all, self-censoring himself out of existence.

In the second chapter, "**Clarice Lispector and Exhausted Reading: Catching the Apple in the Dark**," I turn to Clarice Lispector's modernist novel, *The Apple in the Dark*, which was accused by the thinkers of the nova crítica of bringing to "maximum force" Lispector's "wild" stylistic defects. Indeed, I argue that in *The Apple*, Lispector sets the stage for a "wild" alternative to "exact reading." More specifically, I show that the book falsely presents itself as a crime novel in order to tap into and exaggerate the reader's habits of attention so as to fatigue her and bring about what I term *exhausted reading*, a mode of engagement with the text that hinges on sloth and fatigue, rather than attention.

The third and final part of the dissertation discusses the Israeli adaptation and transformation of New Critical close reading into "maximalist reading" (*kri'a maximalit*, קריאה מכסימלית) in the context of the Tel Aviv School of Poetics and Semiotics. The first chapter, "**The Tel Aviv School and Maximalist Reading: A.B. Yehoshua and the Israeli Crisis of Social Disintegration"** follows Benjamin Harshav as he returns in the early 1960s from his studies at Yale under the Czech Structuralist and New Critic, René Wellek, to found at Tel Aviv University

the Tel Aviv School of Poetics and Semiotics on the foundations of his theory of "Integrational Semantics." On the macro level, the theory engages mostly with Structuralism and Formalism, but on the micro level of textual interpretation, Integrational Semantics relies heavily on the New Critical method of close reading and makes explicit its reader-response component. I demonstrate that in translating "close reading" into "maximalist reading" Harshav and his colleagues conceptualize "attention" as the labor of "integration," namely, "maximizing" the possible connections between the apparently "peripheral" details of the text and its core, or between the work's larger units, such as subplots, and its overarching structure. To conduct this analytic process, the reader is instructed to divest herself of national identity, which has for too long functioned as the governing and limiting interpretative lens, according to the School's theorists. However, I demonstrate that paradoxically this self-suspension of the political had an underlying political motivation. The concept of readerly mental integration functioned as a response to the acute anxiety of social *disintegration* that saturated the Israeli 1970s cultural sphere. By training the Israeli reader to find unification where it seemed utterly missing, the School's members sought to cognitively amend social crises. This chapter then turns to the novel *A Late Divorce* (*Gerushim Me'ukharim, גירושים מאוחרים*) by A.B. Yehoshua, which was praised by the TA School critics and read alongside Faulkner's oeuvre. In the novel, the implicit affinity between formal and social integration comes to the fore. On the level of form, the novel is built as a fragmented puzzle to be put together by the reader, thus enhancing her cognitive process of attention-as-integration; but one the level of content, the novel is deeply preoccupied with the social schisms threatening the Israeli society of the time.

The second chapter, "**Yehuda Amichai, Concatenated Metaphors, and Creative Unintegrating Reading**" looks at Yehuda Amichai's 1961 short story collection, *In This Terrible Wind* (*Ba-ru'ach ha-nora'ah ha-zot*, *ברוח הנוראה הזאת*) which predates the TA School and develops in advance an alternative – the road not taken – to maximalist reading. Not surprisingly, the School later ignores this work by Amichai, in stark contradiction to their intense interest in his poetry. In the collection, Amichai formulates a metaphoric construction that sprawls horizontally from one tenor to another, such that the grounds of comparison constantly shift. In this manner, Amichai encourages "distraction" in its most basic sense of pushing the reader's thought thread sideways, rather than promoting the centralizing and integrational processes to be associated with "maximalist reading." That is, Amichai finds a middle ground between integration/disintegration, instigating in the reader a "creative unintegration," a term I borrow from the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott. Amichai provokes the reader to linger with scatter, and playfully explore its potentiality, and invites her to reevaluate the fundamental premise that a stable denominator is perquisite for relationality to be established, whether between members of a community or between elements in a metaphorical concatenation.

Above and beyond their differences, these three iterations of close reading present this method as predicated on the reader's mental and active process of holding back the "personal" while interacting with the literary text, a process that was taken to have profound political and ethical implications since it was seen as a determining force in formulating the reader's subjectivity, or, in Richards's words, in determining "not only *how* we read but what *we* who read will be."

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Treading the explosive scholarly field construed around New Criticism – bolstered simultaneously by the acknowledgement of the School's momentous and long-lasting influence, and by the deep

urge to declare it defunct – I am frequently asked whether my project is a defense or condemnation of close reading. The answer, unfortunately, is the unsatisfactory "both." Prior to evaluations, I find it pertinent to understand what close reading is, amending the fundamental assumptions that the New Critics were uninterested in the reader, that they developed a purely idealist rather than pragmatic method, and that their politics was simplistic. Once a revised scaffolding is set in place, it becomes clear that close reading as a method for subject formation was driven by and gave voice to conflicting desires. Like any technique of the self, it had a constricting facet; close reading was to advance the illusion of the literary work as autonomous, at the expense of the reader's active effort to erase her own presence from the reading scene. In addition, close reading was thought of as a tool for intervening in national affairs via the shaping of the reader's interaction with social and political reality. But this national impulse was at times subversive, aimed not only at perpetuating but also at destabilizing power structures, as I will demonstrate especially in the chapters concerning Brazil and Israel. Finally, the reader's labor of self-effacement was continually understood by the international critics I discuss as holding paramount ethical valence: educating the reader in deadening herself in order to familiarize her with a different pattern of interaction with alterity, one which grants the other its autonomy within the now suspended self. If close reading is here to stay, as seems to be the case, then it is our role to acquaint ourselves with its complex global history, acknowledge its attributes, and learn (and teach) how to put them into action. As Michael Gaskill suggests, it is only by "understanding how and why the practice of close reading developed" that we can "envision what it may yet become"; or, as Amichai and Lispector suggest, that we can envision what it may yet be replaced with.[68]

[68] Gaskill, "The Close and the Concrete," 506.

FIRST PART | NORTH AMRERICA

Chapter One

WILLIAM FAULKNER, CLEANTH BROOKS, AND THE LIVING-DEAD READER OF NEW CRITICAL THEORY

The self: a cemetery guard. The crypt is enclosed within the self,
but as a foreign place, prohibited, excluded. The self is not
the proprietor of what he is guarding.

–Jacques Derrida

[T]he poet is saying: "Our death is really a more intense life"…
The poem itself is a well-wrought urn… The urn to which we
are summoned… is the poem itself.

–Cleanth Brooks

This chapter focuses on the self-proclaimed "typical New Critic," Cleanth Brooks, and brings together his tour de force of close reading, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*, together with his seminal interpretations of William Faulkner, which are traditionally understood as unrelated to his New Critical aesthetic project.[69] When read in unison, these two ostensibly removed works of criticism expose a consistent model of reading underlying Brooks' thought. In these texts, one finds that Brooks labors to cultivate in his reader an attentiveness so profound as to lead to self-deadening. The close reader is instructed by Brooks to evacuate her subjectivity – personal memories, bodily sensations, self-definition around gender, age, race or nationality – in order to become an empty hall in which the literary work could fully play itself out. This readerly self-erasure is continually associated, for Brooks, with death, mourning, and loss. However, it is in no way a solely negative process in his mind, on the contrary. According to Brooks, this labor of acute attention rewards the reader with an intimate and profound encounter with the literary text as alterity. The cognitive effort of self-draining, which for Brooks resembles a state of momentary death, allows the reader to grant her vitality to the literary work and to thus miraculously bring to life the text as a complex unity in which the like and the unlike harmoniously reside. Put differently, through self-deadening, the reader generates life and, through this forceful experience paradoxically gains, as Brooks terms it in paraphrasing Donne, "a more intense life." In that sense, Brooks theorizes a nuanced reading process, which concurrently involves a sense of loss and an experience of intense liveliness.

In Brooks' model of the reading process, the text figures as an Other that deserves autonomy, and thus should be incorporated into an emptied self, where it would be left to make its literary voice heard without the intervention of the reader's subjectivity. Against this backdrop, the figure of the "urn," which came to represent not only Brooks' aesthetics but New Criticism more generally, is revealed to have a meaning markedly different from traditional views. Usually, Brooks' "urn" is understood to represent metaphorically the more general New Critical view of

[69] Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1947); *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966); *William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990). One of the reasons that Brooks' reading of Faulkner is rarely examined alongside the New Critical creed (Florence Dore's recent work is an exciting exception to this rule) is that close reading was first conceptualized with regards to poetry, see f.n. 60.

the literary text as an "enduring thing," to quote Douglas Mao, an autonomous and self-enclosed object of study independent of both writer and reader.[70] Yet Brooks' theory of reading as self-deadening exposes a different, and almost obvious, facet of this figure: the urn as a burial vessel, a "final memorial for one's ashes," in the New Critic's words.[71] The urn plays a doubly figurative role in Brooks' model: the poem itself is imagined to be a tombstone, a marker of a lifeless form waiting to be animated by the reader, and the reader, through her process of attention, is instructed to turn herself into an urn, into an empty chamber in which the dead (the poem) could reside – a mental process, as mentioned, which holds both negative and positive connotations, simultaneously. This model of readerly attention is further elaborated on from a different perspective in Brooks' *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country*, where stories of the past take the place of the poem as alterity, and where the metaphor of readerly-death-turned-"intense life," which remains implied in *The Urn*, is further clarified. Nevertheless, in both critical works, Brooks' theory of reading as an encounter with Otherness is performed rather than explicitly stated. Surprisingly, the New Critic's ethical stance is usefully elucidated in the work of none other than Jacques Derrida, whose reflections on death and alterity echo Brooks' ideas, notwithstanding the traditional view that Deconstruction was a backlash against New Criticism.[72] This is not to say that Derrida is reading Brooks or vice versa, but that the French thinker's theory helps to explain the association Brooks makes between death, loss, and the reader's capacity for animating otherness.

In his reflections on melancholia, and in his discussions of hauntology (a portmanteau of "haunting" and "ontology"), Derrida outlines his "ethics of alterity."[73] Thinking through this mental state and the ontological positioning it implies, he enters into dialogue with Freud's

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[70] Douglas Mao, "The New Critics and the Text-Object," *ELH* 63, no. 1 (1996): 228. Discussing the political implications of this aesthetic view, John Guillory writes: "that the poem is a 'well-wrought urn,' is not just the proposition that the poem is an artifact… it is rather that the urn belongs to the world of value and not to the world of power. It is a celebration of its own purity, its escape from… the assertion of power over other human beings" ("The Ideology of Canon-Formation," 192). The urn also came to stand for New Criticism via its appearance in John Donne's celebrated "Canonization," which itself represents the early-modern tradition of metaphysical poetry the New Critics strove to revive within the Anglo-American canon. In addition, the urn is affiliated with the work of Faulkner, as will be discussed in Chapter 2.

[71] Brooks, *The Urn*, 14.

[72] Jonathan Culler expresses the traditional view of Deconstruction as the mirror-image of New Criticism when he writes that "[Derrida's] work appealed to students and teachers of literature, who found in it close reading that… was not subservient to the ideological notion of organic form that underlay the most widespread practice of close reading, that of the New Criticism" (*On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007], preface to the 25th anniversary edition. By contrast, both Gerald Graff and Frank Lentricchia condemn Deconstruction for continuing the ostensibly ahistorical and apolitical New Critical trend (*Literature Against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979]; *After the New Criticism*). I agree with the latter as to the affinity between the two theories, but ask to reexamine the conventional assumptions about their shared politics.

[73] For Derrida on "hauntology" and melancholia, see *Specters of Marx*, "Fors," and *Mémoires for Paul de Man*. For an in-depth account of hauntology, see Colin Davis, "Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms," *French Studies* 59, no. 3 (2005): 373-9. On Derrida and *Mourning and Melancholia*, see Michal Ben-Naftali, "Deconstruction: Derrida," in *The Edinburgh Encyclopedia of Continental Philosophy*, ed. Simon Glendinning (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 653-64; and Ilit Ferber, *Philosophy and Melancholy: Benjamin's Early Reflections on Theater and Language* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013). On Derrida's philosophy as outlining an "ethics of alterity," see Penelope Deutscher, "Mourning the Other, Cultural Cannibalism, and the Politics of Friendship (Jacques Derrida and Luce Irigaray)," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10, no. 3 (1998): 159-84; François Raffoul, "Derrida and the Ethics of the Im-possible," *Research in Phenomenology* 38, no. 2 (2008): 270-90; and Shane Weller, *Beckett, Literature and the Ethics of Alterity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

theorization of mourning and melancholia. The psychoanalyst, as presented by Derrida, sees the healthy mourning process as involving a renewed integration of the energy formerly invested in the lost object (decathexis), and views melancholia as the pathological mirror image, in which libido is never regained since the subject is unable to detach herself from the lost object, who continues to haunt her as a foreign body within the I. Derrida concurs with Freud as to the suffering that inevitably accompanies the melancholic state, but insists on depathologizing this position. For the French thinker, allowing the dead to remain an autonomous "cryptic enclave" within the self at the price of self-depletion (losing libido without ever recapturing it) is an ethical stance towards the Other as Other.[74] He writes:

> What is impossible mourning? What does it tell us, this impossible mourning, about an essence of memory? And as concerns the other in us… where is the most unjust betrayal? Is the most distressing, or even the most deadly infidelity that of a *possible mourning* which would interiorize within us the image, idol, or ideal of the other who is dead and lives only in us? Or is it the impossible mourning, which, leaving the other [the other's] alterity, respecting thus [the other's] infinite remove, either refuses to take or is incapable of taking the other within oneself, as in a tomb or the vault of some narcissism?[75]

The "normal" mourning process in Freud's terms is referred to by Derrida as "possible mourning," which he perceives as a "betrayal" of, or "infidelity" towards, the dead. In this process, he claims, the lost object is interiorized into the self as an "idol" or "ideal," becoming an integral part of the subject, who is now enlarged at the expense of the Other's autonomy. Melancholia, on the other hand, becomes in Derrida's terms "impossible mourning," a never-ending process of incorporation (versus interiorization) in which the subject refuses to take "the other within oneself" in a narcissistic process of self-recuperation, and instead allows the Other to remain an internal alterity; it is the melancholic position, Derrida claims, that most respects the Other's "infinite remove." In other words, rather than assimilating the dead into the living self and thus erasing their Otherness, Derrida posits a radical alternative: to internally "keep the dead alive" at a cost of a partial self-death.[76] For this reason, the melancholic subject, for Derrida, is hauntological: she occupies a liminal space between death and life.

It is a similar preoccupation with the incorporation of the dead, and an analogous combination of suffering and a positive ethical potentiality that we find in Brooks' model of reading, where works of literature are imaged as lifeless entities to be revived, and the reader's self-deadening figures as "a more intense life." In Derrida's terms, Brooks offers us an ethical take on the reading process; in order to respect the poems' "infinite remove," the reader must deaden herself, i.e. momentarily abandon her subjectivity so that the dead can be enlivened within her vacated self, a process – melancholic as it may be – which carries a positive and even utopian potentiality. Taking into account the role of attention, death, and alterity in the constitution of close reading within Brooks' body of work not only sheds new light on the link between his lifelong

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[74] Jacques Derrida, "Fors: The Anglish Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok," in *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonomy*, by Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, ed. Barbara Johnson, trans. Nicholas Rand. (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1986), xvi.

[75] Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires for Paul de Man*, ed. Avital Ronell and Eduardo Cadava, trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler, and Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 6.

[76] Derrida, "Fors," xvi.

interest in Faulkner and the aesthetic New Critical project, but also opens up a view of the values that attend close reading as a living method of literary interpretation in our own cultural moment.[77]

▪ THE DEATH OF THE READER

No one seems further removed from the gothic enterprise of "deadening" the reader than Cleanth Brooks, the self-proclaimed "typical New Critic," whose "very claim upon our admiration," as John Guillory puts it, is his "detachment" and "disinterestedness."[78] These characteristics are especially salient in *The Urn* where he strikes a tone of "balance and ease," to quote Robert Heilman.[79] Brooks' close readings and their harmonious quality came to be considered the quintessential example of the New Critical method, i.e., "close reading at its best."[80] In fact, according to Daniel Green, *The Urn*, along with the work of W. K. Wimsatt, was "responsible for bringing final academic respectability to New Criticism."[81] That Brooks became a representative of close reading is not surprising. A student of Allen Tate along with John Crowe Ransom, the co-author of *Understanding Poetry* with Robert Penn Warren, of *Literary Criticism: A Short History* with William Wimsatt, and the co-founder of *The Southern Review*, Brooks played a principal role in the social network and intellectual formation of American New Criticism. The archetypical status of his critical work might explain why arrows of criticism directed at the method of close reading are frequently sent his way: "'Brooks is dead (or ought to be)."[82] Yet pulling on *The Urn*'s thread of "attention," one reveals a text not quite as serene and harmonious as expected.

Brooks' concern with readerly attention is related to his more general anxiety about the effects of modernity on the reading process. In *The Urn*, he detects a cognitive problem in the modern reader and presents his project as a possible solution. For Brooks, throughout his work, "good literature" is defined as possessing a "coherence" of a specific sort, namely, "the hanging together" of "the like with the unlike," a structure of meaning he famously refers to as "paradox."[83] Subsequently, "reading well" is understood by him as predicated on the ability to identify that complex unity. On that account, he assures his readers that "if we see how the passages [in *Macbeth*] are related to these symbols, and they to the tragedy as a whole, the main matter is achieved," and he warns the "dull or lazy reader" of Keats against "insisting very much on the statement in isolation… the relation of the final statement in the poem to the total context in all-important."[84] The problem, however, is that "modern man, habituated as he is to an easy yes or no" can hardly grasp this complexity, according to Brooks: "we are disciplined in the tradition of either-or, and lack the mental agility… which would allow us to indulge in the finer distinctions and the more subtle reservations permitted by the tradition of both-and."[85] As a consequence,

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[77] In discussing the ethics of close reading, I follow in the footsteps of both Heather Love and Ian Hunter, see Introduction.

[78] Brooks refers to himself as a "typical New Critic" in "The New Criticism," *The Sewanee Review* 87, no. 4 (1979): 592; Guillory, "The Ideology of Canon-Formation," 174.

[79] Heilman, "Cleanth Brooks and 'The Well Wrought Urn,'" 323.

[80] Peter Parolin and Phyllis Rackin, "Close Reading Shakespeare: An Introduction," *Early Modern Culture* 12, no. 1 (2017): 4.

[81] Green, "Literature Itself," 64.

[82] Heilman, "Cleanth Brooks and 'The Well Wrought Urn,'" 322.

[83] Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Fiction* (Englewood Cliffs: Pearson, 1979), 510; Brooks, *The Urn*, 195.

[84] Brooks, *The Urn*, 32, 73, 153.

[85] Ibid., 81.

Brooks sets out on a mission to reeducate his readers' minds out of "conventional reading habits" and into ones that would allow them to see structures of "both-and," that is, paradoxes.[86]

The "mental agility" which the modern reader lacks, Brooks believes, is inextricably linked with the capacity to "attend"; and the cure for this cognitive deficiency is the activating power of paradox. Valuable literature, characterized by coupling "the like with the unlike," facilitates attention, a state of mind which in its turn allows the reader to identify paradoxical structures. This claim is outlined in the book's first chapter, where Brooks makes the strong claim that the very raison d'être of the poetic use of paradoxes is the instigation of attention.[87] Reading Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge," he quotes Coleridge and then moves on to draw his own conclusions:

> Coleridge was to… make even more evident Wordsworth's exploitation of the paradoxical: "Mr. Wordsworth… was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us"… "awakening the mind" suggest[s] the romantic preoccupation with wonder—the surprise, the revelation which puts the tarnished world in a new light. This may well be the *raison d'être* of most Romantic paradoxes: and yet the neo-classic poets use paradox for much the same reason.[88]

Brooks links the Romantic fascination with "wonder" to Coleridge and Wordsworth's self-confessed attempt to awaken "the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom." This romantic tendency is generalized by the New Critic to the metaphysical poetry he famously admired, and later on in the text to drama and prose fiction as well. According to this logic, the writer's mission is to compose paradoxical structures that will "awaken" the reader's attention and thereby allow her to grasp the "wonders of the world." But the importance of paradox, for Brooks, does not lie in its ability to aid the reader in overcoming familiarity with the world outside the text, which differentiated his position from that of the Russian Formalists, for example. For Brooks, the good reader dwells with the text, which, he believes, holds a dormant agency and a potentially autonomous life. Consequently, Brooks conceptualized paradox and attention as first and foremost converting the subject into a better reader of the poem itself: the structure of paradox invites attention, which then enables the reader to recognize and appreciate structures of paradox. This is not a one-sided process; the reader's attention is activated by the paradox as much as her practice of attention permits her to see the paradox to begin with. That this is the case is already evident in Brooks' statement above. Attention, elicited by the text, grants the reader to ability to see the "wonders" of the world. But the term "wonder" also stands, throughout *The Urn*, for one of the two basic types of literary paradoxes Brooks identifies: those that "insist on irony" and those that beget "wonder."[89] Brooks hints, then, that Coleridge and Wordsworth's poetic structures "awaken" the reader's mind to the text (to wonder-paradoxes). This very same logic appears in Brooks' discussion of Shakespeare in relation to John Donne. There he argues, "since *Songs and Sonnets* of Donne… requires a 'perpetual activity of attention'… the discipline gained from

[86] Ibid., 67.
[87] Ibid., 7.
[88] Ibid., 7.
[89] Ibid., 8.

reading Donne may allow us to see more clearly the structure of paradox in Shakespeare."[90] In other words, the paradox in Donne brings about attention, which permits the reader to see Shakespeare's paradox.[91]

This theoretical construction seems to suggest that both the text and the reader are active agents in the reading process: the text *begets* attention and the reader, in response, *perceives* paradoxes via mental capacities. But this simple understanding of both participants as animated, or, in Brooks' terms, as "living" entities is complicated later on in *The Urn*. The Coleridge quotation depicts the state of being "attentive" as associated with being "awake," which also insinuates certain "aliveness": paradox works "by *awakening* the mind." And indeed, in various places in *The Urn*, Brooks characterizes the attentive reader, who recognizes the paradoxical unity of the text, as one who is "alive" to it: "Even the most direct and simple poet is forced into paradoxes far more often than we think, if we are sufficiently *alive* to what he is doing."[92] However, in the paragraphs preceding and leading to the discussion of Coleridge, Wordsworth, attention, and life, Brooks is preoccupied with the proximity between paradox and death, rather than life. While discussing the paradox embedded in Wordsworth's line "Dear God! The very houses seem asleep," he comments that the poet "has been in the habit of counting them [the houses] dead – as just mechanical and inanimate; to say they are 'asleep' is to say that they are alive."[93] The paradox of death, which is in fact life – "It is only when the poet sees the city under the semblance of death that he can see it as actually alive" – is strangely what leads Brooks to think about Coleridge's idea of "awakening the mind."[94] This associative link between poet and reader, between the inanimate city and the text, and between death and life suggests that Brooks is diagnosing not just a cognitive condition of the modern reader, but an enduring ethical condition. The New Critic understands attention itself to function in a paradoxical fashion, in the grey zone between death and life: in order for the reader to be "alive" to the text, she must deaden herself, and the poem, though activating attention, is predominantly lifeless, as *The Urn* will go on to insinuate.[95]

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[90] Ibid., 28.

[91] In his recent work on John Donne, David Marno perceptively points out this paragraph to demonstrate that the New Critics noticed "the significance of attention in Donne's poetry," a state of mind Marno argues held devotional purposes for Donne, acting as a "preparation for prayer" (*Death Be Not Proud,* 28, 2). He notes, however, that the New Critics turned more often to Donne's secular poetry. The reason, I believe, is that the New Critics developed a different understanding of attention, one oriented towards self-control rather than towards a potential interaction with the divine.

[92] Brooks, *The Urn*, 10; emphasis added.

[93] Ibid., 6.

[94] Ibid.

[95] The paradox of death in life and life in death governs *The Urn*, despite Brooks' explicit definition of paradox as *any* "tension – set up… by propositions, metaphors, symbols," which is then resolved via "an equilibrium of forces" (*The Urn*, 207). To name a few examples out of many, in Donne's "The Canonization," "the lovers in rejecting life actually win to the most intense life" (Ibid., 15); in Tennyson's "Tears, Ideal Tears," "The dying man, soon to sleep the lasting sleep, is more fully awake than the 'half-awaken'd birds' whose earliest pipings come to his dying ears" (Ibid., 171); In Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn," "the beauty portrayed is deathless because it is lifeless" (Ibid., 157); in Pope's "The Rape of the Lock", "in some cases, little more is implied than a teasing of the popular clichés about bearing a 'living Death'" (Ibid., 101); and in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* it is "the clothed daggers and the naked babe… death and birth" that "are facets of two of the great symbols which run throughout the play" (Ibid., 49). It is not by mere accident that the paradox found at the center of the New Critics' conceptualization of the close reader echoes Yeats' famous line in "Byzantium," "I call it death-in-life and life-in-death." The New Critics were highly invested in Yeats' poetry more generally, and in "Byzantium" specifically. See, for example, Cleanth Brooks, "A Vision and the Byzantium Poems," in *Yeats: Poems, 1919-1935: A Casebook,* ed. Elizabeth Butler Cullingford (London:

That Brooks imagines literature as a revivable "dead" is evident throughout *The Urn*. Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is presented as "a poem in stone," which, in the context of the poem, evokes not any static form but a gravestone specifically;[96] Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" is "the cries of those who die 'in *Metaphor*, and… in *Song*";[97] and Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" is an "epitaph" engraved on a tombstone, which we, as "kindred spirit[s]," are invited to read.[98] Yet the ontology of these inanimate stone-poems is not clear-cut; Brooks depicts the literary work as always carrying a potentiality for life. In that spirit, Wordsworth "houses" quoted above lend themselves to the observation of the speaker (to his "reading") as "mechanical and inanimate," but only until they are given life in the form of "sleep." Similarly, Brooks depicts Robert Herrick's "Corinna's Gone A-Maying" as a lifeless "object," but in that very sentence suggests that it can become a lived "experience" if "we," his close readers, will mentally participate in the reading process: "If we are willing to use imaginative understanding, we can come to know the poem as an object – we can share in the experience."[99] This idea is further stressed in Brooks' interpretation of Keats' "Ode," where the New Critic writes: "If we have been alive to the paradoxes which work throughout the poem, perhaps then, we shall be prepared for the enigmatic, final paradox which the 'silent form' utters."[100] The ability to animate Keats' poem as gravestone, to make the "silent form" speak, depends on the reader's efforts, her being "alive," that is, attentive, to the work as a dynamic unity.

In this interpretation of Keats, Brooks repeats his depiction of the attentive reader as being "alive." However, as his analysis of Yeats' "Among School Children" demonstrates, this liveliness is in fact predicated on self-disintegration. Reading Yeats, Brooks writes: "The mature man can see the harmony, the unity of being, possessed by the tree or the lamb or the child; but the price of being able to see it is not to possess it in one's self… Or to state the matter in Yeats's own terms: 'For wisdom is the property of the dead, a something incompatible with life.'"[101] Brooks discusses here the poet (Yeats) not as a producer of art but as a perceiver of "the unity of being." In that sense, he is preoccupied in this segment with the consumption of art rather than with its production. According to this statement, the ability to discern "the unity of being" is dependent upon the non-unity of the observing self. If we were to translate this statement into Brooks' theoretical terms presented above, it would appear that in order to recognize via attention the paradoxical coherence of a text, in order to hear that poem "utter," the reader must pay the price of self-disintegration. This discussion is concluded with a quote from Yeats, which further complicates affairs: "to state the matter in Yeats's own terms: 'For wisdom is the property of the dead,/ A something incompatible with life.'"[102] If the ability to "see" unity, which we know is predicated on attention, is parallel to "wisdom," then the capacity to attend appears to be the sole "property of the dead." Brooks' reader, then, who wishes to engage well with the text, to animate its paradoxes, must make herself "incompatible with life"; being "alive" to a text is contingent on self-deadening.

As we can clearly see at this point, Brooks' hauntological model of the reading process fits perfectly with his choice of the urn as a central figure. After all, he understands both reader and

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Macmillan, 1984), 63-74; and Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry* (Boston: Wadsworth, 1976), 353-55.

[96] Brooks, *The Urn*, 151.

[97] Ibid., 101; emphasis in original.

[98] Ibid., 122.

[99] I will discuss the role of "imagination" in this process and its link to "attention" in the following section.

[100] Brooks, *The Urn*, 165.

[101] Ibid., 190.

[102] Ibid.

text to be partially dead. Yet Brooks' metaphor works on an even deeper level, as shown by his discussion of Donne's "Canonization." The urn, as is well known, is this poem's thematic core, but Brooks goes on to claim that "Canonization" also becomes the concretization of the object it depicts:

> The poet is saying: "Our death is really a more intense life"… The poem is an instance of the doctrine it asserts; it is both the assertion and the realization of the assertion…The poem itself is a well-wrought urn… Having pre-empted the poem for our own purposes, it may not be too outrageous to go on to make one further observation. The urn to which we are summoned… is the poem itself.[103]

"Canonization," Brooks states, does not only delineate an urn, but is also a "well-wrought urn" itself, an object whose morbid connotations are made to stand out by Brooks' paraphrase: "Our death is really a more intense life." This is a reiteration of Brooks' continuous conceptualization of the literary work as a lifeless entity deeply associated with death, as we've seen with Keats' "Ode" as gravestone, and Gray's "Elegy" as an "epitaph." When Brooks names his project, then, "The Well Wrought Urn," he insinuates that not only "Canonization," but poems more generally are urns of sorts, markers of death. Yet, to follow Brooks' logic, "death is really a more intense life," that is, as demonstrated above, Brooks views poems as tombstones that hold the potentiality for revival, they can "utter" paradoxes if only paid enough attention. These basic premises allow Brooks to venture on his final "outrageous" claim: "The urn to which we are summoned… is the poem itself." The "we" who are "summoned" into the poem as an "urn" are, of course, Brooks' close readers. This indicates that the reading process of "Canonization," as a paradigmatic example, requires the reader, too, to be in contact with the urn, to enter its space, where the dead lie, a rare "experience" that grants her, as it does the poem-as-urn, a "more intense life." Although the "urn," then, stands for both reader and text, the bondage with death in both cases is never stable. The dead urn, as Gray's "Elegy" suggests, can be potentially animated: "Can storied urn or animated bust/ Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?"[104]

Facing the ghostly reading model that arises from Brooks' ostensible book of "balance and ease," several pertinent questions arise: what does it practically mean to deaden oneself via attention? What is the ethical or political significance of this readerly labor, which finally grants the consumer of literature "a more intense life"? And why does Brooks turn to such gothic vocabulary to depict the animation of poetic form? An important path for understanding Brooks' melancholic vocabulary suggests itself in the critic's two-volume tome dedicated to William Faulkner, the master of Southern Gothic. More specifically, *The Yoknapatawpha Country* reveals Brooks to find in Quentin, the suicidal protagonist of *Absalom, Absalom!*, a paradigm for the close reader, and suggests that the reader is imagined in *The Urn* to be a container of ashes, since Brooks understands the readerly process of self-deadening to be a process of self-depletion: through attention, the reader is transformed into an empty chamber that echoes with the voices of the now-enlivened literary text. Brooks' readings of Faulkner also propose an ethical bearing to the New Critic's gothic construction. The poetic text in *The Yoknapatawpha Country* appears not only as a dead entity to be awakened, but as an alterity that deserves autonomy within the reading self. Finally, interacting with Faulkner's work, Brooks turns from the poem as literary text to the socially grounded stories of the past, thus exposing the Southern racial history that informs his

[103] Ibid., 16-20.
[104] Ibid., 110.

notion of the reader as a subject willing to surrender her powers of life to the animation of others. For the New Critic, the literary text and history – the traumatic one as a limit case – hold a similarity, they are both paradoxical unities that the self can only approximate, yet can never possess or fully comprehend. An intimate interaction with them, then, which includes bringing them to life, demands a form of ethical self-abandoning. In the context of Faulkner's work, this process is translated into historical terms: the white guilt-ridden Quentin erases his subjectivity as the reader of his family's past in order to bring the very novel and the brutal history it depicts into being. In *The Urn*, the close reader is not driven by Quentin's melancholic historically-contingent affect, but is similarly trying to animate the poem as a complex unity, this time through the cognitive labor of attention. Over and above these differences, Quentin and the close reader are alike for Brooks: at the price of self-loss, they are granted singular powers of creation.

- **WHEN THE DEAD TONGUE SPEAKS**

In 2009, the acclaimed *Oxford American: A Magazine of the South* asked 134 scholars and writers to select the best Southern novel of all time; Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* was chosen almost unanimously.[105] But this is hardly indicative of the novel's status at the time of its publication. Academic and popular reviews jointly labeled the work "gothic" and reprimanded it for wallowing "in morbidity," practicing "demonology," and presenting its audience with "psychopathic ghosts."[106] Even Malcolm Cowley, the editor of *The Portable Faulkner*, suggested in a disapproving tone – aligning himself with the negative evaluation of the gothic novel, typical of his time – that *Absalom, Absalom!* should be read within the Poe tradition.[107]

The traditional narrative of Faulkner's reception history, and that of *Absalom, Absalom!* specifically, depicts the New Critics (along with the New York intellectuals) as forcing Faulkner's work out from under the umbrella of gothic literature and repositioning it in the category of modernism.[108] In that spirit, Brooks memorably remarked that Faulkner's work should be read as "more than a bottle of Gothic sauce."[109] Nevertheless, Brooks' recurrent fascination with Faulkner's characters who are haunted by death insinuates that the New Critic was drawn to and found a positive potential in the writer's gothic sensibility. Importantly, this might explain Brooks' aesthetic preferences and illuminate Brooks' choice of *Absalom, Absalom!* as "the most brilliantly written of all Faulkner's novels," a text whose narrative is told and produced by a living-dead "ghost," and in which death in life propels the narration.[110]

Absalom, Absalom! is a "racial tragedy," to quote Sheldon Brivic, one which centers around the Civil War story of Thomas Sutpen and his grand, though failed, "design" to rise up in from his position as a "cattle"-like poor white by establishing a monstrous hundred-square-mile

[105] "The Best Southern Novels of All Time," *Oxford American*, August 27, 2009, https://www.oxfordamerican.org/magazine/iten/470-the-best-southern-novels-of-all-time; William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York: Vintage, Random House, 1990).
[106] Max Miller, "*Absalom, Absalom!*" in *William Faulkner: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 152; Bernard De Voto, "Witchcraft in Mississippi," in *William Faulkner: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 149; Wallace Stegner, "Review," in *William Faulkner: Critical Assessments*, ed. Henry Claridge, vol. 3 (Robertsbridge: Helm Information, 1999), 275.
[107] Malcolm Cowley, "Poe in Mississippi," in *William Faulkner: Critical Assessments*, ed. Henry Claridge, vol. 3. (Robertsbridge: Helm Information, 1999), 32.
[108] See Lawrence H. Schwartz, *Creating Faulkner's Reputation: The Politics of Modern Literary Criticism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 32.
[109] Brooks, *Yoknapatawpha Country*, 295.
[110] Ibid., 323.

plantation, and begetting a "purely white" dynasty.[111] But this novel, as has been repeatedly established, is first and foremost the story of the twentieth century guilt-ridden Quentin Compson, or, more precisely, the story of Quentin being told (by Miss Rosa and Mr. Compson) and then telling (Shreve) the racially explosive narrative of the Sutpen family. Due to this unique role, several scholars, including Brooks, singled Quentin out as the surrogate of the reader in the diegetic world, as I will go on to discuss. And indeed, especially in the first half of the novel, Quentin is primarily an absorber of stories, "a Special Listener," in George Marrion O'Donnell's words.[112] By virtue of this trait, both old Rosa Coldfield and his father choose him as a vessel for the stories of the long dead Thomas, Allen, Henry, Judith, and Charles, and the larger racialized American history they represent. Rosa and Mr. Compson do not expect Quentin to intervene in the narrative he receives, but rather to incorporate it and thus give it presence in the world. In that vein, Miss Rosa claims she tells Quentin her story for it to be written down – an expectation that would emphasize his active participation – but the young student quickly realizes that his interlocutor in fact only wants her story read; his role, as she sees it, is to act as a reader rather than a writer, a mediator rather than a producer ("and maybe you will remember this and write about it… *only she dont* [sic.] *mean that*, he thought. *It's because she wants it told…so that people… will read it*").[113] The third person narrator of Faulkner's novel informs us that the role of channeling other people's voices is anything but new to Quentin, and in many ways can be said to function as the defining feature of his being:

> It was a part of his twenty years' heritage of breathing the same air and hearing his father talk about the man; a part of the town's – Jefferson's – eighty years' heritage of the same air which the man himself had breathed between this September afternoon in 1909 and that Sunday morning in June in 1833... Quentin had grown up with that; the mere names were interchangeable and almost myriad. His childhood was full of them; his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts…[114]

What allows Quentin to function as the "reader" of the Sutpen family is his morbid ontology. The protagonist carries in his body the voices of the antebellum dead – those who were "defeated" by their "sin of slavery," and those who were their victims – without integrating them into his sense of self. What can be thought of as his subjectivity shrivels up in order to form an "empty hall" for the dead to make their presence felt. For that reason, Quentin is depicted as a "commonwealth": he is not a unified subject enclosed within clear boundaries of self, but a collective and historical

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[111] Sheldon Brivic, *Tears of Rage: The Racial Interface of Modern American Fiction: Faulkner, Wright, Pynchon, Morrison* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 31; Faulkner, *Absalom*, 190.
[112] George Marrion O'Donnell, "Mr. Faulkner Flirts with Failure," in *William Faulkner: The Contemporary Reviews*, ed. M. Thomas Inge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 144.
[113] Faulkner, *Absalom*, 11. It could be justifiably claimed that at times Quentin is not "a Special Listener" at all. During the scene at Mrs. Rosa's house, for instance, the narrator informs us that "Quentin was not listening" (Faulkner, *Absalom*, 172). However, it is my sense that Quentin is listening at that moment, not to Rosa but to his internal Others. As Brooks writes: "Quentin was not listening because his imagination remained gripped by the confrontation between Henry and Judith when Henry bursts into her room to tell her he has killed her fiancé. This is a scene which Miss Rosa could not have personally witnessed" (*Yoknapatawpha and Beyond*, 306). The precision with which Quentin recounts that encounter, without, here again, treating it as his own imaginative invention, suggests that it emanates from an alterity within him. After all, Quentin is "a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts" (ibid., 7).
[114] Faulkner, *Absalom*, 7.

echo-chamber that encompasses the whole of the community and serves as its unifying space.[115] In that sense, and over and above the numerous differences that pull them apart, Quentin conforms to Derrida's melancholic subject presented above. Like Derrida's mourner, who resists the introjection of the dead as an "image" or "idol" into a now augmented self, Quentin engages in "impossible mourning." He takes in but does not "interiorize" the dead, thereby remaining loyal to the Other's "infinite remove," in Derrida's terms, at the price of immense pain.

Yet we must remember that Quentin does not *choose* his ethical melancholic stance in the simple meaning of the term, which assumes complete agency. The familial and cultural context in which he is raised – saturated with unspoken acts of violence, tormenting secrets, and the daunting, all consuming, presence of slavery as an unrepentable sin – molds him affectively into an "empty hall" for the dead. In the place of "choice," then, Derrida proposes "refusal" as the act that characterizes the ethical melancholic subject, a resistance to the assimilation of the complex Other at the expense of its autonomy:

> The cryptic enclave as an extraneous or foreign area of incorporation… According to Freud's *Mourning and Melancholy*… the self recuperates its previous cathectic investment from the lost object, while waiting for a libidinal reorganization. Sealing the loss of the object, but also marking a refusal to mourn, such a maneuver is foreign and actually opposed to the process of introjection. I pretend to keep the dead alive, intact, safe (save) inside me, but it is only in order to refuse, in a necessarily equivocal way, to love the dead as a living part of me, dead save in me, through the process of introjection, as happens in so-called normal mourning.[116]

The melancholic subject "refuses to mourn" a "so-called normal mourning" by forming the lost Other into a part of the living self. Instead, like Quentin, the "impossible" mourner "pretend[s]" to, that is, gestures towards the unattainable goal of keeping the dead alive within a diminished self who shrivels to allow for a "cryptic enclave as an extraneous or foreign area of incorporation" to act within her. In other words, in order to allow for the "defeated names" to echo, Quentin deadens himself, becoming a non-being.

Paradoxically, it is this melancholic positioning that places Quentin in the privileged position of the narratee within the fictional world. His historically-determined disposition to "listen," in O'Donnell's terms, provides him access to knowledge otherwise unavailable to his surroundings, and allows him to cultivate the narrative of *Absalom, Absalom!* within him. With the backdrop on *The Urn*'s theory of attention, we can already sense a similarity between *The Urn*'s close reader and Quentin: both deaden themselves in order to animate a complex unity, poetry and history respectively, unexpectedly gaining in this manner "a more intense life." Or, put differently, they are both instructed, Quentin by his social milieu and the close reader by Brooks, to animate a lifeless entity within them, either a "storied urn" or "stubborn back-looking ghosts," thus coming into intimate contact with alterity. An important difference between the two models is found in the reader's motivation: Quentin is driven by affect, while the close reader deadens herself via cognitive effort, as we will discuss in detail later on. Yet their similarities suggest that

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[115] Panthea Reid Broughton writes in this regard, "Quentin Compson… would choose to live in the past. He faces backward in time… Becoming himself a 'stubborn back-looking ghost.' Quentin denies his involvement in both present and future. He consciously sets out to destroy the interconnectedness of time, to forestall progression" (*William Faulkner: The Abstract and the Actual* [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974], 113).
[116] Derrida, "Fors," xvi.

when *The Urn*'s close reader is requested to deaden herself via attention, she is in fact instructed to erase her subjectivity, like Quentin, to momentary suspend her personal memories, bodily sensation, and identity formation, in order to become an "empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names."[117] That would explain, of course, Brooks' selection of "the urn" as an apt metaphor for the close reader who, he hopes, will become an empty container filled with the dead.

Brooks turns to *Absalom, Absalom!* specifically in order to think through his readerly model since this novel surprisingly brings into sharp relief the New Critic's notion of the good reader as a living-dead capable of animating a lifeless alterity. This is especially evident in *Absalom, Absalom!*'s famous scene centering on Judith's letter from Charles Bon. The scene follows Bon's murder by Henry due to his realization that Bon is nonother than Judith's half-brother, or, as the novel puts it, Sutpen's "sixteenth part negro son" from his prior Haitian "eighth part negro mistress," whom he abruptly abandoned upon realizing she is not "pure white" and, thus, does not fit his racialized "design."[118] Judith, then, approaches Quentin's grandmother, a foreign acquaintance who she conceives of as a "stranger," in order to bequeath her Bon's final letter, "the only one she ever showed."[119] But the goal of Judith's transaction, we find, is not historical preservation in the traditional sense, that is, making sure that her love story with Bon and its violent resolution will persist in the public sphere through the continuous reading of the letter. As befits a novel that explicitly takes on an investigation of what history means, Judith's reasoning for her actions is far more complex. She instructs Quentin's grandmother: "Destroy it. As you like. Read it if you like or dont [sic] read it if you like."[120] The point, for Judith, in passing her "scrap of paper" from "one hand to another, one mind to another," is not the conservation of life, but an attempt to "scratch" the utterly sealed surface of death:

> You get born and you try this and you dont [sic] know why only you keep on trying… and then all of a sudden it's all over and all you have left is a block of stone with scratches on it provided there was someone to remember to have the marble scratched… and so maybe if you could go to someone, the stranger the better, and give them something – a scrap of paper… it would be at least a scratch, something, something that might make a mark on something that *was* once for the reason that it can die someday, while the block of stone cant [sic] be *is* because it never can become *was* because it cant [sic] ever die or perish.[121]

The grave, the "block of stone" which is the memorial, the urn, cannot be *is*, cannot portray a life, because it is unperishable, unchangeable. The telling of history, on the other hand, requires modification. For a story to unfold, one must scratch or make a mark on that lost life, forcing it to speak, to change, to animate. These exact same concepts, as we've seen, are at the center of

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[117] Brooks' imperative of self-erasure will develop into Wimsatt and Beardsley's seminal "The Intentional Fallacy": "The Intentional Fallacy… begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism. The outcome… is that the poem itself, as an object of specifically critical judgment, tends to disappear" ("The Intentional Fallacy," 31). Against the backdrop of Brooks' theory of attention, Wimsatt and Beardsley's imperative is dislodged from the context of Kantian idealism, and can be seen as holding an ethical significance. The reader is asked to relinquish her "impressions" so that the poem as an autonomous alterity will not "disappear." In other words, the reader is asked to take on a melancholic ethical stance in Derridian terms.

[118] Faulkner, *Absalom*, 80.

[119] Ibid., 75.

[120] Ibid., 100.

[121] Ibid., 101.

Brook's *Urn*, where the attentive reader is the one who is capable of making the memorial – the "poem in stone" – speak or "utter" its paradoxes.[122] But the resemblance does not end there; Faulkner also goes on to present in his novel two models of readers encountering the letter, preferring, like Brooks, the one who is able to revive the dead letter over the reader who is restricted to perceiving its lifelessness. The latter is embodied by Mr. Compson, who depicts his reading of the letter in a fashion characteristic of his didactic rhetoric, generalizing it into a statement about the essence of history:

> We exhume from old trunks and boxes and drawers letters without salutation or signature, in which men and women who once lived and breathed are now merely initials or nicknames… They are there, yet something is missing… the paper old and faded and falling to pieces, the writing faded, almost indecipherable, yet meaningful… but nothing happens… you re-read, tedious and intent, poring, making sure that you have forgotten nothing, made no miscalculation; you bring them together again and again and nothing happens: just the words, the symbols, the shapes themselves, shadowy inscrutable and serene, against the turgid background of a horrible and bloody mischancing of human affairs.[123]

That "something," small as it might be, that Judith hopes would occur when the letter passes from "one mind to another" is precisely what refuses to happen in Mr. Compson's case. He re-reads, "tedious and intent," making sure nothing is forgotten, but "*nothing*" rather than "something" happens, the letter remains a stone: "just the words, the symbols, the shapes themselves." On the other hand, Quentin's interaction with the letter, especially when juxtaposed with his father's, appears altogether different:

> Quentin took the letter from him [Mr. Compson] and beneath that dim bug-fouled globe opened it, carefully, as though the sheet… were not the paper but the intact ash of its former shadow and substance… he read the faint spidery script not like something impressed upon a letter by a once-living hand but like a shadow cast upon it which has resolved on the paper the instant before he looked at it and which might fade, vanish at any instant while he still read: the dead tongue speaking after the four years and then after almost fifty more.[124]

For Quentin, a non-entity that hosts the Southern dead, Judith's letter is not a tombstone, a "scrap of paper," but the very ashes "of its former shadow and substance" which now echo within the reader as an urn. The protagonist does not read the letter as if it is a remnant of the past, of people "who once lived and breathed are now merely initials or nicknames," in his father's terms. For him, the letter is composed in the present, written by the dead hand just an "instant before he looked at it" to the extent that he can hear "the dead tongue" speak while he reads. No doubt, Quentin is the reader Judith – and the novel more generally – imagines for the torturous history of the American South, one that would scratch the surface of the enclosed tombstone by making the dead tongue speak again. But he also represents the readerly model that Brooks embraces.

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[122] Brooks, *The Urn*, 151, 165.
[123] Faulkner, *Absalom*, 80.
[124] Ibid., 102.

- **"FOLLOW QUENTIN'S EXAMPLE"**

The traditional view of the New Critical close reader might lead one to assume that it would be the rational reading process that Mr. Compson advances – one that involves "re-reading," "no miscalculation," and "making sure that you have forgotten nothing," – which would stand in the eyes of Brooks for the close reader within Faulkner's imaginary universe. But this is not the case; Brooks consistently finds Quentin's liminal ontology to be his favorite and theorizes close reading via the ghostly character. The originality of this position is underscored when taking into consideration the conventional scholarly conception of Quentin as the surrogate of the reader within the novel.

Much of the criticism that came after Brooks views Quentin as going through a radical shift halfway through: while the first half of the novel portrays the protagonist as a receptor, many critics believe him to transform into an active creator of the narrative in the later part of the text.[125] In his dorm at Harvard, Quentin relates the tragedy of the Sutpen family to Shreve, his Canadian roommate, and together they inject their own speculations into the story and fill in its most salient gaps. This process marks, the critical convention goes, Quentin's shift from a passive narratee to a narrator. As Richard Godden succinctly puts it, "the critical tradition has garnered their [Quentin and Shreve's] achievements largely from chapters eight and nine under some variant of the generic title 'creative history.'"[126] In this context, "creative" signifies the ability to invent the text from one's own imagination, to act as a free agent within the realm of the narrative.[127]

Brooks presents a position radically different from this critical consensus and more in line with Derrida's hauntological deconstruction of the liberal subject. The New Critic points out the interpretive significance of the intra-textual dialogue between Faulkner's different novels, and, given Quentin's tragic death in *The Sound and The Fury*, concludes that Quentin never finds his place among the living. In his mind, "Quentin is really, as his sister knows, in love with death itself."[128] This obsession brings agony to the student but also carries a positive potential, according to Brooks, since Quentin's fascination with death functions as the fuel that keeps the novel, and its reader, going: "For the novel *Absalom, Absalom!* does not merely tell the story of Thomas Sutpen, but dramatizes the process by which two young men of the twentieth century construct the character of Thomas Sutpen…the second half of the book may be called an attempt at interpretation."[129]. In line with the critical tradition discussed above, Brooks too identifies a line of demarcation between the two halves of the novel, but for him Quentin's process of "inference," "conjuncture," and "guesswork" is not a vivid one.

Shreve, for Brooks, is a different story. The New Critic distinguishes between the narration conducted by Quentin and by that of his roommate. While the novel indicates that "it might have been… in a sense both" roommates that conjure Sutpen's story, although the majority of the telling

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[125] See, for example, Owen Robinson, *Creating Yoknapatawpha: Readers and Writers in Faulkner's Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 99; and John T. Irwin, *Doubling and Incest/Repetition and Revenge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 119. The location of this boundary between the first and second seconds of the novel varies among critics.

[126] Richard Godden, *Fictions of Labor: William Faulkner and the South's Long Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 168.

[127] A central voice in this tradition is Peter Brooks, who claims that Quentin begins *Absalom, Absalom!* in the passive position associated with Roland Barthes' "readerly" text and transforms into a reader in the Barthian "writerly" sense, one that takes on the "authority of narrative" (*Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992], 304-5).

[128] Brooks, *Yoknapatawpha Country,* 327.

[129] Ibid., 310.

is done by Shreve, Brooks insists that it is Shreve, the Canadian "outsider," who "does most of the imaginative reconstruction."[130] While initially counterintuitive, Brooks' claim follows a compelling logic; one might indeed say that Quentin does not understand himself to be "imagining" at all. Both students envision the missing scenes from Sutpen's narrative together, but of the two, Shreve is the one who self-consciously refers to it as the work of the imagination. He makes sure to announce the beginning of the creative process by using markers such as, "Let me play a while now" or "all right, don't bother to say he stopped talking now; just go on."[131] In this sense, Shreve differentiates between knowledge emanating from others and fiction he himself creates. Quentin, on the other hand, does not recognize the boundaries between others' stories and his own, and rarely takes ownership of information he imagines or even discovers.[132] He also moves in his speech between details supported by the outside and those emerging from his inside, but does not acknowledge these shifts.[133] He never announces, as Shreve does, that he is at a certain moment engaged in the "play" of imagination and thus sheds doubt on his own acceptance of these narratives as fictional.

Thus, when Brooks contends that it is Shreve who does "most of the imaginative reconstruction," he makes a valid point. For Quentin, stories arising from the inside are just as foreign as those coming from external sources. Quentin, we remember, is a listener/reader adroit at hearing the stories of the past within him ("his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names"). At times, he is even able to sense these stories without the need for linguistic articulation ("but you were not listening because you knew it already… absorbed it already without the medium of speech").[134] What Shreve, then, conceives as the "play" of imagination could very well be for Quentin an act of listening to foreign voices that he takes in.

It is highly significant, then, that although Brooks flags Shreve as performing much of the "imaginative" work, he advises Faulkner's readers to model themselves on Quentin:

> The story embodied the problem of evil and the irrational… Had Henry cared less for Bon, or else much less for Judith, he might have promoted the happiness of one without feeling that he was sacrificing that of the other. Or, had he cared much less for either and much more for himself, he might have won a cool and rational detachment… Had Henry been not necessarily wiser but simply more cynical or more gross or more selfish, there would have been no tragedy. To say that Quentin was peculiarly susceptible to this meaning of Henry's story is not to make of Shreve a monster of inhumanely cool irrationality [sic]. But Shreve is measurably closer to the skepticism and detachment that allow modern man to dismiss the irrational claims from which Quentin cannot free himself and which he honors to his own cost. The reader of *Absalom, Absalom!* might well follow Quentin's example… the aspect of the story to stress is not the downfall of Thomas Sutpen, a man

[130] Faulkner, *Absalom*, 243; Brooks, *Yoknapatawpha Country*, 314.
[131] Faulkner, *Absalom*, 280, 208.
[132] As Doreen Fowler points out, Quentin presents many of his own discoveries, such as Charles Bon being Sutpen's son, as if they were his father's or grandfather's (*Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed* [Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 1997], 110).
[133] For example, Quentin transitions without any apparent change in tone or language from recounting Sutpen's abandonment of Molly's baby-girl (a detail he knows from his father) to the conversation between Judith and Sutpen after the war, which he clearly makes up (Faulkner, *Absalom*, 300).
[134] Faulkner, *Absalom*, 172.

> who is finally optimistic, rationalistic, and afflicted with elephantiasis of the will. Instead, he ought to attend to the story of Sutpen's children.[135]

Brooks implicitly identifies Quentin and Shreve as two models of readers embedded within *Absalom, Absalom!*'s diegetic world – in a manner similar to the juxtaposition between Quentin and Mr. Compson that we've seen before – and favors the former over the latter. The close reader is asked to join Quentin's group, which includes Henry and Judith as well. These three are clustered together since they are associated with "irrationality" and "attachment," which, we learn, are valuable readerly qualities for Brooks. Not only does he opt for a reader that "cannot free himself" from "irrational claims," but he also urges any reader to follow Quentin's example and focus, in the text, on characters like Henry and Judith who exhibit similar traits. Henry, after all, is so "attached" to and "cares" for Bon and Judith (and so unattached and careless when it comes to himself) that he is described as the very opposite of "rational detachment."[136] Brooks' close reader, then, is asked to imitate not Shreve and Sutpen, associated with "optimism" and "rationalism," but Quentin, Henry, and Judith, who are unselfish notwithstanding the "tragedy" this subject position implies. To push this claim even further, one might say that in order to read like Quentin, who is a "notpeople," or like Henry who pays the price of death for his limitless "care," Brooks' close reader need not be unselfish but, at least momentarily, selfless.[137]

However, *The Urn*'s close reader is never instructed to "care" or emotionally "attach" herself to the text. She is not made to be haunted by "irrational claims" from which she "cannot free" herself, like Quentin. This is where attention as "mental agility," in Brooks' terms, comes into play. Given that not all readers are motivated into a melancholic stance by historical circumstances, affect, or "attachment," the New Critic systemizes his ethical model into a cognitive one in *The Urn*. He teaches his reader how to utilize attention to forgo her integral self and animate the poem as an Other. In that vein, when Brooks shifts from his description of Quentin as "irrational" to his instructions for the reader in the paragraph above, he substitutes "attachment" with "attention" and insists that in order to read like Quentin, the reader "ought to *attend*." The "tragedy" and "sacrifice" that motivate Quentin's compulsion to evacuate himself are replaced, in the case of the close reader, with an active and disciplined cognitive effort of attention. This might explain why the term "irrationality" proves to be unstable for Brooks. The New Critic begins by associating "rationality" with Shreve and Sutpen's "cool… detachment," but goes on to describe Shreve as "a monster of inhumanely cool irrationality." In fact, logic and reason belong to both readerly models Brooks identifies in *Absalom, Absalom!*: Shreve is "rational" in his "skepticism" and "detachment," while the close reader, who pertains to Quentin's group, is required, via "rational" cognitive labor, to transform herself into a selfless "empty hall."

That Quentin's mode of reading history and the close reader's efforts of attention in *The Urn* are in affinity for Brooks is evident in the New Critic's further differentiation between Shreve and Quentin. Faulkner's work, he writes, requires "the heightening, special focus" that all good fiction "demands and justifies," a "focus" that echoes *The Urn*'s "attention."[138] Yet in the context of

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[135] Brooks, *Yoknapatawpha Country*, 318.

[136] Quentin and Henry are also excessive in their "attachment" to each other. As Brooks prods us to recall, the readers forcefully witness Quentin "peculiar" susceptibility to Henry's story when the protagonist recounts to Shreve his encounter with Henry at Sutpen Hundred. While describing Henry's "wasted yellow face… as if he were already a corpse," Quentin becomes a Henry of a kind himself and approaches death, "preparing for the dead moment before dawn… he lay still and rigid on his back" (Faulkner, *Absalom*, 298).

[137] Ibid., 5.

[138] Brooks, *Yoknapawtapha Country,* 13.

Absalom, Absalom! and the reading of history, the labor of "focus" or "attention" is replaced with the work of "projection":

> *Absalom, absalom!* is a persuasive commentary upon the thesis that much of "history" is really a kind of imaginative reconstruction. The past always remains a mystery, but if we are to hope to understand it in any wise, we must enter into it and project ourselves imaginatively into the attitudes and emotions of the historical figures.[139]

History, like *The Urn*'s poems, is a "mystery" not easily accessible. To come into contact with it "in any wise," one must make a special effort and project oneself "into the attitudes and emotions of…figures." The argument that history involves a "projection" of the self into an Other might seem banal, but the term Brooks chooses here makes it anything but hackneyed. A more conventional term would have been "identification," which traditionally implies an imagining of the self as similar to an Other, a process in which the integrity of the self is maintained. Projection, on the other hand, from the Latin *proicere* "stretch out, throw forth," means in Brooks' work an ejection, a forcing out, of parts of the self. This would explain why he writes that "we," the readers of Faulkner and of history, must "project ourselves imaginatively *into*" rather than *onto*, "the historical figures." The process of projection denotes, in the context of Brooks' critical writings, a literal movement between entities: giving up parts of the self in order to take in parts of the Other. A similar movement is generated via attention as conceptualized in *The Urn*; the reader's cognitive labor allows her to remove parts of the self, and incorporate the poem while keeping it external, that is, a not-fully integrated entity. What does seem to destabilize Brooks' idea of reading as leaving the Other its agency is the critic's assertion above that the interaction with history requires "imagination," which seems to suggest that agency fully remains on the side of the reader. But this apparent tension is resolved when Brooks discusses the different kinds of "projection" performed by Shreve and Quentin as "readers" of Sutpen's history:

> Both of the boys make this sort of projection… He [Shreve] finds it, in his lack of any serious emotional commitment, a fascinating game… Quentin on the other hand is too much involved – too fully committed to the problems and the issue – actually to enjoy the reconstruction. He feels a compulsion to do so, of course, the same compulsion that had caused him, against his better judgment, to go up into the bedroom at Sutpen's Hundred and look upon the wasted face of Henry Sutpen… One of the most important devices used in the novel is the placing of Shreve in it as a kind of sounding board and mouthpiece. By doing so, Faulkner has in effect acknowledged the attitude of the modern "liberal," twentieth-century reader, who is basically rational, skeptical, without any special concern for history, and pretty well emancipated from the ties of family, race, or section. In fact, Shreve sounds very much like certain literary critics who have written on Faulkner.[140]

While Shreve stands for the "twentieth-century reader… rational, skeptical" of whom Brooks disapproves, as his sarcastic tone indicates, Quentin embodies the "too fully committed" alternative who projects himself, i.e. throw himself into, the "stubborn back-looking ghosts" of the past. The process of projective imagination which Brooks has in mind is not one of inventing something new ("a fascinating game"), but of committing to alterity at the price of self-

[139] Ibid., 311.
[140] Ibid., 313.

disintegration. Whether that "other" is the traumatic racial history of the American South (as in the case of Quentin), or the paradoxical "unity" of the text (as in *The Urn*), Brooks' close reader is urged to "follow Quentin's example" in the sense of becoming "an empty hall echoing" with the voices of alterity, hence being allowed an intimate contact, partial as it may be, with its "mystery."

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In his recent *Literary Criticism: A Concise Political History*, mentioned in the introduction, Joseph North insists on a binary dichotomy between the "left-liberals… internationalist… and secularist" Cambridge scholars, such as I. A. Richards and William Empson, who are considered, mistakenly in his mind, the forefathers of New Criticism, and the "Southern U.S. Christian" New Critics themselves. The former, he claims, "advanced a utilitarian model of aesthetic and practical education."[141] The latter, on the other hand, institutionalized the method of close reading "as a thoroughly idealist practice, based in a neo-Kantian aesthetics of disinterest and transcendent value," which translated into "the famously radical New Critical attempt to secure the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the aesthetic object."[142] Brooks' theory of mind and readerly model, which are implicitly presented and carefully developed in both *The Urn* and *The Yoknapatawpha Country*, significantly qualify North's paradigmatic view of the New Critical "attempt to secure the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the aesthetic object." Saturated with graveyards, "half acre tombs," "daggers," "ashes," "mortal wounds," and "melancholy," *The Urn* – Brooks masterpiece of so-called "detachment" and "disinterestedness" – emerges as no less gothic than Faulkner's universe.[143] And at the heart of this melancholia is Brooks' close reader: she is diligently taught by Brooks, in both texts, how to deaden herself during the reading process. As I've shown, then, the "autonomy" of the literary text is indeed central to Brooks' thinking, but it is not an idealist "autonomy" that also assumes textual "self-sufficiency." Brooks' autonomy of the literary work as a "mysterious" complex entity that resists domination can only come into play during an interaction with a reader who is willing to ethically make a cognitive effort for the poem to make its singular voice heard. The close reader, then, is not "detached" or "disinterested"; she is evacuated of her subjectivity in order to internally entertain the poem as alterity. This readerly melancholic effort not only leaves "the other its otherness," in Derrida's terms, but enables the reader to approach, over and above her sense of emptiness, a "more intense life," an intimate and non-intrusive encounter with alterity. In this light, close reading, the very bedrock of the discipline of literature, appears to have much more in common with Deconstruction's "ethics of alterity" than with Kantian idealism. If we are sufficiently "dead" to Brooks' work, perhaps we will be able to hear the astonishing reading practice it "utters."

[141] North, *Literary Criticism*, 27.
[142] Ibid., 27, 43.
[143] Brooks, *The Urn*, 108, 14, 30, 14, 100, 50.

FIRST PART | NORTH AMRERICA

Chapter Two

"THE MUSIC OF PROSE TAKES PLACE IN SILENCE": SOUND, FURY, AND FAULKNER'S NEGATIVE AUDITION

When we read to ourselves, our ears hear nothing. Where we read, however, we listen.

–Garrett Stewart

The figure of the urn, so deeply associated with the New Critics, was also crucial to their literary paragon, William Faulkner. An avowed admirer of Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Faulkner referred to the poem and the urn at its center in various of his works (e.g., *Sartoris*, *Go Down*, *Moses*, *The Sound and the Fury*), famously declared that "if a writer has to rob his mother, he will not hesitate; the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is worth any number of old ladies,"[144] and even crafted his own version of the "Ode" for his lover, Meta Carpenter.[145] Surprisingly, the triangulation between the Southern critics, the author they promoted, and the figure of the urn did not receive much scholarly attention. When it did, however, scholars have taken Faulkner's frequent gestures toward to "Ode" to mean that, like the New Critics, he understood the literary text to be an urn, that is, an autonomous, unfading, and exceedingly well formulated aesthetic object. In that vein, André Bleikasten claims, in alluding to Brooks' *The Well Wrought Urn*, that Faulkner "strove for… the wholeness and perfection of the 'well-wrought urn,' sometimes even subscribing to the extreme idealistic assumption… that, if the world exists at all, it is destined to end up in or as a book, the Book: 'it takes only one book to do it… it's one perfect book, you see. It's one single urn or shape that you want.'"[146] In a like manner, Fredric Jameson ideologically criticizes Faulkner for overly manipulating form at the expense of plot in the spirit of the New Critical ideal of literature as a perfected aesthetic object. For Jameson, Faulkner "construct[s] a mystery which is the result only of the author's withholding of information, rather than latent in the plot itself" in agreement with the New Critical vision of literature as an "artifact" from which "nothing stands out, there are no excesses either way… no extra stylistic frills, no 'extrinsic' or extraneous content poking out of the pillowcase."[147] Using similar vocabulary, Richard Godden blames Faulkner for producing mystery and an accompanying readerly difficulty in the service of a sadistic obsession with crafting too well-wrought a text:

> Many are the close readings of Faulkner, generally conducted under some version of a celebratory modernist rubric, whereby "difficult" is translated as "rich, "dense," or "complex" […] Rather, Faulkner's "difficulty" […] is driven by his penurious habit of secretion – a habit which demands the reader attend closely in order to recover, from

[144] James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate, ed., *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner* (New York: Random House, 1968), 239.
[145] Meta Carpenter Wilde and Orin Borsten, *A Loving Gentleman: The Love Story of William Faulkner and Meta Carpenter* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 76-7.
[146] André Bleikasten, *The Ink of Melancholy: Faulkner's Novels from The Sound and the Fury to Light in August*, Reprint edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), x.
[147] Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (London: Verso, 2013), 176, 210.

> Faulkner's choked, subverted, underarticulated, and yet imperious prose, inferences of a tale that is not being told.[148]

According to Godden, the demand Faulkner's work makes upon the reader to "attend closely" is fruitless. It is merely the heavy price she must pay for Faulkner's excessive formalism: "Faulkner's 'difficult' writing is not pleasurable, and reading him is often an intolerable labor. Impressionistically, the experience can resemble running on the spot, only to find that you are descending, and have been button-holed in a pit."[149] Godden's paradigmatic view, the traditional claim goes, is corroborated by Faulkner's own introduction to *The Sound and The Fury*, where he allegedly mobilizes the image of the urn to describe his masterpiece as a self-sufficient flawless "artifact," to quote Jameson, while advancing his more general idea of literature as "beauty held and arrested for the purpose of contemplation and immortality," in the words of Hilayne Cavanaugh.[150] In the introduction to the novel, which he considered his best, Faulkner writes[151]:

> There is a story somewhere about an old Roman who kept at his bedside a Tyrrhenian vase which he loved and the rim of which he wore slowly away with kissing it. I had made myself a vase… It's fine to think that you will leave something behind you when you die, but it's better to have something you can die with.[152]

Faulkner's introduction indeed supports the claim that the urn symbolizes for him an important aesthetic principle. But his vocabulary around the "Tyrrhenian vase" is far more morbid than one would expect from a depiction of "beauty," "contemplation" and "immortality," as suggested by the critics above. Faulkner depicts his novelistic urn, ostensibly symbolizing the text as an enduring artifact, as being "worn away." And his urn is not made to outlast the author in its eternality, but to perish with him: "it's better to have something you can die with." It is my contention that these ghostly undertones, which follow Faulkner's depictions of the urn throughout his work, shed doubt on the transcendental aesthetics such critics as Jameson and Godden attribute him with. Instead, I believe the urn echoes for Faulkner not only "wholeness and perfection," but also, in fact mostly, a readerly mental ability to act as an urn and provide an empty space for ostensibly absent entities to resound.[153]

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[148] Godden, *Fictions of Labor: William Faulkner and the South's Long Revolution*. 4.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Hilayne Cavanaugh, *Faulkner, Stasis, and Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn,"* PhD Dissertation, The University of Nebraska, 1977, 3.
[151] Faulkner referred to *The Sound and The Fury* as "the most gallant and the most magnificent failure" of all his "failed" works (*Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia, 1957-1958* [New York: Vintage Books, 1965], 61).
[152] William Faulkner, "An Introduction to The Sound and the Fury," ed. James B. Meriwether, *Mississippi Quarterly* 26 (1973): 415. Faulkner produced various drafts for his introductions to *The Sound and The Fury* during 1933 in anticipation of a limited edition that did not finally materialize. I quote from the two drafts published by James B. Meriwether in 1972 and 1973. For more about the genealogy of this introduction, see Philip Cohen and Doreen Fowler, "Faulkner's Introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*," *American Literature* 62, no. 2 (1990): 262-283.
[153] R. Murray Schafer also identifies in Faulkner a sonic sensitivity ("earwitnessing") to the dead: "William Faulkner… knew the noise of corpses, which he described as 'little trickling bursts of secret murmurous bubbling'" (*The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* [Rochester: Destiny Books, 1994], 9). Yet, Murray focuses on the positive depiction of death, i.e., actual vocalities generated by corpse, while I am interested the ways in which Faulkner's texts conjure "dead" or "ghostly" sounds in the reader's mind without their material presence in the text.

I take my cue for this argument from the previous chapter, where I demonstrated that it is precisely the common view of Faulkner as nothing but an extravagant formalist that the New Critics challenged in advance. While critics such as Godden criticize Faulkner for demanding that the reader "attend closely" for no good reason, Brooks suggests that this readerly mental effort has an ethical valence. The New Critic understands Faulkner's work not to *be* an urn but to *construct* an urn-like attentive reader. His interpretations of Faulkner alongside his *The Well Wrought Urn* make salient the urn's costumery function as a receptacle of ashes, and Brooks turns specifically to this morbid figure since he believes that Faulkner encourages his reader to utilize attention as a way to turn herself into an vessel for the dead, that is, to evacuate her subjectivity for the sake of animating the lifeless text. Brooks models his view of Faulkner's ideal reader on the fictional character of the suicidal Quentin Compson, whom the New Critic suggests acts as an exemplary reader within the diegetic world. As I have showed, though the readerly subjectivity Brooks theorizes out of Faulkner – a ghostly, deadly one – might appear to be utterly pessimistic, it also opens up an ethical possibility in the spirit of Jacques Derrida's "hauntology": Brooks identifies in Faulkner a gesture towards a radical form of encounter with the literary text as an alterity.[154] In this chapter, I follow through on this previous conjecture of mine and turn to Faulkner without the mediation of the New Critics in order to examine the degree to which Faulkner's body of work is indeed ethically invested in shaping a ghostly urn-like reader, as Brooks suggested.

That Faulkner's oeuvre is replete with specters is self-evident; anyone familiar with his work would know that questions of death in life and life in death govern his fictional universe. But I would like to push this obvious observation further, and argue that Brooks' method of reading Faulkner allows one to see that Faulkner constructs a ghostly reader as well, one who functions as an empty echo chamber. In fact, to my mind, Faulkner is more committed to the idea of the reader as an urn that Brooks has predicted; he not only thinks of his reader as a Quentin of sorts, an echoing "empty hall" metaphorically, but takes the acoustic aspect of this depiction literally. My argument is that, for Faulkner, the reader's work of attention signifies a labor of sonic imagination; the attentive reader is she who brings the text to life by producing its soundtrack, by making the novel's voice heard.[155]

▪ GHOSTLY SOUNDS AND NEGATIVE AUDITON

Faulkner's fictional world is saturated with echoing sounds; on her dying bed, Addie Bundren of *As I Lay Dying* famously hears Cash's saw going "Chuck. Chuck. Chuck"[156]; *Light in August*

[154] For more on "hauntology," see Chapter 1.

[155] My argument follows in the footsteps of Florence Dore, who has recently demonstrated that Faulkner's work conforms with what she terms the New Critical "protocols of reading" only if we change our understanding of what New Critical close reading means ("The New Criticism and the Nashville Sound: William Faulkner's *The Town* and Tock and Roll," *Contemporary Literature* 55, no. 1 [2014]: 32-57; *Novel Sounds: Southern Fiction in the Age of Rock and Roll* [New York : Columbia University Press, 2018]). Dore, however, finds this new dimension of close reading in later works such as *The Town*, and claims that the earlier novels, like *The Sound and The Fury*, fall in line quite easily with conventional understandings of New Critical close reading. In contrast, I believe that *The Sound and The Fury* proves the close reader to be, for both Faulkner and Brooks, not the detached contemplator of an autonomous urn-text, as even Dore assumes, but an active participant in the creation of the work, a participant whose function is, however narrowly specified, to occupy a hauntological subject position, to function as the text's echo-chamber and thus give it life. In addition, my argument is inspired by Marilia Librandi's recent work on the role of aurality in the oeuvre of Clarice Lispector (to be discussed in Chapter Four). See, *Writing by Ear: Clarice Lispector and the Aural Novel* (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2018).

[156] William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, Reissue edition (New York: Vintage, 1991), 5.

opens with Armstid's wagon reaching Lena Grove with "the sharp and brittle crack and clatter of its weathered and ungreased wood and metal"[157]; and Old Ben in "The Bear" is recognized by the young Isaac through "a moiling yapping an octave too high… leaving then somewhere in the air that echo, thin, slightly hysterical, abject, almost grieving."[158] While these sounds strike a haunting tone in the ears of Faulkner's characters – signifying the approaching death for Addie, a dangerous journey for Lena, or the uncanny encounter with nature for Isaac – they are not delivered as an enigma to the readers. The text presents itself as capable of registering and communicating to the reader the sounds of the saw, the wagon, and the bear via onomatopoeia ("Chuck. Chuck. Chuck"), a detailed description of the sound's qualities ("thin, slightly hysterical, abject, almost grieving"), or through alliteration ("sharp and brittle crack and clatter").

But what of those sounds in Faulkner's work that are not delivered to the reader through the language of the work? What about those sounds that infiltrate her like ghosts whose presence she feels but cannot locate? Karl Zender's pioneering work, engaging with Faulkner through Sound Studies, distinguishes between two kinds of sound representation in his oeuvre: a reconciliating representation, which expresses the "reciprocity between the self and the other," and a hostile one, that stands for "an invasion of the self *by* the Other [emphasis in original]."[159] Rather than representations of sound, I am interested in textual cues designed to provoke sonorities in the reader's mind, in the spirit of what Garrett Stewart calls the phenomenology of phonemic reading.[160] Yet the auditory experiences I look at can certainly be said to pertain to Zender's second category of hostile sound; the sounds I'm interested in "invade" the reader, force themselves on her perception. This effect is especially salient in *The Sound and The Fury*, the novel that marks, for Zender, Faulkner's shift from benevolent to more hostile sounds, and whose title clearly attests to its preoccupation with acoustics.

Where I diverge from Zender's argument is in his evaluation of Faulkner's "penetrating" vocalities in *The Sound and The Fury*. For Zender, the diegetic acoustic of this novel is thoroughly negative, these sounds are "inimical," "hostile," signifying the author's painful recognition that the natural and bestial world around him is autonomous and cannot be controlled by human imagination.[161] But if we gloss Faulkner's formal experiments by way of Brooks and Derrida, the ethical charge of this sonic autonomy comes to the fore. I argue that even if the sounds in *The Sound and The Fury* are born out of a lamentation for a lost world, the readerly experience this text formally provides is one of ethical potentiality, compelling the reader to acknowledge through her senses the porous quality of her ontology and the presence of hauntological beings in her world. That is to say, Faulkner's formal strategies for cultivating an urn-like reader who is attentive to absent-present sounds falls in line with Brooks' view of the close reader as a kind of living-dead subject, one who radically opens up to alterity.

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[157] William Faulkner, *Light in August*, 1st Vintage International edition (New York: Vintage International/Random House, 1990), 8.

[158] William Faulkner, *Three Famous Short Novels: Spotted Horses, Old Man, The Bear*, 1st edition (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 197.

[159] Karl F. Zender, "Faulkner and the Power of Sound," *PMLA* 99, no. 1 (1984), 90. Another important work on Faulkner and Sound Studies was recently published by Julie Napolin, see "The Fact of Resonance: An Acoustics of Determination in Faulkner and Benjamin," *Symploke* 24, no. 1 (2016): 171-186. While Napolin focuses mainly on the role of resonance and acoustics within the diegetic world of Faulkner's oeuvre, I am interested in the audition these texts invite the reader to participate in.

[160] For Garrett Stewart, the phenomenology of phonemic reading stands for the reader's experience of the text's "silent voicing… the vocalization of any text when we read" (*Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990], 3).

[161] Zender, "Faulkner and the Power of Sound," 92.

To rethink the positive charge of a "negative" or absent sound I return to Derrida, this time via his concept of "negative audition," where "negative" signifies not adversity or hostility but a quality marked by absence. Derrida unpacks this concept in his 1984 lecture on James Jayce called "Ulysses Gramophone."[162] There, Derrida makes the ostensibly idiosyncratic argument that behind Joyce's repetitive *yes*, especially pronounced in Molly's final soliloquy, he hears a laughter:

> With one ear, with a certain hearing [*ouïe*], I can hear a reactive, even negative yes-laughter resonate… Through the telephonic lapsus that made me say or hear *ouï dire*, 'hear say,' it was the *oui rire*, 'yes laughter,' which was making its way, as well as the consonantal difference from the d [of *dire*] to the r [of *rire*]. These, moreover, are the only consonants of my name.[163]

If one listens carefully to *Ulysses*, Derrida claims, this laughing "vibration" becomes "the very music of *Ulysses*."[164] And this imagined soundtrack proves important to him since it highlights the playfulness imbedded in this novel, which, Derrida claims, is read with excessive gravity, especially by scholars. This unheard "music" also underscores the ethical valence of the novel; both laughter and the affirmative "yes," Derrida asserts, are acts of response, they are always part of a dialogue with an Other, whether external or internal. As Anca Parvulescu puts it, for Derrida "*Yes* stands in need of an other than comes before it, an ambiguous, undetermined structural necessity. It is to this other – not necessarily a someone or a something – that one responds."[165] Hence, by attending to the laughter that emanates from *Ulysses*, the reader takes part in the novel's consistent dialogical gestures, its reaching out for the Other.

In the current context, however, what I find important in Derrida's discussion of "negative audition" is not its contribution to our understanding of Joyce, but the recognition that sound can emerge from a text and even hold ethical significance without being explicitly inscribed in or described by the words on the page. This observation once again proves Derrida's "hauntology" to unexpectedly elucidate the New Critical concept of close reading and Faulkner's congruity with it. In my mind, Faulkner, like Joyce, works to activate "negative audition" in his reader as an ethical practice, compelling her to hear something that is not there on the page, what I call "ghostly sounds." In comparison to *Ulysses*, however, *The Sound and The Fury* provokes negative audition in a way that is far less subjective. One does not have to be the guru of deconstruction in order to experience negative audition in Faulkner, since his novel is fully organized around the conjuring of imaginative ghostly sounds in the reader's mind. A paradigmatic example is the first section of *The Sound and The Fury*. There, Benjy, the youngest of the Compson siblings, who has a mental disability, depicts his experiences following his grandmother's death, which he was never informed about but apprehends via the senses of hearing and smell:

> I could hear mother, and feet walking fast away, and I could smell it. Then the room came, but my eyes went shut. I didn't stop. I could smell it. T.P. unpinned the bed clothes.
> "Hush." he said. "Shhhhhhhh."
> But I could smell it. T.P. pulled me up and he put on my clothes fast.

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[162] Jacques Derrida, "Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce," in *Derrida and Joyce: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Andrew J. Mitchell and Sam Slote (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 41-86.
[163] Ibid., 67-8.
[164] Ibid., 80.
[165] Anca Parvulescu, "To Yes-Laugh Derrida's Molly," *Parallax* 16, no. 3 (2010): 18.

> "Hush, Benjy." he said. "We going down to our house. You want to go down to our house, where Frony is. Hush, Shhhhh."
> He laced my shoes and put my cap on and we went out. There was a light in the hall. Across the hall we could hear mother.
> "Shhhhhh, Benjy." T.P. said. "We'll be out in a minute."
> A door opened and I could smell it more than ever, and a head came out. It wasn't father. Father was sick there.
> "Can you take him out of the house."
> "That's where we going." T.P. said. Dilsey came up the stairs.
> "Hush." she said. "Hush. Take him down home, T.P. Frony fixing him a bed. You all look after him, now. Hush, Benjy. Go on with T.P."
> She went where we could hear Mother […]
> We went down stairs. The stairs went down into the dark and T.P. took my hand, and we went out the door, out of the dark. […]
> "I can't take you down home bellering like you is." T.P. said. "You was bad enough before you got that bull-frog voice. Come on."[166]

The most salient feature in this exchange, appearing ten times in different variations, is the attempt to silence Benjy. "Hush," "shhhhh," and even T.P.'s final comment, "I can't take you down home bellering like you is […]," overwhelms the text in this moment, as it does much of Benjy's section and the ones to follow. In fact, over one hundred hushings directed at Benjy can be found in *The Sound and The Fury*. In the spirit of narratology, then, it seems pertinent to ask what the function of this silencing is. Clearly, it is not there to merely inform us that Benjy is crying, one mention of this fact would have sufficed. It also does not advance the plot much, definitely not enough to account for its compulsive repetition; we do not need to be constantly reminded that Benjy is crying in order to understand why he is sent out of the house in a time of mourning, and the actions his crying propels, like Dilsey walking up the stairs, do not bring about any significant change of events. What does disappear if we were to remove the silencing gestures from the text – as I took the liberty to do for the purpose of demonstration – is the agency and control over the events around him that Benjy's affect displays:

> I could hear mother, and feet walking fast away, and I could smell it. Then the room came, but my eyes went shut. I didn't stop. I could smell it. T.P. unpinned the bed clothes.
> []---[]
> But I could smell it. T.P. pulled me up and he put on my clothes fast.
> "[]." he said. "We going down to our house. You want to go down to our house, where Frony is. []."
> He laced my shoes and put my cap on and we went out. There was a light in the hall. Across the hall we could hear mother.
> "[]." T.P. said. "We'll be out in a minute."
> A door opened and I could smell it more than ever, and a head came out. It wasn't father. Father was sick there.
> "Can you take him out of the house."
> "That's where we going." T.P. said. Dilsey came up the stairs.

[166] William Faulkner, *The Sound and The Fury: The Corrected Text* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 34-5.

> "[]" she said. "[] Take him down home, T.P. Frony fixing him a bed. You all look after him, now. []. Go on with T.P."
> She went where we could hear Mother […]
> We went down stairs. The stairs went down into the dark and T.P. took my hand, and we went out the door, out of the dark. […]
> "[] Come on."

In this subtracted version, Benjy "hears," "smells," sees, and follows T.P. down the stairs and into "the dark," but he does not act independently on his surroundings. He appears to be an agentless, unemotional and purely receptive subject, who cannot express himself via spoken language and therefore cannot orally express himself at all.[167] Yet, as we know from the full version of the paragraph, Benjy – and specifically his cry – is the propelling force of this scene: it motivates T.P.'s haste ("T.P… put on my clothes *fast*"; "We'll be out in a minute"), it pulls one of the mourners away from the grandmother's side to request that Benjy be taken "out of the house," it sends Dilsey up the stairs, and in a larger context, it draws all of the Compson brothers to the servants' house and leads them to the novel's central scene where Caddy climbs up the tree in her "muddy… drawers."[168] The hushes, then, are where Benjy's emotional presence resides, and yet the cry itself is never positively represented in the paragraph above, neither through onomatopoeia, nor through description, or even through a simple internal comment. The cry is only communicated via negation, either in the form of hushes or through comments such as "I can't take you down home bellering like you is." So, even though it might appear that Benjy's subjectivity unfolds in full on the page through his detailed internal dialogue, his affective non-linguistic yet vigorous vocal expression exists not in the text but as an echo reverberating between the novel and the reader's mind. Benjy's medium of agency is compressed into the signs of its negation – its silencing – and with each such "hush" Faulkner calls upon, one may even say automatically triggers, his readers' attention to the present-absent cries that provoked it.[169]

Unlike the reader, the characters within the diegetic world of *The Sound and The Fury* need not engage in any mental labor in order to hear Benjy. On the contrary, effort is required if one wishes to avoid hearing his voice. As we've seen, the protagonist's cry reverberates far and wide, penetrating the perception of people around him whether they like it or not; it arouses compassion,

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[167] Though unable to express himself vocally via language, Benjy does feel the desire to do so: "I was trying to say," he narrates when approaching a girl on the road who reminds him of Caddy, "and I caught her, trying to say, and she screamed and I was trying to say and trying and the bright shapes began to stop and I tried to get out" (*The Sound and The Fury*, 53).

[168] Faulkner, *The Sound and The Fury*, 39.

[169] Benjy's is not a generic cry; it invades the reader's mind in its acute specificity molded by the text's form. The number of silencing gestures, for example, informs the reader of the duration of the cry: it begins when Benjy recognizes the smell of death and continues as he is dressed, his shoes laced, his cap put on, as he walks down the hall, and all the way to the servants' house. The cry's amplitude is signaled through diegetic distance: Benjy is loud enough to be heard not only in the adjacent room, but downstairs as well, which prompts Dilsey to climb up and try to calm Benjy down. The text also informs us of the cry's unique quality via T.P.'s vexed comment: "I can't take you down home bellering like you is… You was bad enough before you got that bull-frog voice." As if anticipating that the reader is liable to think of Benjy's presence in the world as placid due to the neutral tone of his internal monologue, Faulkner makes clear that Benjy's "bellering" is acoustically clamorous: low-pitched and "bull-froged." In fact, as the final scene of the novel implies – in which Benjy's cry prompts Jason to adhere to a strict routine – it might just be the case that Benjy's voice and its tonality are the determining factor of the family's very way of life. What we encounter here is Faulkner's formal strategy for making Benjy's agency, mobilized through his cry, heard without rendering it legible via language; to engrave it into the text as a "ghostly sound" and in that manner design for the novel an urn-reader, a subject who would attend to nonbeings and function as an echo chamber.

rage, and brings about dramatic change of events. On the morning of his suicide, for example, Quentin – the Compson's eldest brother discussed in the previous chapter – recalls the moment in which Benjy's cry invaded the sister's (Caddy's) wedding, causing her to rush away and calm Benjy down:

> Only she was running already when I heard it. In the mirror she was running before I knew what it was… Then she was across the porch I couldn't hear her heels then in the moonlight like a cloud, the floating shadow of the veil running across the grass, into the bellowing. She ran out of her dress, clutching her bridal, running into the bellowing where T. P. in the dew Whooey Sassprilluh Benjy under the box bellowing. Father had a V-shaped silver cuirass on his running chest.[170]

Hearing Benjy "bellowing" is a communal act, no one can escape it, not even the bride on her wedding day. His voice reaches everyone within his soundscape, before they can even decipher "what it was." To draw on another French thinker, according to Lacan, what constitutes sound as a collective experience is the structure of the ear as a sensory organ. The ear, as differentiated from the eye and mouth, is always physically open, as he reminds us in his eleventh seminar.[171] While the human subject can eliminate light through the shutting of the eyes and avoid food by closing the mouth, the ear cannot close, it is always open to the Other and we can only cover it externally. For Lacan, then, sound is by nature intrusive; it is often unavoidable, much like Benjy's cry.

Yet Faulkner's sonic world doesn't always follow Lacan's principle. While Benjy's voice penetrates everyone's perception, other auditory stimuli in *The Sound and The Fury* encroach upon specific ears alone. This is the case with Quentin, who is imprisoned within a body that cannot help but hear the sound of the clock, while all other characters around him can ignore it. The tick-tock constantly haunts and fragments his experience so that in the moment of his drowning, he is thinking: "the road empty in darkness in silence the bridge arching into silence darkness sleep the water peaceful and swift not goodbye."[172] "Silence," "empty," and "peaceful," is an escape from an overwhelmingly loud world, which is populated by Benjy's bellowing, the mumbling of the past's ghosts, and above all, the repetitive din of moving time:

> When the shadow of the sash appeared on the curtains it was between seven and eight oclock and then I was in time again, hearing the watch. It was Grandfather's and when Father gave it to me he said… I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment… It was propped against the collar box and I lay listening to it. Hearing it, that is. I dont suppose anybody ever deliberately listens to a watch or a clock. You dont have to. You can be oblivious to the sound for a little while,

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[170] Faulkner, *The Sound and The Fury*, 81.

[171] Lacan writes: "I must… point out the difference between *making oneself heard* and *making oneself seen*. In the field of the unconsciousness the ears are the only orifice that cannot be closed. Whereas *making oneself seen* is indicated by an arrow that really comes back towards the subject, *making oneself heard* goes towards the other. The reason for this is a structural one [emphasis in original]" (*The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan, Revised edition [New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998], 195).

[172] Faulkner, *The Sound and The Fury*, 172. The traditional interpretation of Quentin's suicide, rooted in Sartre's famous essay on *The Sound and The Fury*, locates its cause in metaphysics. Quentin can imagine no future and is thus a captive of a haunting past and an enclosed present. I claim that Faulkner embeds this metaphysical preoccupation in a phenomenology, in a lived-sonic experience to which the reader functions as a soundboard.

> then in a second of ticking it can create in the mind unbroken the long diminishing parade of time you didn't hear… Father said that. That Christ was not crucified: he was worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels.[173]

The sound of the pocket watch is the first external stimulus to reach Quentin in the morning, forcing him out of his dream world and "into time." Immediately following is Quentin's thought about the isolated quality of his sensory experience. Others, he ponders, are capable of being "oblivious to the sound for a little while," but he cannot avoid it. Like Christ as seen by his father, Quentin is tortured not by one definitive act of human violence ("Christ was not crucified"), but by a repetitive inhuman mechanical sound, "worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels." This sensory experience stands in stark contrast to the paternal instructions Quentin receives upon inheriting the watch: "I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it." Quentin, of course, cannot, and he conveys the involuntary nature of his sensory experience through exchanging of the verb "to listen" with "to hear" when he describes his interaction with the ticking of the watch: "I lay listening to it," he says and immediately corrects himself, "Hearing it." Listening, for him, is associated with choice and agency, which are the domain of others around him. "I dont suppose *anybody* ever deliberately listens to a watch or a clock. *You* dont have to." The "you" that surrounds Quentin – including the reader who might be called upon by this pronoun – can choose to un-listen to the clock. Quentin, on the other hand, does not "listen," he unwillingly "hears" the clock; this sound invades his ear.

Clearly, it is not the ear as an orifice that governs Quentin's inability to ignore the clock, but his mind; more specifically, as prominent cognitive psychologists and neuroscientists claim today, this is the work of attention. The brain, and its novelty detector neurons, differentiates between predictable ongoing noises and novel ones. The healthy mind in the neuroscientific discourse is understood as that which is able to tune out repeated sound patterns and make salient to consciousness only those that are distinct from their environment.[174] Quentin, against this backdrop, appears to suffer from attention disability, perceiving "the old" rather than attuning to "the new"; he is perceptually porous to that which should be forgotten. But Faulkner conceptualizes "healthy" attention differently. As we have seen through Benjy's "ghostly" cry which he urged the reader to hear, Faulkner encourages a perception precisely of that which is registered as insubstantial.[175] Similarly, Faulkner propels the reader of *The Sound and The Fury* to reactivate her ability to hear the ghost of the clock ticking. Like Brooks, then, Faulkner constructs a reader that is Quentin-esque, a reader whose very body is an urn, "an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names."[176]

Once the reader is reminded of the ticking of time, it becomes much harder for her to un-remember this familiar sound. In this case, then, Faulkner plays with negative audition through

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[173] Faulkner, *The Sound and The Fury*, 76-77.

[174] For neuroscientific research on the link between novelty detector neurons and attention, see David Pérez-González, Manuel S. Malmierca, and Ellen Covey, "Novelty Detector Neurons in the Mammalian Auditory Midbrain," *European Journal of Neuroscience* 22, no. 11 (2005): 2879-85; Jonathan B. Fritz et al., "Auditory Attention – focusing the Searchlight on Sound," *Current Opinion in Neurobiology* 17, no. 4 (2007): 437-55; István Winkler, Susan L. Denham, and Israel Nelken, "Modeling the Auditory Scene: Predictive Regularity Representations and Perceptual Objects," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 13, no. 12 (2009): 532-40.

[175] In *Absalom, Absalom!*, as well, Faulkner describes Quentin as perceptually receptive to sounds unheard by others around him: "Then hearing would reconcile and he would seem to listen to two separate Quentins… talking to one another in the long silence of notpeople in notlanguage," 4.

[176] Faulkner, *Absalom*, 7.

sonic reactivation; the text mentions the ticking of the clock, but does not provide us with a robust representation of this sound in proportion to its centrality within the diegetic world. The text reads: "the watch ticked on,"[177] "I heard a clock strike the hour,"[178] "the clock struck three,"[179] "the chimes began,"[180] "the chimes ceased,"[181] but the words "ticking" and "clicking" are the closest the novel gets to an onomatopoeia of the watch's sonority. Similarly, the text presents the reader with very few descriptions of the clock's acoustic properties. Instead, Faulkner trusts that the reader will be unable to resist echoing the absent-presence sound of the watch as a consequence of a simple mention of its ticking. For instance, when Quentin enters a clock shop, we are told: "The place was full of ticking, like crickets in September grass, and I could hear a big clock on the wall above his [the shop owner's] head […] I went out, shutting the door upon the ticking […] I could hear mine, ticking inside my pocket, even though nobody could see it, even though it could tell nothing if anyone would."[182] Quentin's watch allegedly sounds "like crickets in September grass," but the protagonist's sonic experience is in actuality foreign to this simile; rather than pastoral, Quentin takes the watch's sound to be so regular as to be maddening. That is, the clock does not function for Quentin on the level of signification ("it could tell nothing" to anyone who could see it), but on a somatic level, haunting him thus that even when he tries to "shut the door upon the ticking" of the shop, this sound invades him anew from "inside [his] pocket." The echoing of Quentin's tick-tock penetrating the reader's field of attention is undoubtedly frustrating and even violent. But, in my mind, it has an ethical purchase as well. It compels one to perceive the "ghostly sound," a sonority designed to be forgotten, and it punctures Quentin's complete sensory isolation; his acoustic experience of being in the world is shared, if only momentarily, with the reader.

- **UNHEARD MELODIES ARE SWEETER**

What, then, is the conceptualization of the reading process that arises from Faulkner's negative audition? What relationship between mental labor, sound, and text does he consider conducive to an interaction with his texts? The kind of audition that *The Sound and The Fury* advances is counter-intuitively rooted in silence. The reader is urged to hear Benjy's cry through the attempts to suppress it, and to perceive the ticking of Quentin's clocks in a movement opposite to mental habits of mute erasure. There seems to be, then, a nuanced dialectic that Faulkner is imagining between the reader's capability to act as an echo chamber, and silence. In his introduction to *The Sound and The Fury*, mentioned earlier in relation to Faulkner's urn, this dialectic further unfolds. Faulkner depicts there the writing process of the novel. After failing attempts to find a publisher for *Sartoris*, his earlier novel, a change occurs: "One day it suddenly seemed as if a door had clapped silently and forever to between me and all publishers' addresses and booklists and I said to myself, Now I can write. Now I can just write."[183] Closing the door, creating a physical barrier between himself and the external loud world, Faulkner produces a sonic environment that enables

[177] Faulkner, *The Sound and The Fury*, 80.
[178] Ibid., 83.
[179] Ibid., 88.
[180] Ibid., 96.
[181] Ibid., 100.
[182] Ibid., 83.
[183] Faulkner, "An Introduction to The Sound and the Fury," 409.

him to "just write."[184] But, as Faulkner goes on to articulate, the shutting of the door upon the sonic stimuli, like in Quentin's case, does not close off sound. In fact, it is the vocalities that emerge from silence that sustain Faulkner's ability to write, and, as the very first sentence of the introduction reveals, his capacity to read as well: "I wrote this book and learned to read."[185] He elaborates on this enigmatic statement:

> I discovered then that I had gone through all that I had ever read, from Henry James through Henty to newspaper murders, without making any distinction or digesting any of it, as a moth or a goat might. After *The Sound and The Fury* and without heeding to open another book and in a series of delayed repercussions like summer thunder, I discovered the Flauberts and Dostoievskys and Conrads whose books I had read ten years ago. With *The Sound and The Fury* I learned to read and quit reading, since I have read nothing since.[186]

The experience Faulkner describes is not far removed from Derrida's hearing of Joyce's laughter. With *The Sound and The Fury*, Faulkner is able to *hear* a facet of the texts he most loves "in a series of delayed repercussions like summer thunder." This sound – this repercussion – appears to him not in the external texts, the books in their materiality, but in the "Flauberts and Dostoievskys and Conrads" as they inhabit him internally. That is, writing the novel behind closed doors, Faulkner auditorily perceives the books within him. In a later interview, Faulkner returns to the term "thunder" to describe once again the voices that one hears during the reading process: "Music," he says, "would express better and simpler, but I prefer to use words as I prefer to read rather than listen […] That is, the thunder and the music of the prose takes place in silence."[187] The reading process, for Faulkner, consists of sound and silence simultaneously: it is the lack of external auditory stimuli that enables the "thunder and music" of the alterities one carries within to make their presence felt. Put differently, silence allows the reader to become an urn "filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts."

Keats' "Ode" itself, we should recall, portrays a similar dialectic between sound and silence: "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/ Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;/Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,/ Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone." The melodies "unheard" by the "sensual ear" are in no way unfelt or nonexistent. They are perceived with much enjoyment ("are sweeter") by the consumer of art, in the case of the Ode, the viewer of the urn. And this perceiver is not alone in her capacity to sense the silent "soft pipes"; the "spirit ditties of no tone" are an audience to this absent-present music as well. Though Faulkner's ghostly ethics of reading does not map perfectly on the phenomenology of art consumption depicted by Keats, the two share an interest in perceptual sensitivity to "spirits" of "no tone." After all, Faulkner imagines for his work a reader who is able to detect sounds played but not heard, capable of attending to a music of a different ontology.[188]

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[184] Faulkner's portrayal of silence as conducive to creative labor follows a long American literary tradition, portrayed in great detail by Milette Shamir in *Inexpressible Privacy: The Interior Life of Antebellum American Literature Inexpressive Privacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

[185] Faulkner, "Introduction to The Sound and the Fury," 507.

[186] Ibid.

[187] Meriwether and Millgate, *Lion in the Garden,* 248.

[188] Cavanaugh similarly claims that Faulkner's fascination with the Ode is related to "the Urn piper's silently piped ditties," which also resonates, she suggests, with Faulkner's comment upon seeing the Cathedral in the Piazza del Duomo in Milan: "Can you imagine stone lace? Or frozen music?" But for her, Faulkner's interest in "unheard music" is limited to his investment in art as stasis, in line with the view of Faulkner as a perfect formalist, depicted

▪ FAULKNER, BROOKS, AND THE ETHICS OF READING

If we accept, then, that Faulkner works to shape the reader into a permeable subject who is acutely attentive to absent-present sounds, then it is easy to see how the readerly subjectivity he shapes falls in line with Brooks' notion of the ghostly close-reader. However, as I discussed in my introduction and first chapter, the attempt to educate the reader into a specific mental reaction to the text is not utopian; it is also an intrusive act of control and regulation. In fact, in the case of both Brooks and Faulkner, and this is true globally as the following chapters will demonstrate, the two political facets of close reading function dialectically. The ethical component cannot be thought of without the pedagogical one, meaning that even when the reader's education is oriented towards an openness to Otherness, this ethical capability is made possible via a manipulation of the reader's capacity to attend. In that sense, Faulkner indeed, as Godden strongly asserts, "demands the reader attend closely in order to recover… a tale that is not being told."[189] Yet, to differentiate from Godden, I believe that the payoff from this mental manipulation is not futile, but can very well be of an ethical nature.

A similar complexity appears when one probes into Faulkner's politics in relation to what I suggest is his sonic and hauntological ethics of reading. Undoubtedly, as Godden goes on to demonstrate in great detail, Faulkner (as well as Brooks) mourns the postbellum loss of Southern culture.[190] But, I would add, Faulkner is simultaneously haunted by this culture's violent history of exploitation and abuse. In my mind, this tension is counterintuitively what injects an ethical potentiality into his theory of reading. Faulkner imagines a reader that, like him, would be porous to ghosts, to the dead, to the presence of the past within the present. After all, both Brooks and Faulkner's exemplary close reader, Quentin Compson, is able to function as an urn, to evacuate himself so that the dead can dwell inside him, since, to quote from *Absalom, Absalom!*, "he was born and bred in the deep South… the deep South dead since 1865 and peopled with… ghosts."[191] Quentin has become an astute close reader in New Critical terms because he grew up in a living-dead culture, one that is haunted by the "sin of slavery," in Faulkner's terms. As Brooks and Faulkner suggest, then, if we are to follow in Quentin's footsteps when we read a text, we may learn to attune ourselves to entities that are not clearly present, to practice the difficult task of listening to the ghosts of the past.

The perceptual attunement to a lost past is what opens *The Sound and The Fury*. The novel might form the impression of recording its characters' psyches in the pure present, giving us direct access to their minds as they unfold right there on the page, but the text, as we've seen, is also inhabited by sonic presences, like Benjy's cry and Quentin's ticking watch, that resist fitting into

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above (*Faulkner, Stasis, and Keats' Ode*, 3-4). My argument, in contrast, is that Faulkner viewed the urn as symbolizing precisely the tension between stasis and movement, or in the context of the current discussion, between silence and sound. To imagine "frozen music" is to hear "Flauberts and Dostoievskys and Conrads" without interacting with their books, to hear Benjy's cry through its negation, or to hear "the thunder of prose" in silence; it is to be perceptually present to what it ostensibly not there.

[189] Godden, *Fictions of Labor*, 4.

[190] Godden's main argument is that Faulkner's works of the 1930s are undergirded by the "labor trauma" of white Southern slaveowners, that of "recogniz[ing] and repress[ing] the fact that since his [the white owner's] mastery is slave-made, he and his are blacks in whiteface" (*Fictions of Labor*, 1, 4). This trauma, he claims, is communicated in Faulkner's oeuvre via "secretion": the works simultaneously "conceal" and "discharge" it via "'sub' or 'anti' semantics" (Ibid., 4), they function as a "crypt" that embodies and preforms the master's anxiety without acknowledging it. Against this background, Faulkner is presented as complicit in the act of covering up the "traumatic secret," rather than critiquing the Southern labor structure.

[191] Faulkner, *Absalom*, 4.

that mimetic present. These are the voices of the past that echo through the work even when they are not directly inscribed in it, thus encouraging us to attend to a hauntological stimulus. That these sonorities are linked to a lost past, to a history, is evident already in the opening scene of the novel, which has the problem of sound at its heart. In the first page of *The Sound and The Fury*, the readers encounter Benjy as he accompanies Luster, his fourteen-year-old African-American caretaker, while the two are searching for a lost quarter along a fence that borders a golf course. Suddenly, Benjy overhears the golfers call for their caddies:

> Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting […] Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence while Luster was hunting in the grass.
> "Here, Caddie." He hit. They went away across the pasture. I held to the fence and watched them going away.
> '"Listen to you, now." Luster said. "Aint you something, thirty three years old, going on that way. After I done went all the way to town to buy you that cake. Hush up that moaning. Aint you going to help me find that quarter so I can go to the show tonight."[192]

Benjy hears what is not there. He hears the name of his older sister, Caddy, in the golfers call for their caddie. This ghostly echo reminds Benjy of his beloved sister's disappearance eighteen years earlier, when she left home to get married and was abandoned by her husband when he realized that her baby was not his own. Benjy's capacity, or perhaps compulsion, to hear Caddy's absence is immediately made to replicate in the reader's mind. Benjy's cry, which bursts out in response to the echo of Caddy's name, does not positively appear in the text. It is communicated to us only through its negation, through Luster's imperative: "Hush up that moaning." Very much like Benjy, then, we are left to conjure that absent sound, to listen to what is not there, to what is lost and erased. In that spirit, when Faulkner was asked by Malcolm Cowley about his writing process, he confessed, "I listen to the voices, and when I put down what the voices say, it's right. Sometimes I don't like what they say, but I don't change it." This is what Brooks and Faulkner urge us to do when we close read: to allow ghostly voices to speak through us.

[192] Faulkner, *The Sound and The Fury*, 3.

SECOND PART | BRAZIL

Chapter Three

THE NOVA CRÍTICA AND EXACT READING: JOÃO GUIMARÃES ROSA AND THE IMPERATIVE TO EXTRACT THE SAVAGE

A new order was urgently needed…Conditions were ripe for founding a new critical regime. A new mentality seized the country, one based on the expertise that accompanies scientific investigation…Afrânio Coutinho was the central advocate of this cause: that of a critical reformulation and a methodological restoration.

–Eduardo Portella

There is hardly a novel more emblematic of nascent post-colonial national Brazilian literature than the romantic masterpiece, *Iracema: A Legend of Ceará* (*Iracema: lenda do Ceará*).[193] The very title of the novel, published by José de Alencar in 1865, is an anagram of "America," the home-continent of the recently independent Brazil, an autonomous state that drives its force, according to Alencar's allegory, from the admixture of the indigenous native and the European colonizer. This implicit claim rises to a crescendo towards the end of the novel when the two protagonists who represent these geo-cultural identities give birth to Moacir, "the first child born in Ceará."[194] And since factually Ceará is long inhabited by natives, Moacir's status as a "first child" lends itself to be read symbolically as marking "the beginning of the Brazilian people" and setting "national history in motion," as Naomi Lindstrom concisely puts it.[195]

What Marisa Lajolo has recently added to our understanding of Alencar's canonical work is that *Iracema* depicts not only the archetypical national Brazilian subject, but also the exemplary Brazilian reader: "José de Alencar set in circulation an array of readerly characteristics that have since become a commonplace in tradition, if not in the occidental one then at least in that of Brazil and in José de Alencar's work itself."[196] As Lajolo points out, Alencar conducts his most intense work of "reading pedagogy" (*pedagogia de leitura*) in his prologue to the novel's first edition, which opens with the intimate appeal to the reader as "my friend" (*meu amigo*).[197] In this letter-like introduction, Alencar poetically describes the kind of reader he expects his novel to encounter and the kind of experience he hopes this novel will incite. While Lajolo explicates the gendered and class-related characteristics of *Iracema*'s imagined reader, I would like to highlight the mental state Alencar attributes to his novel's interlocutor. It is my claim that this readerly state of mind, soon to become a Brazilian "commonplace," as Lajolo notes, turns in the mid-twentieth century into the target of a harsh critique by a group of literary scholars determined to free Brazilian culture from the shackles of post-colonial dependency by construing what they viewed as a new and

[193] There exist three translations into English of José Martiniano de Alencar's *Iracema*: *Iracema, the Honey Lips: A Legend of Brazil*, trans. Isabel Burton (London: Bickers and Son, 1886); *Iracema: A Legend of Ceará*, trans. D. N. Bidell (Rio de Janeiro: Impresa Ingela, 1921); and *Iracema: A Novel*, trans. Clifford E. Landers. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Quotes here are taken from Landers' translation.
[194] Alencar, *Iracema: A Novel*, 111.
[195] Naomi Lindstrom, foreword to *Iracema: A Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), xix.
[196] Marisa Lajolo, "José de Alencar, um criador de autores e de leitores," *Revista de Letras* 29, no. 2 (2009): 89-91. As in this case, all unattributed translations throughout the dissertation are mine.
[197] Although scholarship had established that Alencar had in mind his cousin (Domingos Jaguaribe) when writing this letter-like prologue, the interlocutor remains unnamed in this text, thus allowing him to function as the marker of *any* (white and male as Lejolo points out) Brazilian reader.

improved national Brazilian reader. In his prologue, under the valance of a romantic imagining of his novel's future scene of consumption, Alencar gives the reader an implicit set of instructions as to how one should engage with his text[198]:

> This book will naturally find you in as you stroll among the picturesque meadows, or in your sweet abode… It is probably the most blazing time of Friday. Nature is under the dominion of the potent tropical irradiation, that which produces both the diamond and the genius, the two most brilliant instantiations of creative powers… Your wife, loving and tireless… prepares a delicious mousse of *buriti* to freshen her husband, who had just returned from his excursion and now reposes, cradled in his hammock, soft and snug. You then open up the book which reached you unexpectedly from Corte. You scroll through its pages to distract your spirit from the serious matters that keep it preoccupied. This book is Cearánian. It was envisioned there, under these lucid crystal blue skies… I wrote it to be read there, on the porch of a rustic cabin or in the garden's fresh shade, in the sweet rocking movement of the hammock, among the murmurs of the wind crisping through the sand, or rustling the branches of the coconut tree.[199]

The ideal reader Alencar imagines for his novel is first and foremost a tranquil one. Undoubtedly a white man, as Lajolo demonstrates, he is located on a porch within the northeastern Ceará, rocked by the hammock and embraced by the murmuring wind, the chirping birds and the coconut trees' rustling branches.[200] These do not function as a mere context to be erased by an attention-absorbing narrative. Instead, Alencar imagines this medley of sounds, images, and sensations to be present for his reader, whose interaction with the literary text is interwoven with the body's back and forth movement, with the harmonic temperature of a commingled shade, wind and sun, and with nature's sonic pleasures. The absorption of these conditions is assumed by Alencar to then produce a mental state of absent-mindedness in the term's most literal sense; the natural environment embracing *Iracema*'s reader is metaphorically portrayed as unspoiled –the *clear* sky, the *fresh* shade – metonymically qualifying the reader's mind as uncluttered. This is stated explicitly later on, when Alencar attributes to the act of reading the power to "distract" (*desenfastiar*; literally, to un-bore or relieve) the reader's spirit from "the serious matters that keep it preoccupied" (*ocupado*; literally, occupied). Instead, the reader's mind should be *un*occupied. Alencar urges the reader to surrender his mental faculties to nature's "intense" forces since, after all, it is the Brazilian "potent tropical" climate that produces "creative powers." In fact, the link between tranquility of mind and imaginative thought is already communicated by the object at the center of Alencar's reading scene. The Brazilian hammock (*rêde*), as Luís de Câmara Cascudo demonstrates in his ethnographic work, is not only long-associated with meditation, dreams, and a deep observation of nature, but also functions in the popular imaginary as a metaphor for the plasticity of the

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[198] As Lejolo explains, Alencar had to educate his readers since he assumed they are approaching his novel with an oral rather than written textual tradition in mind. That is, given to low rate of literacy in Brazil of the mid-nineteenth century, authors like Alencar "had to 'seduce' their readers into becoming a 'reading public'… by evoking traces of *residual orality* as a narrative strategy" ("The Role of Orality in the Seduction of the Brazilian Reader," *Poetics Today* 15, no. 4 [1994]: 553; emphasis in original).

[199] José Martiniano de Alencar, *Iracema: lenda do Ceará* (São Paulo: Ed Cultrix, 1968), 23-4.

[200] Alencar's descriptions of the Brazilian landscape, both in this introduction specifically and in his body of work more generally, set the stage for the later development of Brazilian regionalist literature. For discussions of Alencar's *regionalismo*, see Antonio Candido, "Literatura, Espelho da América?" *Luso-Brazilian Review* 32, no. 2 (1995): 15-22; and José Maurício Gomes de Almeida, *A tradição regionalista no romance brasileiro* 1857-1945 (Rio de Janeiro: Achiamé, 1981).

Brazilian mind and body.[201] Put another way, absent-mindedness and readerly aptitude go hand in hand for the author of *Iracema*.

This is not the case for the Brazilian New Critics – or, more precisely, the thinkers of the *nova crítica* – who are the focal point of this chapter. It is my claim that a full century after the publication of *Iracema*, this group of thinkers waged a cultural war against the "commonplace" Brazilian reader that Alencar envisions and this reader's distracted state of mind. It is a well-known fact that the arrival of New Criticism on the shores of Brazil in the mid-twentieth century brought about nothing less than a "redefinition of the literary field," as Vagner Camilo has maintained.[202] However, when investigating this process of reception, traditional accounts chiefly focus on its influence on the institutionalization of literary scholarship in Brazil, on the formation of new scholarly methodologies, and on its role in producing a cultural chasm between journalistic and academic literary criticism.[203] I would like to add to this important discussion the question of readerly subject formation, which comes forcefully to the fore when the nova crítica is extracted from its ostensible provincialism and placed in its appropriate international context. It is my contention that alongside their founding of "modern literary criticism," the local thinkers of New Criticism also sought to shape a new Brazilian reader; in constructing their version of close reading, these critics rethought the kind of mental state, bodily engagement, and process of self-fashioning that is required for the act of reading to take place within the particular Brazilian culture. In the words of the critic Eduardo Portela quoted in the epigraph above, the Brazilian thinkers of the nova crítica entered the cultural discourse at a time when "a new order was urgently needed" and constituted a "new critical regime" by theorizing a "new mentality… based on the expertise that accompanies scientific investigation."[204] They conceptualized this "new mentality," I maintain, by keenly identifying and following the implicit pedagogical thrust already embedded within the Anglo-American New Criticism, as demonstrated in the previous chapters. More specifically, they recognized and took seriously their mentors' latent call for readers to practice self-suspension via attention, and modified this imperative to fit their own post-colonial national goals: while in the American context, the reader was requested to suspend her personal associations

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[201] Luís C. Cascudo, *Rêde De Dormir: Uma Pesquisa Etnográfica* (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Cultura, Serviço de Documentação, 1959), 81-7.

[202] Vagner Camilo, "O aerólito e o zelo dos neófitos: Sérgio Buarque, crítico de poesia," *Revista USP* 80 (2009): 111-24.

[203] The Brazilian reception of New Criticism is primarily studies in three contexts: (1) the influence of the Anglo-American movement on the establishment of autonomous departments of literary studies in Brazil. In this context, the contemporaneous reception of Structuralism and Russian Formalism into Brazil is also discussed, though New Criticism is highlighted since it forms the theoretical backbone of the predominant agent to advocate for this process, i.e., Afrânio Coutinho. For a work in this vein, see Vagner Camilo, *Drummond: da Rosa do povo à rosa das trevas* (São Paulo: Ateliê Editorial, 2001). (2) From a slightly different angle, New Criticism is investigated as a major factor in shaping the curriculum of literary studies in Brazil, and consequently in bringing about a drastic change in methodologies of research. Formalism, in the broad sense of the term, is just as key in this context as New Criticism. Moreover, Antônio Cândido, in addition to Coutinho, is considered principle to this process. See, for example, Roberto Corrêa dos Santos, "A crítica literária no Brasil: últimos quinze anos," *Revista de Crítica Literária Latinoamericana* 16, no. 31/32 (1990): 85-97. (3) Finally, New Criticism is investigated as instigating a cultural battle between the traditional *rodapé* Brazilian literary critics and the "new" literary thinkers, who aims at specialization. This debate sets the stage for the two processes above. See Flora Süssekind, "Rodapés, tratados e ensaios: a formação da crítica brasileira moderna," in *Papéis Colados* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora da UFRJ, 1993), 13-33; and Cláudia Nina, *Literatura nos jornais: a crítica literária dos rodapés às resenhas* (São Paulo: Summus Editorial, 2007). This chapter wishes to add a yet uninvestigated fourth context to this list: the influence of the Anglo-American New Critical ideas on the construction of a new Brazilian readerly subjectivity.

[204] Eduardo Portella, "Crítica literária: Brasileira e totalizante," *Tempo Brasileiro*, no. 1, 1962: 67-9.

and bodily sensations in order to maintain the illusion of the text as an autonomous object – a move that carries ethical implications as well, as I've shown – the Brazilian New Critics asked their readers to put on hold their alleged Brazilian innate savagery while engaging with the literary text, in order to free Brazil from its "backward" character.

More specifically, the Brazilian New Critics encouraged their readers to practice an intense attention oriented towards controlling and repressing what they believed was a set of Brazilian tendencies detrimental to the reading process specifically, and to analytic thought more generally. As a consequence, they sought to educate their reader in dividing their mental efforts between an internal and an external task; to attend outwards in order to solve the text as one does a puzzle, and attend inwards in order to counter their inherent "savage" thought process. This mental arrangement, they hoped, would create in the Brazilian subject an internal hierarchy in which the analytic faculties (to be directed at the text) would rule over the ostensible malevolent non-analytic impulses. Counterintuitively, this project of self-control was viewed by the local New Critics as patriotic, enabling Brazilians to undo colonial stereotypes and prove to the West that they were capable of rigorous and systematic thought. Yet their attempts to mobilize readerly subject-formation for the purpose of Brazilian "modernization" was in fact a byproduct of an identification with the colonial viewpoint, and hence mired in the forms of racism and colonialism from which the figure of the Brazilian savage emerged.

The Brazilian subject the scholars of the nova crítica culturally constructed became, I maintain, the new "commonplace" reader in the Brazilian culture of the fifties and sixties. Moreover – and this is my main claim – this figure played a crucial role in the genealogy of the Brazilian third-wave modernism of the fifties and sixties. The model of a purely analytic reader, which circulates widely within the Brazilian culture of the time, inspired creative responses from the producers of literature themselves, who, at times, tried to appeal to their attentive readers and, at other times, tried to counter their focused "non-savage" state of mind. Two clear instantiations of this kind, as I will demonstrate, are to be found in the oeuvre of João Guimarães Rosa and Clarice Lispector. Both modernists utilize their texts (whether intentionally or not) to reexamine and question the assumptions undergirding the nova crítica's figure of the ideal reader, and in this manner, allowed Brazilian literature to negotiate how it wants to be read and who its ideal reader should be.

This chapter focuses primarily on the reader the nova crítica is hoping to construct, while the following chapter concentrates on the literary responses to this model. However, since these are two sides of the same coin, the two issues are discussed in both chapters. In this chapter, I first detect the contours of the Brazilian reader as depicted in the work of the principle agent of the nova crítica, Afrânio Coutinho, while also engaging with the writings of both his adherents, Eduardo Portella and Eurílalo Canabrava, and his more ambivalent interlocutors, Sergio Buarque de Holanda and Antônio Cândido.[205] Then, I explore the main method of reading suggested by these thinkers, i.e., exact reading (*leitura exata*), and examine the two mental exercises this method entails: narrowing one's mental focus and activating self-surveillance, both understood as forms of attention. Finally, I follow one of the literary reactions to the nova crítica, the short story "The Mirror" ("O espelho") by Guimarães Rosa, where he presents a sketch, or, rather, a parody, of the Brazilian New Critical reader. The concluding section looks to the Brazilian critical discourse outside the nova crítica's milieu, specifically to the writings of Álvaro Lins and João Cezar de Castro Rocha, in order to trace there the imperative to subordinate the internal "savage" to analytic

[205] Other thinkers affiliated with the nova crítica include Henrique Abílio (considered a precursor), Alceu Amoroso Lima, Leodegário A. de Azevedo Filho, and Adonias Aguiar Filho.

thought. Through their critical work, we learn the extent to which the nova crítica's imagined reader became a Brazilian "commonplace," while also generating a vivid discussion about other possible readerly subjectivities.

- **THE PROBLEM OF BUTTERFLY THOUGHT**

"The recent history of literary criticism in Brazil knows many versions, but almost all overlap in pointing to the same moment as the origin of its modernization: the polemics initiated in 1948 by Afrânio Coutinho." [206] The watershed moment that João Cezar de Castro Rocha sharply points to is inseparable from the reception of New Criticism in Brazil. In 1948, the abovementioned literary critic Afrânio Coutinho returns to the continent's larger country from his five years of study in the U.S., mostly at Columbia University. Powerfully influenced by New Criticism, Coutinho initiates a literary campaign to integrate the Anglo-American theory into Brazilian literary institutions. He does so through his column "Cross Currents" ("Correntes cruzadas") – published between 1948 and 1966 in the daily *Diário de notícias* – and through his extensive body of work, including *Correntes cruzadas* (1953), *Da crítica e da nova crítica* (1957), *A literatura no brasil* (1955-9), *No hospital das letras*, (1963), *A tradição afortunada* (1968), and *Crítica e críticos* (1969). In these writings, Coutinho sketches the outlines of what he refers to as the nova crítica. And although critics such as Denis Heyck rightly highlight the distinction between the Anglo-American version of the theory and its South-American iteration, claiming that "the unique feature of the nova crítica is its combination of Anglo-American new critical principles with a remarkably wide variety of other intellectual influences and concerns,"[207] there is no doubt that New Criticism was the strongest of those influences in the personal case of Coutinho. It is also the case, as I will go on to demonstrate, that the increasingly dominant Anglo-American method of interaction with literature, i.e. close reading, formed the basis for the overall discourse around reading techniques articulated by both Coutinho and his followers.

The "father of New Criticism in Brazil," as Camilo refers to Coutinho, was not alone in his interest in New Criticism. At least two more prominent cultural figures, unaligned with the nova crítica, were central players in the reception of this theory. The historian and literary critic Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (SBH) spent 1941 in Washington upon the invitation of the Culture Division of the U.S. State Department and came back with "a whole little library about Anglo-American New Criticism" that found its expression in his various publications, making him "one of the most fecund interpreters of New Criticism to ever develop in Brazil," according to Antonio Arnoni Prado.[208] From another perspective, the legendary Antônio Cândido was also highly invested in New Criticism in an attempt to link together formalism and sociology, a combination that allowed him "to maintain [his] distance" and yet learn from the Anglo-American theory, as his renowned

[206] João Cezar de Castro Rocha, *Crítica literária: Em busca do tempo perdido?* (Chapecó: Argos Editora da UnoChapecó, 2011), 11.

[207] Heyck mentions in this context the Russian Formalism, Spanish Stylistics School, and Benedetto Croce's aesthetics. However, as she adds, "it was the New Criticism and its leading practitioners that had by far the greatest influence on Coutinho personally" (Denis Lynn Heyck, "Coutinho's Controversy: The Debate Over the *Nova Critica*," *Latin American Research Review* 14, no. 1 [1979], 112-3).

[208] A letter by Holanda dated July 24, 1948, quoted in Camilo, "Sérgio Bourque," 112; Antonio Arnoni Prado, Introduction to *O Espírito e a Letra: Estudos de Crítica Literária (1948-1959)*, by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, vol. 2 (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996), 29.

student, Robert Schwartz has claimed.[209] Both thinkers, however, were much more ambivalent than Coutinho and his adherents about the merits of New Criticism and, most importantly in the context of this project, devoted very little of their discussions about aesthetics and literary criticism to the figure of its reader. Coutinho, on the other hand, was intensively preoccupied with defining the attributes of the efficacious reader. In fact, upon his return from the U.S., he ignited a heated cultural debate specifically around the Brazilian habits of engagement with the literary text.

Coutinho presents the nova crítica in his columns as an alternative to what he considers a highly problematic cultural Brazilian phenomenon: *rodapé* literary criticism. The *críticos de rodapé* (literally, "footnote critics"), established cultural figures, traditionally published their literary commentary in newspapers, and addressed the general public and the academic professionals as one. They functioned, in the terms of Castro Rocha, as "cultural mediators" between high culture and the public, offering guidance to readers, educated or not, in their interactions with the literary text.[210] The adherents of the nova crítica, on their end, considered the *rodapé* form of literary commentary subjective, impressionistic, unprofessional, and in fact responsible for the myriad faults they found in Brazilian conventions of textual engagement.[211] As a result, the local New Critics strove to bring about a "methodological restoration," as the epigraph above suggests, by turning literary criticism into an autonomous academic discipline in Brazil – specialized, professionalized, and characterized by a systematic and scientific method of textual interpretation.[212] This cultural polemic, whose presence is everywhere to be found in the Brazilian press of the mid-fifties to mid-sixties, extended far beyond the field of literary criticism alone. It involved the participation of various prominent Brazilian figures such as Lêdo Ivo, Wilson Martins, Fábio Lucas, Nelson Werneck Sodré, and Álvaro Lins (whose work will be discussed later on in this chapter). In fact, this debate had such strong cultural presence that Heyck argues, "It helped to determine the state of the national critical mind that came to prevail during the sixties."[213]

Though undoubtedly accurate, this conventional narrative is in many ways "a simplification of a much more complex historical process," as argued by Castro Rocha, who consequently sets out to rewrite the strife between the *rodapé* and the academic (*catédra*) critics in less binary and more nuanced terms.[214] This chapter revisits the reception of New Criticism in Brazil from a different angle. It is my sense that an important yet unacknowledged stake in this dispute is the very body of the literary-critic-as-reader. I believe that the polemic around the nova crítica is magnified to national dimensions due to Coutinho's apprehension of the New Critical project as one of producing no less than a new Brazilian subject. As he writes, "The process of turning oneself into a better literary artist is inextricably linked with turning oneself into a better man."[215] Since for the Brazilian New Critics, any "literary artist" is at bottom a reader (as I will

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[209] Roberto Schwarz, "Roberto Schwarz: Um crítico na periferia do capitalismo [A critic on the periphery of capitalism]," interview by Luiz Henrique Lopes dos Santos and Mariluce Moura, *PESQUISA FAPESP*, 2004, http://revistapesquisa.fapesp.br/2004/04/01/um-critico-na-periferia-do-capitalismo.

[210] Rocha, *Crítica Literária*, 168.

[211] When applying the term "impressionistic" with respect to criticism, both here and in the discussion of the Tel Aviv School, I am not referring to the writing style associated with the nineteenth century art movement but to criticism based on impression and evaluation rather than a method based interpretation.

[212] The first Literature Department in Brazil is only founded in 1967 at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Coutinho is both its founder and its first chair.

[213] Heyck, "Coutinho's Controversy,"100.

[214] Rocha, *Crítica literária*, 11.

[215] Coutinho, *Correntes cruzadas*, 13.

later demonstrate), the above argument asserts in other words that becoming a better consumer of literature is a vehicle for becoming an ameliorated Brazilian subject.

Coutinho makes evident his understanding of New Criticism as a philosophy and practice of subject-construction from as early as his his May 30, 1948 column, with which he will later choose to open his volume of collected columns. While the standard dictum is that "the Poem itself – this is what the New Criticism purported to be about,"[216] Coutinho surprisingly identifies the reading-subject rather than the aesthetic-object as what fuels the Anglo-American New Critical enterprise from its onset. As we've seen in the previous chapters, Coutinho was right on the mark. In fact, his perceptive observation will appear in Western commentaries as well, but only years later.[217] This is not to say that Coutinho did not advocate for "intrinsic" literary interpretation that focuses on "the poem itself." But, in contrast with his American predecessors (and Cleanth Brooks specifically, as Chapter 1 demonstrates), he openly admitted that it is only through the cultivation of a specific readerly subjectivity that the poem could indeed appear to be an independent entity:

> More than ever, and more than any other, the movement of New Criticism confirms the conviction that literary criticism is the art of reading and teaching how to read literature, both prose-fiction and poetry. The work of I. A. Richards, a point of departure for New Criticism (1923), with his *Meaning of Meaning*, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, *Practical Criticism*, *Interpretation in Teaching* […] and *How to Read a Page* […] leads us to conclude that it is guided by one dominant line of investigation, made explicit in the title of the final work in this list – *How to Read a Page*, and its subtitle – *A Course in Effective Reading*. This idea dominates the movement as a whole.[218]

How to Read a Page is usually considered a relatively minor work by Richards that functions as a "manual of sorts … Richards presents his readers with a set of exercises to enable them to read better… rather than adhering to the critic's role of subsequent comment."[219] For Coutinho, however, enabling readers to read better *is* the fundamental role of the critic, which is what he shrewdly perceives his Anglo-American mentors to claim. This characteristic so deeply appeals to Coutinho since he believes the Brazilian reader is in urgent need of assistance of the kind the theory of New Criticism can provide. To depict this readerly problem, Coutinho frequently reverts to medical vocabulary. He diagnoses in the Brazilian reader a severe "degeneracy" in comprehension capabilities (*abastardamento*), an internal "degradation" (*degradação*), and a "mental immaturity" (*amadorismo*), conditions that urgently require, he claims, a "cure" (*esforço de "redressement")* or "remedy" (*remedio*).[220] The nature of this spiritual and intellectual "defect" (*defeito*) is discussed in especially intriguing terms in one of his columns which revisits (most likely inadvertently) Alencar's above mentioned reading scene.[221] While the elements imagined to

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[216] Thaventhiran, *Radical Empiricists*, 1.

[217] See Armstrong, "Textual Harassment," 401-20; and Benjamin Morgan, "Critical Empathy: Vernon Lee's Aesthetics and the Origins of Close Reading," *Victorian Studies* 55, no. 1 (2012), 31-56.

[218] Coutinho, *Correntes cruzadas*. In his edited *A literatura no Brasil*, Coutinho repeats this claim and writes "De modo geral, a nova atitude desacreditou a crítica exclamativa procurando ensinar a *ler* a literatura, interpretar o seu significado intrínseco, descobrir como a linguagem funciona na obra literária, em suma, o que *é* a literatura, que existe nela e como atua [emphases in original]," in Afrânio Coutinho ed., *A literatura no Brasil*, vol. 5, (Rio de Janeiro: Sul Americana, 1968), 647.

[219] Thevanthiran, *Radical Empiricists*, 90.

[220] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 122, 148, 39, 144, 44.

[221] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 159.

constitute the scene remain the same as in *Iracema* – the tropical blazing sun, the rocking hammock, the absent-minded reader, the open book – when Coutinho resketches it in his 1957 column, he places at its center a reader entirely different from the one depicted by Alencar; a reader that is incompetent, exhausted and, in fact, duplicated:

> Imbued with the ideas of geographic determinism, so dear to his generation and to the era of naturalist materialism, Araripe Júnior tried to explain… the premature aging and debilitation of the Brazilian intellectual as a consequence of his physical environment… "In this immense Brazil, under the blazing rays of the tropical sun, one can either imitate the savage that takes refuge from this devouring climate in sloth and in the oscillation of the hammock, or intensify one's actions as the only way to achieve one's goals, thus quickly exhausting oneself… in the extraction, in the preparation of the foundation, he [the Brazilian intellectual] has already exhausted all the mental-juice necessary for making sense of a book..." Undoubtedly, the environmental influence is significant, but… social reasons must also be taken in consideration, as we are lacking an organized intellectual profession.[222]

Coutinho's version introduces a violent split into Alencar's reading scene. In *Iracema*'s prologue, the enjoying subject ("the sweet rocking movement of the hammock") and the thinking subject ("I wrote it to be read there, on the porch") are one and the same, both benefiting from the "intensity" of the Brazilian climate. Yet for Coutinho, these two subject positions cannot coexist. The "oscillation of the hammock" characterizes the Brazilian "savage," whereas "intensified action" and the pursuit of "goals" are associated with the "reader" and the "intellect." And while the first is associated with "sloth," the latter continually "exhausts" himself (*consumirse*) as the paragraph mentions twice. To put it differently, Coutinho bisects Alencar's reader using a Cartesian dualism invested with a local political charge: the embodied pleasure-seeking native is constructed as the binary opposition of the hard-working thinking reader.

The identification of the indigenous with the body, and as the Other of intellect, is a well-known (post-)colonial cultural construction. In fact, Antônio Cândido suggests that the tension between the "barbarian" and the "acculturated" undergirds the whole of Latin-American culture, as can viewed in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's seminal *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism* (*Facundo: civilización y barbarie*, 1845), and Euclides da Cunha's *Backlands: The Canudos Campaign* (*Os Sertões*, 1902).[223] In the same vein, the abovementioned Buarque de Holanda (though disagreeing with Coutinho on many other grounds) similarly bemoans the dichotomy between manual and intellectual labor in Brazil, claiming that "leisure is worth more than business, and that productive activity is in itself less valuable than contemplation and love."[224] What Coutinho nevertheless specifies in this notorious hierarchical dichotomy is the matter of mental focus. Coutinho understands mental effort in terms of light (unsurprising when one considers his positivist enlightenment-based orientation): while worthy intellectual work is associated with condensed "beams" of thought, a deficient interaction with a text is caused by a "disperse"

[222] Ibid., 145-8.
[223] Antônio Cândido, "The Significance of *Roots of Brazil*," introduction to *Roots of Brazil* by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, trans. G. Harvey Summ (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), xxiv-xxvi.
[224] Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Roots of Brazil*, trans. G. Harvey Summ (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 9.

mindset.[225] In contrast with Alencar who saw the "intense" Brazilian climate as the producer of "creative powers," Coutinho views the "blazing" rays of the tropical sun as an obstacle in the way of intellectual production. And so, in coping with the over-centralized Brazilian sunrays, one can either "imitate the savage" and perform a metaphorically opposite mental movement of de-centralized thought (here translated as "sloth"), or choose the path of the intellect and intensify (etymologically "tighten") one's mental "rays" to an even higher degree than the sun.[226] Indeed, throughout the writings of both Coutinho and his followers, the "degeneracy" of the Brazilian reader is seen as rooted in the "savage" urge to "find refuge in sloth" and in scatter. On the other hand, the "remedy" for this condition is understood to be linked with learning how to condense one's thoughts and "intensify" focus.

The superimposition of Alencar and Coutinho's scenes might appear to sketch a sentimental and politically-problematic transition from a once harmonious Brazilian past, where absent-mindedness and intellectual rigor were imagined to reside in one reader, to a modern disjointed present, where these characteristics can no longer be seen as complimentary. However, the interrelationship between these two scenes is far more complex. First, Alencar's imagined reader, though to later become a Brazilian "commonplace," is not at all typical of his time, as Lajolo points out.[227] And Alencar's view of the Brazilian subject, like Coutinho's, is fraught with colonial stereotypes, imagining the native's "wild" and "natural" tendencies to be acculturated by the arrival of the Portuguese, to quote Lindstrom.[228] That is, harmony between "savage" distraction and analytic concentration does not truly inhabit any Brazilian past, even on the level of the cultural imaginary. On the other side of this presumed dichotomy, the nova crítica's reader is not in fact fully divided. Actually, what most preoccupies Coutinho throughout his writings is that the divide within the Brazilian subject between "degenerate" scatter and intellectual "intensity" is not as stable as he would have liked it to be. As the paragraph above demonstrates, Coutinho does not identify the Brazilian *exterior* environment as the main cause for the Brazilian readerly "debilitation" he identifies (unlike the nineteenth century Brazilian critic, Araripe Júnior, whom he quotes), but instead saddles the Brazilian *interiority* with the responsibility for this disability. For the leader of the nova crítica, the incapacity of the Brazilian reader to focus is generated not by the Brazilian "physical environment" but by an internalized hammock-rocking native – referred to in his columns as "instinctive forces" (*forças instintivas*), "innate qualities of spirit" (*as qualidades inatas do espírito*), and "unconscious, savage-like, virginal, primitive forces" (*forças inconscientes, selvagem, virgens, primitivas*); all of these together work to pull the Brazilian reader

[225] Jonathan Crary extensively outlines the historical tradition of conceptualizing "attention" in terms of "light," see "1888: Illuminations of Disenchantment," in *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1999), 237-81.

[226] For another instance of affiliation between "sloth" and Brazilian interiority, see *Correntes*, 131.

[227] Lajolo writes, "By beginning the letter-prologue that opens the book with the vocative *my friend*, José de Alencar already hints at what we might call the familial and domestic reception he intends for his book. In fact, nothing could be further away from the students' dorms (*república estudantil)* and academic bohemia – the cultural spaces usually associated with romantic literature –, than the imagine of the reception the opening lines of the book suggest" ("José de Alencar," 89).

[228] Lindstrom writes: "In the vision projected in *Iracema*, native communities appear to have lived in the wild, enjoying a timeless unity with the natural world. The arrival of the Portuguese brings changes in this hitherto unblemished society, sets national history in motion, and marks the beginning of the Brazilian people" (Forward to *Iracema*, xix).

away from an "intense" intellectual productivity.[229] That is, what was depicted by Júnior as the exclusive trait of the Brazilian native forms for Coutinho an integral part of *all* Brazilian readers:[230]

> Everything conspires amongst us against the work of the spirit, even with regards to our most-talented. First, our deficient formation, the result of autodidacticism, which is responsible for our lack of mental discipline, our dilettante spirit, our lack of persistence in pursuing aspired goals, our insubstantial methodologies, our dispersive and butterfly-like form of thought, our idealization of the personal, our tendency towards encyclopedism, graphomania, generalizations.[231]

Among the "everything" that conspires against the Brazilian's "work of the spirit," Coutinho counts in his body of work social reasons such the flawed education system mentioned here ("deficient formation") and the colonial rule with its system of oppression.[232] But these seem to only bolster, for Coutinho, an already existing natively inherited "racial temperament" characterized by a "dispersive and butterfly-like form of thought."[233] To harken back then to Coutinho's medical vocabulary discussed above, what seems to lie at the basis of the diagnosed Brazilian "degeneracy" is a mental tendency towards "distraction" (from the Latin *distractionem*, "a pulling apart, separating") – or, as he elsewhere puts it, an "inaptitude of our race for speculative meditation."[234] That this is in fact for him no less than a disease is made evident by the title of Coutinho's central book on the topic, *In the Hospital of Words* (*Na hospital das letras*), second in importance only to his *Cross Currents*. When expounding on this title in the book's introduction, he writes "*In the Hospital of Words* […] [is] a hospital for the vices and deformations of our professional activity. Here we diagnose and reproach various aspects of our moral and social diseases, in the hope that in the future the healing process of the University will not allow for the transmission of this devastating virus."[235] To revert to Coutinho's rewriting of Alencar's reading scene, it seems that for the thinkers of the nova crítica, Brazilian readers must always be on guard, watchful and attentive, since the innate tendency within them to "seek refuge" in "sloth" constantly threatens to interfere with their analytic "intense" thought. The suggested antidote, for Coutinho, comes in the form of a reading technique. Along with his colleagues, he construct a version of the Anglo-American "close reading" which works to persistently suppress and suspend the "savage" within the Brazilian subject in order to enhance focused thought and inhibit scatter.

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[229] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 48, IV, 144.

[230] The difference between Júnior and Coutinho's opinion about the locus of the Brazilian "degeneracy" is made evident in another of Coutinho's columns, where he writes: "Araripe Júnior was early to identify… the Brazilian bad habit of leaving the mental faculties of imagination in disarray in front of the tropical nature… The phenomenon of tropical disorder is longstanding… and it is the sole tradition that generates our dispersive spirit" (Afrânio Coutinho, *Da crítica e da nova crítica* [Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilizacão Brasileira, 1957], 168). For Júnior it is the external "tropical nature" that generates the Brazilian "bad habit," while for Coutinho it is the Brazilian internal "spirit" that undergirds it.

[231] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 119.

[232] For more on Coutinho's attitude toward Portuguese colonialism, see Denis Lynn Heyck "Coutinho, The Nova Crítica and Portugal," *Hispania* 64, no. 4 (1981): 564-69.

[233] Coutinho, *Correntes*, xvii, 83.

[234] Ibid., 122.

[235] Afrânio Coutinho, *Na hospital das letras* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Tempo Brasileiro, 1963), 25.

▪ EXACT READING AND SELF-FASHIONING

The Brazilian New Critics configured separation as a cure for the Brazilian readerly "virus," not only if terms of the self (isolating analytic from "butterfly" thought), but on the institutional level as well. That is, they viewed the establishment of autonomous departments of literature as a crucial step in the creation of a new and improved Brazilian reader. This is not the result of the materials taught there (also available to the autodidacts that Coutinho criticized), but rather the academy's propagated methods of approaching textual materials. Coutinho writes, "Our issue at hand is one of methods. It is only through a radical change of methods that will we be able to remedy our detrimental mental habits, which are responsible for the faults in our intellectual production."[236] These remedial methods, for the thinker of the nova crítica, are no less than surgical techniques for mental intervention, for the "creation of a critical conscious for our literature… in Departments of Philosophy and Letters... From there will flourish better poets, better novelists, better critics, better researchers and hard-working intellectuals."[237] As the list included in this statement makes evident, the Brazilian New Critics detect no rigid boundary between the work of the "poets," "novelists," "critics," "researchers," and "intellectuals." As Coutinho explains elsewhere, the reason is that – on the most basic of levels – all these figures are understood to be readers, i.e. agents in the literary field that should be taught the "know-how" of engagement with the literary text in order to bring about a revolution in Brazilian culture. He writes, "Generally put, our new attitude… asks to teach one how to *read* literature [emphasis in original],"[238] adding that, "The University is first and foremost a spiritual attitude. A technique. Of work, of thought, of action. And our revolution will be one of methodology or it won't be at all."[239] The work of the imagination, both of the writer and critic, is contingent labor, that is, knowing how to "act" upon literature via "methodology."

The scholars of the nova crítica understand their advocated technique of reading – and the intellectual and literary production it fosters – to hold an inherently political role. It is a vehicle through which they hope to implement a general change in Brazilian national subjectivity. This might seem perplexing, given that these scholars advocate for readers to narrow down their engagement with the surrounding social space and, still more, with their own internal world. But it is precisely by becoming universal subjects, detached from their "savage" ancestry, that the thinkers of the nova crítica believed the Brazilian people will better themselves and improve the nation as a whole. In fact, this paradox is imprinted in the very model of the close reader. This is why, in the American case, the history of the South is understood to echo most powerfully within a self-deadened reader, and the Israeli reader, as the following chapters will show, is thought to enhance the status of Hebrew literature by emptying herself of national identification. It is not surprising to find, then, that the Brazilian New Critics – ardent followers of New Criticism – predicate their unique reading method on the Anglo-American "close reading." In that process, they expose a less familiar facet of the original: the extent to which the original close reading lends itself to be used as a tool for self-fashioning:

> Various recent works acknowledge that the "nova crítica" (New Criticism) […] acquired public importance beyond the circle of pioneers who gave rise to it. Emphasizing an

[236] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 77.
[237] Ibid., V.
[238] Coutinho, *A literatura*, 647.
[239] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 84.

> intense, exact and accurate analysis of literature (close reading), or, more explicitly, "the examination of the literary work in order to understand each of its parts and in order to establish the relationship between them and the whole and amongst themselves" (George Arms), it [New Criticism] positions the critic in front of the poem as a poem, in front of the work of art as a work of art.[240]

Close reading, as viewed from the Brazilian perspective, has the ability to "position the critic in front of the poem," i.e. to dictate the subject's location within geographical and mental space. In order to explicate what the reader must do when faced with "the poem as poem," Coutinho turns to the little-known North-American literary critic, George Warren Arms, since he finds especially useful Arms' definition of this practice: close reading works first and foremost to activate the reader's mechanism of puzzle-solving, a mechanism of establishing "the relationship between them [the literary work's parts] and the whole, and amongst themselves." To understand why this specific cognitive procedure is important for the Brazilian New Critics, it is worthwhile to examine the basic adjectives attached to close reading in the paragraph above: "intense, exact and accurate." Coutinho's previous use of the term "intense," we will recall, hints that, here as well, he might be referring to the subject's ability to focus "rays" of thought rather than dispersing them. How this fits into the Brazilian version of close reading will be soon discussed. As for "accurate" and "exact," their redundancy implies that they stand for two different characteristics of this practice. Indeed, "accurate" and "exact" denote the double mechanism of the Brazilian method, designed to bring about and maintain the internal hierarchy in the local reader discussed above: the "accurate" function is devised to reinforce "intense" thought, while the "exact" facet works to suppress and to subordinate "dispersive" tendencies to the analytic faculties. In other writings of the nova crítica, these two attributes are embodied together within the term "exact" alone, which is used by the Brazilian thinkers as their title for "close reading." They refer to the original English term with the Portuguese *leitura exata*, which can be re-translated into English as "exact reading." Ever since, a more literal translation had popularized in Brazil, i.e. *leitura de perto* (reading from close up), but examining the original vocabulary is highly telling with regards to this method's imagined function.

As in the English, the adjective "exact" (*exato*) refers to an action done with great care and rigor, from the Latin *exactus*, "precise, accurate, highly finished." The proximity of this term to positivist vocabulary is not accidental. In contrast with (or perhaps simply more explicitly than) their Anglo-American precursors, the nova críticos openly align themselves with scientific discourse and thought.[241] Their imagined reader is one who approaches the text with "the expertise that accompanies scientific investigation," to go back to Eduardo Portela, or who applies to literature "a scientific method" and introduces "discipline and order" into the text, according to Euríalo Canabrava, the analytic philosopher who zealously supported Coutinho.[242] Exact reading is indeed highly in line with positivism as it obligates the "debilitated" Brazilian subject to practice two analytic skills while reading. The first is that of putting together discrete pieces into a greater whole, i.e. Arms' definition of close reading as puzzle-solving. The second is that of identifying behind that totality a solid and unified truth, of creating "methods that penetrate to the intrinsic

[240] Ibid., 206.
[241] Both Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and Terry Eagleton similarly suggest that the Anglo-American New Critics were in fact very much aligned with positivist thought over and above their explicit repudiation of it (see Terry Eagleton, *The Event of Literature* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012], 35; Holanda, *O Espírito*, 412).
[242] Portella, "Crítica literária," 67-9.

core or esthetic essence of the work of art."[243] Both these cognitive tasks are understood by the Brazilian New Critics in Coutinho's terms of thought as light and are associated with intensification and focalization. That is, they are understood to require a narrowing down of the reader's mental field of vision to the "the poem as a poem."[244]As Castro Rocha demonstrates, Coutinho's own experience with close reading was as a focus-enhancing praxis:

> In his 1952 inaugural speech in Colégio Pedro II, Coutinho acknowledged that, before his encounter with the North-American university, his perspective was one of a dilatant precisely because he was wanting in methods and concentration: "my scatter and lack of direction were substituted with strong conviction and linearity. The vice of butterflying around without rest, so common amongst us, and which was mine as well, was opposed by a tendency to restrict one's vision under the assumption that no one serves well many lords."[245]

Given that the Brazilian New Critics are trying to prevail over the detrimental "savage" tendency towards "scatter" and "butterfly-like form of thought," it is clear why they find so compelling, and indeed highlight, what they identify as the ability of close reading to "restrict one's vision." If we take Coutinho's word for it, embracing the Anglo-American intense focus on the puzzle-like logical problems posed by the text serves not only the literary work ("no one serves well many lords"), but also the reader's mental capabilities ("The vice of butterflying around without rest […] was opposed"). Exact reading, then, is intended to mend the reading-subject while working for the benefit of the aesthetic-object. This Frankensteinian fantasy of creating a positivist, narrowly-focused, puzzle-solving Brazilian reader through exact reading is flat out exposed when Coutinho quotes Stanley Edgar Hyman, "If we could, hypothetically, construct an ideal modern literary critic out of plastics and light metals, his method would be a synthesis of every practical technique or procedure used by his flesh-and-blood colleagues."[246] That is, the exact reader for the nova crítica is nothing less than an accurate machine.[247]

Still, as in the English, "exact" should not be glossed only with the adjective *exactus.* It also has its etymological roots in the Latin verb *exigere*, which literally means to "to drive or force out," e.g. to exact revenge or exact a promise from someone. In Portuguese, the verb *exigir* also signifies the act of imposing a demand or command upon someone. Indeed, the process of turning the Brazilian reader "exact" involves for the thinkers of the nova crítica a politically charged imperative of extraction. In order to make sure that the absent-minded hammock-rocking savage will not stand in the way of performing the "accurate" textual procedures detailed above, the Brazilian reader is urged to participate in a constant process of wresting those detrimental

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[243] Coutinho, *A literatura*, 640.

[244] As Coutinho writes about F. R. Leavis' use of close reading, "Leavis focuses his powerful critical instrument on the supreme works of George Elio, Henry James and Joseph Conrad, using… all recourses available… but subordinates them all to a focal attention to the text itself" (*Correntes*, 131).

[245] Rocha, *Crítica literária*, 191.

[246] Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Armed Vision; A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 396. Coutinho, *Correntes*, 98.

[247] Against this background, one may understand why one of the arguments mounted against the thinkers of the *nova crítica* is that they are importing dysfunctional "machines" of criticism from the U.S.: "the true thinkers of New Criticism are certainly not like their post-boys from the provincial backland of South America, who pick up such cultural movements… as others sale certain North-American machines long-ago constructed, eroded and done for" (Álvaro Lins, *Teoria literária: Poesia, romance, teatro, biografia, crítica* [Rio de Janeiro: Editora de Ouro, 1967], 195).

tendencies from within, or suppressing their influence. That is, while the first mental procedure associated with exact reading is exterior, an "intensity of thought," "focus," and "meditation" directed at the aesthetic entity, the second mental procedure is interior, one of "vigilance," "alertness," and "carefulness" against the innate Brazilian tendency towards "a butterfly form of thought." The exact reader is advised to be in a constant mental state of "self-vigilance" (*autovigilância*),[248] to be constantly on guard in order to fight off the natural detrimental tendencies as soon as they make their presence felt. This effort must be exerted perpetually since, as mentioned above, Coutinho is uncertain if the internal unfocused savage can ever be extracted all together:

> This reaction is a product of a new mentality created by the diffusion of higher academic education. These studies necessitate professional rigorous thought and a changed spiritual attitude, which are the adversaries of dilettantism, improvisation, amateurism, infantility. Undoubtedly, the university will put an end to the old mentality. But we must not lose heart in vigilance, for the devil has a thousand breaths.[249]

Here again we witness how, somewhat ironically, self-surveillance and self-censorship are construed as patriotic, directed at enhancing the production of an independent Brazilian literary field. They strive to dispel the colonial myth of the Brazilian as unable to engage in rigorous, analytical thought, not by exposing the basic falsity of this argument, but by educating Brazilians on how to detect and remove their own pathology of distraction from within ("the old mentality") in order to create in its stead a "new mentality" of "rigorous thought" via "higher academic education" and its exact method of focus and vigilance. And "attention" is the term that appears time and again in the writings of the nova crítica to describe the mental attitude that should accompany close or exact reading. As Coutinho writes, "Leavis focuses his powerful critical instrument on the supreme works of George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad, using for the investigation of their intimate nature all recourses available […] but subordinates them all to a *focal attention* to the text itself."[250] This attention *externally* minimizes stimuli that might bring to life the embodied pleasure-seeking savage and, in case it does, *internally* blocks this dangerous intervention. As Heyck points out, what Coutinho or his followers meant by "a literary scientific method" was never made altogether clear (and they were severely criticized for this ambiguity), but when Coutinho did address this topic, he defined scientificity as "an objective and ordered state of mind before the work of art."[251] The practice of exact reading establishes an "ordered state of mind" by disciplining the "thinking mind" to rule over the Brazilian savage's "detrimental tendencies." This reinstates the peculiar paradox described above: in order to transform into a sovereign Brazilian reader, unconstrained by the colonial grip, the Brazilian subject must detach herself from what the nova crítica defines as most essentially Brazilian. The new Brazilian readers are the ones who extract the mental Brazilian tendencies from within them and thus become universal (or "neutral" Anglo-American) readers.

It is precisely into this caesura that the renowned Brazilian writer João Guimarães Rosa injects his intricate critique of exact reading. Rosa's short story, "The Mirror," occupying the center of his short story collection, *Primeiras estórias* (*First Non-Stories*), is published in 1962,

[248] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 224.
[249] Coutinho, *No Hospital*, 18.
[250] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 131
[251] Heyck, "Coutinho's Controversy," 104.

the same year Coutinho is finally elected to the prestigious Brazilian Academy of Letters (*Academia Brasileira de Letras*) following two previous rejections – a historical moment that marks, according to both Heyck and Castro Rocha, the general victory of the nova crítica and its method of reading over more traditional Brazilian forms of literary analysis.[252] In this critical moment, the celebrated modernist intervenes to reflect (as implied by the story's title) on the nova crítica's readerly imperative to extract the Brazilian "barbarian" from within.

- **THE JAGUAR READER**

The work of Guimarães Rosa (along with that of Clarice Lispector, to be discussed in the following chapter) is traditionally viewed as pertaining to the third wave of Brazilian Modernism. And though his works differ in various ways from that of the modernists pioneers of the twenties, it markedly shares with them a "posthuman affiliation," to quote Gabriel Giorgi.[253] As is well known, at the heart of Brazilian modernism, from its inception in the 1920s to its later 1960s manifestations, stands the metaphor of anthropophagy, making its debut in Oswald de Andrade's 1928 iconoclastic *Manifesto antropófago*.[254] There, the avant-garde poet calls for the devouring, absorption, and transformation of European culture into and through the Brazilian experience, in an attempt to "challenge the binary opposition of civilization versus barbarism, highlighting the dual history, indigenous and European, of contemporary Brazil," in Susan Basnett's concise words.[255] Following his footsteps, the early Brazilian modernists – in a radical move of resistance and in reaction to a post-colonial anxiety of influence – reappropriated the European stereotype of the Brazilian as a savage, and urged Brazilians to brazenly cannibalize Western culture into their own; to devour hegemonic culture not via imitation emerging from a sense of inferiority, but from a position of power that allows for creativity and play. In contrast, then, with the viewpoint that Coutinho exemplifies, according to which Brazilian "savagery" should be amended through acculturation, the Brazilian modernists strove to expose the cultural and political potency embedded within the "the cannibal instinct," in de Andrade's words.[256]

Rosa continues in this modernist tradition by insisting on his work on the cannibal, the bestia,l and the outcast as the locus of truth and knowledge. Coutinho, on his end, can be said to have had stylistic preferences very close to those of Rosa and the 1920s modernists, given that he was invested throughout his career in reestablishing the importance of the Brazilian baroque, a project central to Brazilian modernism as well. However, the leader of the nova crítica draws a

[252] Ibid., 110; Rocha, *Crítica literária.*
[253] Gabriel Giorgi, "La alianza salvaje: 'Meu tio o Iauaretê' de Guimarães Rosa," in *Formas comunes: animalidad, cultura, biopolítica* (Buenos Aires : Eterna Cadencia, 2014), 47-52.
[254] Oswald de Andrade, "Manifesto antropófago," in *Vanguardas Latino-Americanas*: *Polêmicas, Manifestos e Textos Críticos*, ed. Jorge Schwartz (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2008), 142-7.
[255] Susan Basnett, *Translation, the New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 53. As Basnett points out, the Antropophagist ideology was revived in the 1960s through the work of Haroldo and Augusto de Campos. In the current context, I would add that the de Campos brothers played an important role in the importation of American modernist poetry into Brazil, especially that of Ezra Pound, an aesthetics that was inseparable from the American New Critical theory that promoted it. That is, to my mind, the concrete poetry that Haroldo de Campos published during the 1960s was influenced in its acute concision and object-like form by the New Critical creed, bolstering Coutinho's *nova crítica* project through poetic creation. However, de Campos took the "object" metaphor to an extreme and combined it in original ways with the figure of the cannibal, thereby destabilizing Coutinho's views as well.
[256] Oswald de Andrade, "Cannibalist Manifesto," trans. Leslie Bary, *Latin American Literary Review* 19, no. 38 (1991): 43.

clear line of demarcation between his work and that of the modernists, both early and late. He does so since he believes that the avant-garde aesthetics that emerged from the anthropophagic movement (*movimento antropofágico*) exacerbated the "degeneracy" of the Brazilian reader. Brazilian modernist works, he claims, incite a readerly state of mind utterly opposed to the one that accompanies exact reading:

> Since these assertions might seem barbaric, the above signed [i.e. Coutinho] would like to make clear that no personal mark is imprinted on his position with regards to modernism… with its [Brazilian modernism] aesthetics of liberty, its rebelliousness, its negativism… it endorses tendencies very typical of the Brazilian nature and habits… our tendencies towards indiscipline, towards disorder, and towards disobedience to methods and norms.[257]

Coutinho pairs together the Brazilian aesthetics that openly structures itself on indigenous culture with what he understands to be a "savage" reading practice. It is his conviction that the modernist works "endorse" the unacculturated "tendencies" that haunt the Brazilian reader from within – "disorder," "disobedience" and "indiscipline." So, the "savage," for the nova crítica, is taken to disturb Brazilian culture from both sides of the literary equation – that of the text and that of the reader. It engenders "rebellious" texts and "disordered" readers, and should thus be kept in check in both realms (which is why Coutinho makes clear in the paragraph above that *his* assertions are anything but "barbaric").[258] Yet Coutinho's assertions do not go unanswered within Brazilian culture. It is exactly the nova crítica's insistent distanciation from the "savage"– or, better yet, its suppression – as a prerequisite for a worthy engagement with the literary text that is rethought in Rosa's "The Mirror." This is not to claim that Rosa intentionally wrote this story as a direct response to the nova crítica's theory and practice. More likely, "The Mirror" echoes a voice that Rosa is detecting, whether consciously or not, and which depicts a portrait of Brazilian self-reflection and embodies a resistance to the nova crítica's demands from the Brazilian subject, imperatives that circulate widely within the local culture of the time.

"The Mirror" is recounted by a first-person narrator who commits early on in the story to the task of revealing his "true countenance" (*vera forma*), which is hidden, he is certain, in the mirror.[259] As Anna Pacheco argues, this narrator places his confidence in *scientificismo* – the belief that the scientific technique can and should be extended to examine the whole scope of human behavior.[260] As so, unsurprisingly, Rosa' protagonist chooses to accomplish his formidable task by using empirical methods alone. This positivist inclination no doubt reverberates with the nova crítica's project, but the question of literature could seem quite a ways away from the concrete object at the heart of this story. However, the mirror is to be understood in the context of this work not only literally but also allegorically, as standing for the literary text and for the reader's responsibility, according to the Brazilian New Critics, to penetrate into the truth hidden in its midst.

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[257] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 83.

[258] In another column on the issue, Coutinho reiterates that the "modernist rebellion" brought about a "mental agility that is dangerously opposed to the qualities of meditation, of patience" and which "resulted in a true disaster to intelligence," *Correntes*, 144. That is, within the paradigm of a disordered "butterfly-like form of thought" versus a focused "patient" and "meditative" one, Coutinho positions himself in the latter.

[259] João Guimarães Rosa, *Primeiras estórias* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1969), 117; João Guimarães Rosa*, The Third Bank of The River, and Other Stories*, trans. Barbara Shelby (New York: Knopf, 1968), 140. From this point onwards I will refer to the English translation only.

[260] Ana Paula Pacheco, *Lugar do mito: narrativa e processo social em* Primeiras estória*s de Guimarães Rosa* (São Paulo: Nankin, 2006), 228.

The tension between these two possible meanings of "the mirror" – the denotative and the symbolic – appears in as early as the first line of the story, where the narrator advises his listener (both an anonymous interlocutor and the reader), that he is not about to provide her with a story in the conventional literary sense (*uma aventura*) but to present a scientific *experiência* based on rational and systematic research.[261] To differentiate from English, the Portuguese *experiência* stands for both "experiment" and "experience." That is, while the narrator is trying to establish a binary distinction between the scientific (his exploration of the mirror) and the subjective (a depiction of a personal experience or adventure), Rosa's reader is already instructed to suspect that the two might be inseparable.

The adventure of Rosa's narrator begins when he encounters (in a public bathroom of all places) a "repulsive, utterly hideous" image in the mirror, which he shockingly discovers to be his own.[262] This self-proclaimed "impartial investigator, absolutely neutral," does not back away from the challenge of comprehending his baffling experience of self-estrangement, and plans a scientific experiment to expose the "real self" that lies behind what he concludes must have been a "false mask."[263] This coping mechanism, the story reveals, holds social capital. By dealing with the situation through logic, the narrator understands himself to establish a superiority over children, animals, and the "primitive" inhabitants of the Brazilian *interior* (backlands). To differentiate, "they" are all afraid of mirrors and superstitiously believe that "when you are alone you should never look into a mirror during the small hours of the night, for sometimes, instead of your own reflection, some other, frightful visage may appear there."[264] A confrontation with a "frightful visage" in the mirror could serve as a description of the narrator's experience, who even admits to be himself from the *interior* (as is his interlocutor, the reader's avatar in the diegetic world). Yet Rosa's protagonist insists that in contrast with his former neighbors who satisfy themselves "with fantastic nonexplanations," he is "a materialist, a rational person who keeps his feet and paws on the ground."[265] In his scientific experiment, he is positive, he will act as "a hunter of my true form, driven by disinterested, even impersonal curiosity; not to say a scientific urge."[266] The terms Rosa's narrator uses for his self-description match perfectly with the traits attributed to the exact reader. He is rational, impersonal, scientific, and objective. As Coutinho writes, "the man of letters must subordinate himself to his observations as does the physicist and the biologist… [to] the careful and objective observation of facts, the verification of their consequences and the progressive accumulation of their results… whenever we thus operate in literature, we conduct science."[267] Moreover, like the exact reader, the narrator of "The Mirror" works ardently to detach himself from all beings "primitive;" you could easily say that he is anything but "savage."

And yet, quite a few elements in the narrator's monologue destabilize this exact self-portrait. Why, for example, would such a "rational person," a scientist, allow himself to grow an animal's foot, even if only metaphorically ("his feet and *paws* on the ground")? Or why would he, a perfectly neutral observer, imagine himself to be a "hunter" of all things ("a *hunter* of my true form")? After all, searching for prey or being one can hardly be viewed as disinterested positions; they both threaten to invite the body along with its desires and anxieties back into the realm of presumed scientific impartiality. It seems that Rosa is stealthily calling upon his readers to take

[261] Rosa, *Third Bank*, 135.
[262] Ibid., 139.
[263] Ibid. 140.
[264] Ibid., 138.
[265] Ibid. 138; trans. modified.
[266] Ibid., 139; trans. modified.
[267] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 81.

with a grain of salt the narrator-protagonist's authoritative speech and his categorical statements by allowing the denigrated animal-child-primitive to speak through his allegedly "disinterested, even impersonal" language. Though he proclaims himself removed from his "primitive" origins, this seems not to be the case for this story's protagonist.

And while this linguistic play takes place behind his back, the narrator continues on in his endeavor, unaware and undisturbed. As one would expect of an exact reader, instructed not only to focus his attention outwards but to also use it inwards in a gesture of self-censorship, the procedure Rosa's narrator opts for in order to discover his "true form" is the slow "annulment" of irrelevant and distracting layers from his reflected image,

> As it was, I had to penetrate the veil, see through that *mask*, in order to expose the heart of the nebula – my true countenance. There must be a way. I pondered, and was rewarded by a positive inspiration. I concluded that since the disguise of the *external face* was composed of diverse mingled elements, my problem was to submit those to a visual blockage or perceptive annulment, blotting out each element one at a time, beginning with the most rudimentary, the grossest, the least meaningful. I took the animal element as a start […] My inferior double in the scale of evolution was – the Jaguar.[268]

By selecting self-reflection as the aesthetic object under examination in this story, Rosa is brilliantly able to put on display both the procedures that exact reading entails: the external analytic task of puzzle-solving and extracting the truth from within the text ("penetrate the veil, see through that *mask*, in order to expose the heart of the nebula"), and the internal self-policing task of suppressing the internal Other ("my problem was to submit those to a visual blockage or perceptive annulment, blotting out each element one at a time"). Making the mirror the "literary" text under examination allows for the two forms of attention these processes involve – focus and vigilance – to be directed outwards and come under the inspection of Rosa's reader.

As in the case of the "ailing" Brazilian reader, Rosa's narrator must reengineer his "perception" to be able to correctly engage with his object of examination. For the sake of such self-indoctrination, he sets to "blot out" the four elements he believes most severely distort his accurate vision: the bestial, the familial, the emotional, and the psychological. As discussed in the previous chapter, the process of self-censorship is true to the North-American version of close reading as well, a similarity that Rosa hints at by referring to these four elements earlier on in the story with the reputable New Critical term, "affective fallacy" (*preconceito afetivo*).[269] Yet, the narrator's insistence in "The Mirror" on eliminating the "animal element" makes plain that Rosa is engaging here (whether consciously or not) with the specific nova crítica version of the theory. In the spirit of Coutinho's deprecation of Brazilian "savage" nature, Rosa's narrator emphasizes the malignant effect the remnants of the bestial continue to have on his analytic thought by repeatedly depicting their worthlessness, "beginning with the most rudimentary, the grossest, the least meaningful. I took the animal element as a start."[270] But in fact, the excessive depiction of unimportance ("most rudimentary," "grossest," "least meaningful") presents the animalistic as eminent. Had this element of subjectivity truly been the "least meaningful," redundant repetition would not have been necessary. In this manner, Rosa hints that he shares neither his narrator's nor Coutinho's view that the bestial must be eliminated for a valuable thought process to take place.

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[268] Rosa, *Third Bank*, 141; trans. modified; emphasis in original.
[269] Ibid., 139; translation modified (Shelby renders "*preconceito afetivo*" as "affectionate partiality").
[270] Rosa, *Third Bank*, 141.

And he further underscores this position by identifying specifically "the Jaguar" as his narrator's "inferior double." In such a way, Rosa inserts into "The Mirror" an intertextual reference to his novella "My Uncle the Jaguar" (*Meu tio o iauaretê*), published only a year earlier. There, he negotiates the very differentiation between the jaguar and the human, forcefully questioning the anthropocentric notion that the animal is the inferior of the two, and creatively countering the colonial viewpoint of the Other as bestial.[271]

Rosa's narrator, on his end, is still blind at this point to the disintegration of the premises underlying his own experiment. In fact, the story reveals, our protagonist has finally become, after a long and ardent process, a master "at excluding, abstracting, and extracting," as he had hoped.[272] He was successful in "excluding" the internal Brazilian "primitive" (bestial, immature, emotional) while simultaneously accentuating his "intellectual" faculties (impersonal, grounded, rational). In other words, He brought about the nova crítica's desired-for internal subordination of the "savage" to rational thought. And he is able achieve this challenging goal by controlling and specifically narrowing down his vision, very much in line with Coutinho's conceptualization of attention in terms of concentrated light: "It was principally in a *mode* of focus, in a partially peripheral vision, that I had to acquire agility: to look without seeing. Without seeing, in 'my face,' the *relic* of the beast" [emphasis in original].[273] It is the narrator's "peripheral vision" – what occurs on the outskirts of his gaze – that poses the biggest danger to accuracy (revealing his "true" countenance), and consequentially requires stricter discipline; he must attempt to avoid those parts of the visual field as much as possible, "to look without seeing." That this is a manipulation of attention specifically is made clear by the narrator's comment to his interlocutor: "you don't see that your face is merely a perceptual, deceptive motion. You don't see because you are *inattentive*, dulled by habit."[274] In contrast, Rosa's narrator is doubly attentive. He is able to focus his mental efforts so intensely on the mirror, and to suppress any relic of subjective-particularity, to such an extent that he has become a "transparent contemplator" (*transparente contemplador*) of the aesthetic object under scrutiny, i.e. his own readerly-self.[275] Even Coutinho, I would guess, could not have described in more accurate a term his ideal Brazilian-Universal exact reader.

The narrator's perceptual victory, however, is quick to pass. As it does throughout the story, language here as well sets up a trap for its speaker. Rosa's protagonist reveals, startled, that his metaphor of "transparency" has concretized in front of his very eyes. Instead of exposing his *vera forma* in the mirror, as he has hoped, he finds there that his reflection had disappeared altogether. Nothing at all appears as his reflection; or, in other words, the forceful "nothing" is the only thing now staring back at him from the looking glass,

> I will simply say that I looked into a mirror and there was nothing there. I saw nothing […] Had I no features, no face at all? I touched myself repeatedly. But there was only the unseen. The fictive, without visible evidence. What was I – the transparent contemplator?... I turned away abruptly. So agitated, I could scarcely stand and almost fell into an armchair.[276]

[271] See Giorgi, *Formas comunes*, 47-52.
[272] Rosa, *Third Bank*, 142
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid., 140; emphasis mine.
[275] Ibid, 143; trans. modified.
[276] Rosa, *Third Bank*, 143; trans. modified.

Coutinho's process of self-vigilance ends for Rosa in self-annihilation. Without the familial, emotional, and psychological – but most importantly, the bestial – the reading subject is erased and with it the object under scrutiny. To take Rosa's implication here seriously would mean concluding that the Brazilian exact reader is in danger of becoming a no-reader at all, self-censoring itself out of existence. As mentioned before, for Rosa, in this text specifically and in his body of work more generally, critical thought is embedded within the bestial, the corporal, and the subjective, incorporated by the leper, the child, the outcast, and the insane.[277] These figures are not, for him, the Others of thought, but form the very locus of apprehension.

The juxtaposition of the nova crítica's understanding of "attention" with "The Mirror" – a co-reading this short story seems to call for – sheds light on Rosa's possible implicit conceptualization of readerly attention. In one of his rare interviews, five years after the publication of *First Non-Stories*, Rosa maintains that, "Many people say it's difficult to read my work. It's not difficult. And it's not necessary to read aloud, like many people I know, to apprehend. It's enough to read, read attentively. You think you don't understand, but mentally you do. Understand?" [278] This enigmatic answer suggests that, for Rosa, "read[ing] attentively" means allowing some internal alterity to read for or with a more conscious "you." That is, while one *you* thinks, "I don't understand," another mental *you* does. This statement might seem to jibe with Cleanth Brooks and William Faulkner's New Critical conceptualization of the reading process as suggested in the previous chapters. However, for the Americans, the close reader must deaden herself – suspend her subjectivity during the engagement with the literary work – for the alterity of the text to speak through her. For Rosa, on the other hand, the alterity always already resides in the subject such that one must be alive rather than dead to oneself, internally attentive, in order to fully "understand" his work. This conceptualization of mental doubleness announces its presence in "The Mirror" during the last and surprising segment of the story. After years of fearfully avoiding mirrors in order to not confront his "nothingness" once again, Rosa's narrator accidently encounters one. From that encounter emerges, to the amazement of the narrator, not self-transparency, but a fuzzy image, a mysterious and barely emerging "not-quite-face":

> It was only later, years later, after I had gone through a period of great suffering, that I confronted myself again – but not quite face to face. The mirror showed myself to me. Listen […] And… yes, I saw myself again, my face, a face; not this one which your reason attributes to me, but a not-quite-face – scarcely outlined – barely emerging, like a pelagic flower born of the abyss… it was no more than a child's small face, even less-than-a-child's. And nothing more. Will you ever understand?[279]

In a sophisticated play on words that is quite difficult to render in English, Rosa brings back the image of the jaguar into this uncanny final scene. When calling upon his fictional interlocutor and his reader to pay attention by imploring them to "Listen" – in Portuguese, "*Ouça*" – Rosa also subtly engraves into the text the word "*onça*" (jaguar), which is identical except for the inversion of the "n" into a "u." The proximity in both sound and orthography between "*ouça*" and "*onça*" brings closer together the less-than-a-child and the jaguar's face staring at the narrator from the mirror. Both are not the "true self" that the narrator hoped to find in the mirror via his experiment,

[277] Among Rosa's well-known works to depict the outcast as the locus of truth (i.e., the child, the animal, the insane) are "Sorôco, sua mãe, sua filha," "Recado do Morro," and "A terceira margem do rio."
[278] João Guimarães Rosa, "Guimarães Rosa fala aos jovens," *O Cruzeiro*, December 23, 1967.
[279] Rosa, *Third Bank*, 145.

but a self that cannot be detected by "reason" alone since it does not obey the basic logical law of identity, according to which each thing is the same with itself; what the narrator encounters in the mirror is simultaneously "my face" and "a face." "The mirror showed myself to me," he declares, a "myself" that is not the identical with "me."

The miraculous reappearance of the narrator's mirror image implies that, for Rosa, the dimension of "extraction" in exact reading is nothing less than impossible. The Other within the subject, that which Rosa's narrator frighteningly encounters in the mirror and consequently strives to eliminate, is not contingent upon the conscious self, but holds an autonomous voice within it. Thus, attempting to engage with a literary text without the intervention of the bestial is beyond human possibility. Our internal alterity stares back at us from the texts we read, since it always inhabits the reader in one way or another. Under these conditions, "to read attentively" appears to signify an acknowledgment of the bizarre and irrational, both within the literary text and within the self. That is, Rosa does not refute the nova crítica's recommended processes of puzzle-solving the "discovery… [of the literary work's] intrinsic aesthetic content." "The Mirror" invites the reader to engage in such attempts through its play on words, complex metaphoric structures, and delicate work with paradoxical structures. Moreover, without his scientific efforts (*experiências*) to solve the enigma, Rosa's narrator would never have experienced (*experiênciar*) his significant encounter with the "not-quite-face." What Rosa does seem to imply through his latent dialogue with the nova crítica in "The Mirror" is that along with logical attempts to arrange the pieces of the text into an integral whole, the reader must also be able to thoroughly engage with the places in the text where these attempts collapse, when the awkward, the impossible, the improbable or the ridiculous stand in the way of proper rational closure. And it is the internal "not-quite-face" that is most capable of attending to these voices ("*You* think you don't understand, but mentally *you* do. Understand?"), which are where the wondrous "pelagic flower" dwells. For Rosa, then, if exclusion or suppression is to be part of the reading process, they should be directed at the reader's doubts about the irrational, instead of discarding of the irrational altogether. This is made clear in the final paragraphs of the story:

> Can this disjointed world of ours be the plane – the intersection of planes – where the finishing touches are put to our souls? If so, then "life" is an extreme and serious experience (*experiência*); its technique – or at least part of it – demands a conscious jettisoning, a clearing away, of whatever obstructs the growth of the soul or buries it under rubble… And the problem-judgment survives in the simple question: *do you exist yet?*... Tell me … I welcome any objections you may design to express to me, your obedient servant, a newly made friend and your companion as a lover of science with all its misguided successes and its halting quantum jumps forwards. Yes?[280]

Rosa's narrator returns here to the basic terms of "The Mirror" – *experiência,* technique, exclusion, science – in order to reconstruct his understanding of the self now dramatically changed. The experience/experiment he is facing now, that of making sense of his childish Jaguar-like doppelgänger, leads him to conclude that it is not the bestial that should be jettisoned from the self in order to arrive at truth, but the contrary. What should be "cleared away" is anything that impedes a possible confrontation with the internal Other, since it is there that the "growth of the soul" occurs. The final lines of the story seem to approach Rosa's Brazilian exact readers directly. Themselves working to suspend their internal savage during the reading process in accordance

[280] Rosa, *Third Bank*, 146; trans. modified.

with the nova crítica's demands, they are now forced by Rosa to come face to face with the limitations of their technique. The narrator, an easily relatable "companion as a lover of science," demands their personal response on the question of self-censorship. What is the best "technique" for their "extreme and serious experience/experiment" of reading? Should one acknowledge the internal "savage" that gazes back from the mirror-text? Would one at all *exist yet* without engaging with its presence?

- **THE HYBRID SCHIZOPHRENIC READER**

The imprint of the nova crítica's exact reader can be detected not only in the Brazilian literature of the 1960s (a discussion I will return to in the following chapter); this figure has also left an enduring mark on the local literary criticism. As mentioned above, Coutinho's columns elicited copious explicit responses from the intellectual milieu. But the exact reader also makes an inadvertent appearance in the critical discourse, being referred to implicitly and unwittingly. These more subtle critical reactions, as Shoshana Felman has famously taught us, are invaluable since they expose – or "act-out" in her terms – the tensions embedded in the original text.[281] Following that trajectory, I find the critical work of Coutinho's contemporary, Álvaro Lins, and the current-day scholar, João Cezar de Castro Rocha, to shed an important light on the nova crítica's imperative to utilize readerly attention in order to control an innate malignant Other. Both critics lay out in their work a readerly model that, though never portrayed as such, functions as an alternative to the exact reader. And tellingly, in both cases, this reader is depicted in terms of internal integration, testifying to a previous *dis*integration enforced upon the Brazilian reader.[282] More specifically, Lins mobilizes the concept of "integration" to depict his ideal reader-critic, and Castro Rocha uses "schizophrenia" towards that same goal. But both models are undergirded by the basic nova crítica presumption (inherited from colonial discourse) that the Brazilian subject embodies two contradictory impulses, the "savage" and the analytic, a presumption that leads the nova crítica scholars to demand that the reader subordinate the first impulse to the latter. Lins and Castro Rocha accept this imaginary split and respond to it by depicting their reader in terms of reunification. They thereby demonstrate the extent to which the nova crítica's tenets took root in the Brazilian imaginary. Castro Rocha's work is especially significant in that vein, since it attests in its contemporaneity to the still lingering presence of the nova crítica demands within current Brazilian culture.

Lins, an acclaimed journalist of literary criticism in prominent newspapers such as *Diário de notícias*, *Diários associados* and *Correio da manhã*, was categorically the biggest opponent of Coutinho in the *rodapé-catédra* debate.[283] For Coutinho, Lins represented the archetypal ailing Brazilian reader, whose engagement with the literary text exhibits the full spectrum of the disease's symptoms. To make sure his skeptical opinion of Lins is communicated as unequivocal, Coutinho

[281] Shoshana Felman writes: "The scene of the critical debate is thus a repetition of the scene dramatized in the text. The critical interpretation, in other words, not only elucidates the text but also reproduces it dramatically, unwittingly *participates in it*. Through its very reading, the text, so to speak, acts itself out ("Turning the Screw of Interpretation," *Yale French Studies*, no. 55/56 [1977]: 101).

[282] In the final two chapters of the dissertation, dedicated to New Criticism in Israel, we will once again encounter the tension between "integration" and "disintegration" as central to the conceptualization of the close reader.

[283] There has recently emerged a renewed interest in the critical work of Álvaro Lins, "an author ignored by the canon," to quote the title of the *Folha de S. Paulo* (February 2, 2013). For an example of this new line of research, see Eduardo Cesar Maia, ed. *Sobre crítica e críticos: ensaios escolhidos sobre literatura e crítica literária, com algumas das notas de um diário de crítica* (Recife: CEPE Editora, 2012).

wrote in the closing remarks of *In the Hospital of Words*, "It is probably unnecessary to reveal the model that inspired many of the analyses and allusions presented in the previous pages. However, to remove all doubt, I write here, although with gulps, his name: Álvaro Lins… he is the presumptuous and paranoid protagonist of the most ridiculous spectacle in our intellectual history."[284] In the midst of this heated polemic, and as a response to it, Lins publishes his *Literary Theory* (*Teoria literária*), a collection of essays about the Brazilian novel, poetry, theater, and literary criticism, with the latter including a detailed comparison of Anglo-American New Criticism with its Brazilian iteration.[285] In his first essay on the topic, entitled "The Authentic 'New Criticism' on Foreign Grounds" ("*O autêntico 'new criticism' no estrangeiro"*), Lins portrays T. S. Eliot as the paramount representative of Anglo-American New Criticism in Brazilian culture. In the current discussion, I would like to focus not on the veracity of this claim – as we've seen, Richards plays no less of a central role for the nova crítica – but to examine the reasons Lins presents to support his argument. It is my sense that the Brazilian thinker turns to Eliot since he identifies the North-American critic as a model of readerly self-integration, therefore mobilizing him as an alternative to the split and self-censoring reader Coutinho is promoting. Lins never refers to the nova crítica's imperative to subordinate one's "butterfly"-distracted impulse to the analytic mind, and it might very well be the case that he is responding to this implicit demand without ever understanding it consciously. In either case, Lins' descriptions of Eliot as an epitome of synthesis gives voice to an opposing thrust in the Brazilian conceptualization of the reader at the time.

Lins justifies his pick of Eliot – "no choice would be better suited to our purposes" – in terms of the North-American critic's mastery of "integration" (*integração*).[286] It is his claim that Eliot, as a thinker and a reader (he does not refer to him as a poet in this context), represents a unique ability to "harmonize" oppositions, i.e. to hold together (rather than split apart) qualities of the self that might appear to be contradictory.[287] "In the first place," Lins writes, Eliot acquires a privileged position among the Brazilian public "due to his special psychological and moral constitution as a man that belongs simultaneously to the two biggest peoples of the English language."[288] In a similar manner, Lins maintains, the Brazilian people are trapped within "the drama of a spirit that must revolve around two axes, one, that of Europe, with its characteristic personally traits and culture, and second, that of our proper continent, with its political and economic tendencies."[289] Lins adds that Eliot also belongs to two generations simultaneously; he is considered among the scholars of New Criticism "a patriarch critic by origin and, at the same time, an extremely modern critic."[290] Finally, Eliot is "a poet of free spirit and at the same time an academic critic of a disciplined spirit… a creative-writer and an academic-critic is a single personality."[291] In contrast with the exact reader, then, Eliot does not suppress one internalized culture for the benefit of the other, does not reject his "immature" aspects to accentuate those of experience, and is not willing to split between his "free" and "disciplined" tendencies of mind with a clear preference for the latter. In the terms of the nova crítica, The North-American thinker is both a "savage" and an "intense" thinker, all at once. Lins refers to the concept of "disintegration"

[284] Coutinho, *No Hospital*, 188.
[285] Lins, *Teoria literária*, 119-44.
[286] Ibid., 127, 138.
[287] Ibid., 128
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid., 131.
[291] Ibid., 128-30.

even more clearly in his second discussion of New Criticism.[292] There he insists that while several of Eliot's theoretical writings appear to contradict each other, his body of work is in fact free of "dissociation or rupture." Eliot is able, Lins argues, over and above occasional internal discrepancies, to form a "continuous" and "harmonious" critical oeuvre.[293] In other words, Eliot provides Lins with a readerly model, from within New Criticism itself, whose powers of critical thought arise not from self-division but from self-integration. That is to say, Lins' view takes issue with Coutinho's imperative to violently suppress to effacement all Brazilian "innate" tendencies.

In the example of Eliot as depicted by Lins, self-division ceases to be an undeniable requisite for becoming a worthy reader, even in the terms of New Criticism itself. To push it even further, via Eliot, Lins is able to question the subordination of the "savage" to analytic thought as a condition of possibility for becoming a worthy subject, specifically a Brazilian one. Indeed, though *The Location of Culture* is to be written only twenty years later, it is hard to ignore the similarity between Lins' description of Eliot as an analogue to the Brazilian critic ("a man that pertains simultaneously to two people," "a spirit that revolves around two [cultural] axes," a critic found "between the borders"), and Homi Bhabha's key figure of "the hybrid." [294] Without making any claim of influence or identity between the two diverse bodies of work, a short glance at Bhabha's understanding of the (post-)colonial "hybrid" in relation to the "process of splitting," sheds light on the possible national implications of Lins' reaction to the nova crítica. For Bhabha, as is well-known, the colonial hybrid, both subjected and potentially subversive to power, is located at the liminal space between self and Other, "on the borderlines of cultures... in-between cultures."[295] Less remembered is the fact that this state of hybridity, for him, emerges as a result of a previous colonial "process of splitting as the condition of subjection":

> The discriminatory effects of the discourse of cultural colonialism, for instance, do not simply or singly refer to a "person," or a dialectical power struggle between self and other, or to a discrimination between mother culture and alien cultures. Produced through the strategy of disavowal, the reference of discrimination is always to a process of splitting as the condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different – a mutation, a hybrid.

In light of Bhabha's views, Lins' model of the hybrid-integrating reader, can be understood as a nuanced answer to Coutinho's attempt to cure Brazilian readers of their "brazility." The nova crítica thinkers internalize, adopt, and continue in the colonial process of "splitting as the condition of subjection"; they then paradoxically try to free the Brazilian subject from European dependence by teaching their readers how to manage that internal split (subordinating the "savage" to analytic thought) rather than questioning the mere split to begin with. Lins' hybrid reader, as an alternative, accepts as well the existence of the (perhaps inevitable) post-colonial internal tension, but he attempts to inhabit a subject position that holds together, rather than suppresses, those incongruities

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[292] Lins' second essay is entitled "The Unimportance of New Criticism in Brazil, with its Opportunists and Careerists" (*A desimportância do new-criticism, em arrivistas e carreiristas, dentro do Brasil*) (*Teoria Literária,* 132-44).

[293] Lins discusses in this context Eliot's "The Function of Criticism" (1923) and *On Poets and Poetry* (1957) (Ibid., 137).

[294] Ibid., 130; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[295] David Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha* (London: Routledge, 2005), 7.

while engaging with the literary text. That the discussion of the nova crítica and its methods is, for Lins, an urgent national one, is made evident at the final pages of his text, where he writes,

> Each time period, or each generation, has its "ways" of criticism, like it has its "ways" of theater or plastic arts… these changes are not arbitrary or providential; they are the consequence of a historical determinism that produces and explains the existence of cultural communities… these ["ways"] are configured under the impact and development of social-economic factors, which are… nationalized in their local and particular realization… yes, it's true, the problem of New Criticism, for us as well, should be more than anything a problem of the characterization of the individual and the nationalization of the collective… the problem, for each of us, is how to be a Brazilian critic.[296]

The modernist of *The Waste Land*, then, though biographically as distant as one can be from South-American culture, is marshaled by Lins as a model for a different Brazilian readerly identity. He functions in this context as an example for an alternative and contemporary "'way' of criticism." Via this discussion, the conviction underlying the heated debate around the nova crítica emerges with great clarity: the manner in which one engages with the literary is deeply dependent on "social and economic factor[s]" and works to constructs no less than "the characterization of the individual and the nationalization of the collective." The contours of the Brazilian reader, then, serve as a mold in which the very body and mind of the national subject are imagined.

Four decades following Lins' analysis of "'New Criticism' on Foreign Grounds," the acclaimed Brazilian scholar João Cezar de Castro Rocha revisits, as mentioned before, the *catédra-rodapé* polemics in order to "reevaluate the history of literary criticism in the [Brazilian] academy."[297] In the epilogue of his comprehensive study (*Literary Criticism: In Search of Lost Time?*), Castro Rocha turns to imagine a Brazilian model of literary interpretation that bypasses, he claims, the binary of "synchrony versus diachrony; text versus context": "we can now, with more autonomy than two or three decades ago, effectively read books as if their authors did not pertain to any specific school, and above all, as if we were not obliged to affiliate ourselves with this tendency or the other."[298] What is of interest to me in Castro Rocha's discussion of how to "effectively read books" in Brazil today is not so much the terms of literary interpretation involved in this process (synchronic versus diachronic; text versus context), but the mental state which he associates with this alternative model. It is Castro Rocha's claim that the reception of New Criticism in Brazil brought above a rift in Brazilian culture between the common-reader and the literary-critic, two positions the *rodapé* critic used to once embody simultaneously. To overcome this split, he suggests, the Brazilian critic-as-reader today must attempt to engage with texts of literature from a position of what he terms a "productive schizophrenia": "I have in mind a literary and cultural critic… which valorizes analyses that are bilingual in their own language."[299] By "bilingual," Castro Rocha means a subject that speaks both the language of the common-reader and that of the university professor. Yet, significantly, he does not have in mind a reader that blends these languages so utterly as to erase their differences. Like Lins, Castro Rocha gestures towards the figure of the "hybrid" to explicate the specific kind of integration he is looking for, relying on Nelson de Oliveira's fecund term of the "hybrid conciliator" (*híbrido conciliador*). For Castro

[296] Lins, *Teoria literária*, 133.
[297] Rocha, *Crítica literária,* 245.
[298] Ibid., 359.
[299] Ibid., 380.

Rocha, the imagined "schizophrenic" reader "will preserve the difference between the abovementioned discourses and thus produce a permanent state of tension rather than one of comfortable reconciliation. It is not, therefore, a question of confounding journalistic and academic genres, but of finding productive forms of coexistence between the two."[300]

Both Lins and Castro Rocha, then, implicitly identify a state of rupture in the Brazilian reader brought about by colonialism and then propagated further by the nova crítica (schizophrenia, after all, literally means "a splitting of the mind"). They also similarly revert to pathological vocabulary in their examination of the Brazilian literary discourse, perhaps thus echoing and reacting to Coutinho vocabulary of readerly "degeneracy." However, while for Lins "dissociation" is the problem that Eliot is able to overcome, Castro Rocha presents "schizophrenia" as the solution. That is, he employs the psychiatric term not as a diagnostic one, but as a descriptive category, referring to the linguistic capabilities ("bilingualism") that are associated with the subject position of the schizophrenic. Though Castro Rocha never mentions Lacan, the French psychoanalyst emerges in-between the lines here, since it is he who added the facet of language to Freud's understanding of psychosis: "For psychosis to be triggered, the Name-of-the-Father… must be summoned to that place in symbolic opposition to the subject. It is the lack of the Name-of-the-Father in that place which, by the whole that it opens up in the signified, sets off a cascade of reworking in the signifier;"[301] as paraphrased by Jacques-Alain Miller, "The schizophrenic does not defend himself or herself from the real by language, because for him or her, the symbolic is real." This conceptualization of schizophrenia as "not being caught up in any discourse" is important in the context of Castro Rocha's analysis, since it implies that the Brazilian scholar has in mind not only a non-split "schizophrenic" reader, but also a non-attentive one. Since, according to Lacan, the schizophrenic encounters the world without the mediation of "the Name-of-the-Father" (or the symbolic), her/his engagement with it on the perceptual level is necessarily different. Fredric Jameson famously comments on this in saying:

> The schizophrenic will clearly have a far more intense experience of any given present of the world than we do, since our own present is always part of some larger set of projects which force us selectively to focus our perceptions. We do not, in other words, simply globally receive the outside world as an undifferentiated vision: we are always engaged in using it, in threading certain paths through it, in attending to this or that object or person within it.[302]

Through his latent reference to Lacan, Castro Rocha underlies the nova crítica's preoccupation with "disperse" thought. For Lacan, schizophrenic moments are accompanied by a sense of all-encompassing perception to differentiate from a focused and selective one. A readerly "productive schizophrenia," then, will imply integrating, though not confounding, the disciplined attention suggested by the nova crítica (i.e. self-vigilance and narrow focus) with the "butterfly form of thought" these thinkers associate with the Brazilian "savage" and the *rodapé* critics. In other

[300] Ibid., 385.
[301] Jacques Lacan, "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis," in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 578.
[302] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: New Press, 2002), 119. For Jameson, this state of unselective attention is associated with the maladies of post-modernism, "the disappearance of a sense of history, the way in which our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present," 123.

words, Lins' "hybrid" and Castro Rocha's "productive schizophrenia" give voice to the existence of a previous nova crítica imperative to subordinate "savage" thought to the thinking mind via attention. And their ambitious attempts to counter that model attest to the importance of this discourse; after all, in deliberating "how to read a page," the very contours of Brazilian subjectivity are at stake.

SECOND PART | BRAZIL

Chapter Four

CLARICE LISPECTOR AND EXHAUSTED READING: CATCHING THE APPLE IN THE DARK

Do not read what I write as a reader would do.

–Clarice Lispector

We have to be careful when we read Clarice Lispector.

–Hélène Cixous

When Otávio thinks back to the moment he first met his wife, Joana – the protagonist of Clarice Lispector's 1944 debut novel, *Near to the Wild Heart* [*Perto do coração selvagem*] – he relates an encounter quite at odds with the traditional romantic type-scene. Both are at a bookstore, unfamiliar with each other, when an old man comes through the door, "his fat body shaking, his skull weepy."[303] His gestures are all geared towards soliciting Joana's sympathy: "I got a boo-boo… It hurts… I took my medicine like a good boy, it's a little better… aren't you going to say you feel sorry for me?… aren't you even going to say 'poor little thing'?" Joana seems to succumb and utters "poor thing," which leads the old man to consider "the game over" and turn laughing to the door. But the game is not over. As soon as he moves away from the table, Joana picks up "a thick little book" and throws it "with all her strength" at the back of his head. Shocked, the man turns around in "vague terror" only to hear Joana's biting response: "Forgive me. A little lizard there, above the door… I missed."[304] Yes, Lispector's novels are designed to hit you over the head – to violently jolt your mind – precisely at the moment when they've gained your trust. And in spite of this violence (or perhaps as a result of it), Lispector's reader, just like Otávio, often finds herself falling in love.

This chapter sets out to demonstrate that Lispector's programmed "concussion" is pedagogical. More specifically, it is aimed at forcing the reader to abandon her earlier reading habits and enter into a new and unfamiliar "reading pact" with the text.[305] This argument takes its cue from Emília Amaral, Benedito Nunes, and Ângela Fronchowiak, who astutely identify Lispector's investment in molding her own "ideal reader" in her 1964 novel *The Passion According to G.H.* [*A paixão segundo G.H.*]. However, these critics do not reflect on the pedagogical thrust in Lispector's other works, and leave undiscussed the cultural context in which this political poetic move is conducted. [306] Elaborating on their claim, I suggest that Lispector's intervention in her readers' mode of interaction with the text is a response to the very specific

[303] Clarice Lispector, *Near to the Wild Heart*, trans. Alison Entrekin (New York: New Directions, 2012), 83.
[304] Ibid, 84.
[305] Emília Amaral, "O pacto com o leitor e o misticismo da escrita em *A Paixão Segunado G.H.*, de Clarice Lispector," in *Leitores e leituras de Clarice Lispector*, ed. Regina Pontieri (São Paulo: Hedra, 2004), 13-6.
[306] Emília Amaral, "O pacto com o leitor e o misticismo da escrita em *A Paixão Segunado G.H.*, de Clarice Lispector," in *Leitores e leituras de Clarice Lispector*, ed. Regina Pontieri (São Paulo: Hedra, 2004), 11-20; Benedito Nunes, "Os destroços da intersecção," in *Clarice Lispector: A Narração do Indizível*, ed. Regina Zilberman, (Porto Alegre, Artes e Ofícios, EDIPUC/Instituto Cultural Judaico Marc Chagall, 1998), 35-48; Ângela Fronchowiak, "A ato de narrar em A paixão segundo G.H.," in *Clarice Lispector: A Narração do Indizível*, ed. Regina Zilberman, (Porto Alegre, Artes e Ofícios, EDIPUC/Instituto Cultural Judaico Marc Chagall, 1998), 65-74.

readerly model that was circulating in Brazilian culture throughout her literary career, namely, the model of the exact reader. It is my sense that Lispector does not simply resist the general "discourse of precipitated deciphering… a protocol of reading, used as early as Antiquity," in Amaral's terms. Instead, she is reacting to her immediate cultural surroundings that were saturated at the time with the nova crítica's readerly imperative to *exact* the savage from within. Moreover, I propose that Lispector views the praxis of reading as capable of modifying one's self-identity (gendered, national, racial), and as a consequence grapples from early on in her oeuvre with the question of reading practices. This preoccupation is indeed quite palpable in *The Passion* following Lispector's opening note to the reader (which I discuss below), but it is also present in the abovementioned *Wild Heart*, written just after Coutinho's first publications on the principles of the nova crítica; it in fact reaches its peak in the novel Lispector produces in between these two: her longest novel – Joana's "thick little book" – *The Apple in the Dark* (*A maçã no escuro*; 1961).[307] In my mind, this work throws into relief Lispector's strategy of questioning the privileged status of exact reading within the Brazilian culture of her time. In *The Apple*, Lispector taps into and exaggerates her reader's habits of engagement with the text, only to then forcefully frustrate these habits. This process of unceasing impediment works to fatigue the reader and to set the stage for Lispector's radical alternative to exact reading that I term *exhausted reading*.[308] This is a mode of engagement with the work that hinges on the reader *exhausting*, i.e. completely using up her mental resources oriented at putting together the jigsaw puzzle of the text as the nova crítica demands, a process that leaves her *exhausted* to such an extent that she is forced to let go of the self-discipline required for exact reading. The resulting state of mental lassitude echoes Alencar's reader on the hammock (discussed in the previous chapter), and gestures towards a reading in a dream-like state; a reading that at least partially abandons the attempt to neatly place the various pieces of the text into a completed puzzle, an imagined whole, a totality. Thus Lispector does not simply do away with exact reading in her work. On the contrary, she dialectically depends on this practice's hyperbolic form in order to develop from within it a new mode of interaction between reader and text.

The nova crítica's exact reader, we will recall, is expected to perform two simultaneous mental tasks when engaging with the literary text. First, she is required to engage in self-surveillance. That is, the reader is instructed to mentally watch herself reading and be constantly on guard against her internal "racial" tendencies towards dispersive ("butterfly-like") thought, irrationality, laziness, and sentimentality. This mission is linked for the Brazilian New Critics with the states of "alertness" and "carefulness"; as Afrânio Coutinho warns, even if it seems that an improved and "new mentality" is at play while reading, "we must not lose heart in vigilance, for the devil has a thousand breaths."[309] Simultaneously, the exact reader must focus her mental efforts on the key elements of the text in order to both integrate them into a unified whole (establish "the relation between the various parts within that whole") and "penetrate" their "aesthetic essence."[310] These tasks are associated for the nova crítica with the mental states of "intense thought," "focus," "attention" and "meditation," which are considered to be analytic, objective, and thus effective.

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[307] Clarice Lispector, *The Apple in the Dark*, trans. Gregory Rabassa (London: Haus Publishing, 2009).

[308] Echoing the same terminology, Italo Moriconi convincingly demonstrates that Lispector's books to follow *The Apple in the Dark* "stage the limit, *the exhaustion* of a project of progressive radicalization of self-reflective writing" ("*The Hour of the Star* or Clarice Lispector's Trash Hour," trans. Paulo Henriques Britto, *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 4/5 [2000]: 215; emphasis mine). *The Apple*'s "exhausting" thrust, it seems, impacts not only the reader, but Lispector's body of work as well.

[309] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 18

[310] Ibid., 640.

That the thinkers of the nova crítica found *The Apple* to be in tension with these demands is evinced by their reaction to the novel. Although this work is almost unequivocally considered by critics to be Lispector's "best" and "most ambitious" novel,[311] in the nova crítica's voluminous historiography of Brazilian literature, *A literatura no Brasil* (*Literature in Brazil*), the apex of this intellectual movement's achievements, *The Apple* is accused of bringing to "maximum force" Lispector's "incapacities."[312] This chapter suggests that the thinkers of the nova crítica experience this novel as "incapable" precisely because of its dialectical nature: it first appears to lend itself perfectly to their imperative of vigilant attention, but then turns out to systematically bring this mode of reading to an abrupt halt. This rhythmic frustration, though viewed in *A Literatura* as a lack, can also be seen as a means for mobilizing the mindset associated with exact reading to produce a different reading experience.

By contrast with Lispector's reception, the aesthetics of her contemporaries, the poets of the 1945 Generation (*Geração de '45*), was very much celebrated by the Brazilian New Critics. In fact, these poets' singular style was not only publicly championed by the thinkers of the nova crítica but, as suggested by José Guilherme Merquior, functioned as the very prototype around which they developed their method of reading: "Since this generation surged more or less simultaneously with the introduction of the nova crítica into our culture, the two immediately tried to unite. The aesthetics of 45 formed a counterpart to aesthetic criticism, which then proved itself equipped to uncover the structure of the poem."[313] Indeed, the qualities the Brazilian New Critics found in these poems clearly correspond to the mental state they hoped to cultivate in their reader. In *A Literatura*, the poems of *Geração de '45* are praised for being "disciplined," "balanced," "well governed," "universal" rather than "local," "formally rigorous," and "intellectual."[314] The Brazilian critics, it seems, believed that the formal discipline of these poems would enhance the kind of self-discipline – the suppression of any "butterfly-like" or distracted thought patterns – they were expecting their exact readers to perform. This is further supported by Coutinho's

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[311] To mention a few examples among many, Bella Jozef writes in 1972, "*A maçã no escuro* [The Apple in the Dark] (1961) marks a new phase in Clarice Lispector's fiction. This allegory of the human condition is perhaps the most ambitious of her books" (*O espaço reconquistado: Linguagem e criação no romance hispano-americano contemporâneo* [Petrópolis: Vozes, 1974], 243), and Elizabeth Ordóñes adds in 1976, "*A maçã no escuro* [The Apple in the Dark], published in 1961, is considered Clarice Lispector's best work so far" ("Symbolic Vision in Clarice Lispector's *The Apple in the Dark*," *Letras Femeninas* 2, no. 1 [1976]: 44). Thirty years later, Cláudia Nina remarks that "*The Apple in the Dark* is one of the most fascinating and complex among Clarice Lispector's works" (*A palavra usurpada: Exílio e nomadismo na obra de Clarice Lispector* [Porto Alegre: Edipucrs, 2003], 96); Benjamin Moser asserts that *The Apple in the Dark* is Lispector's "longest, most complexly allegorical novel" (*Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], 219) and that with it Lispector "earned a position in Brazilian culture unmatched by any other twentieth-century Brazilian writer" ("A Brazilian Golem," Introduction to *The Apple in the Dark*, trans. Gregory Rabassa [London: Haus Publishing Ltd., 2009], vii); and Earl E. Fitz contends that "*The Apple in the Dark* is her [Lispector's] most protracted example of the destabilizing process of signification" (*Sexuality and Being in the Poststructuralist Universe of Clarice Lispector*: *The Différance of Desire* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001], 45).

[312] Luís Costa Lima, "Clarice Lispector," in *A literatura no Brasil*, ed. Afrânio Coutinho, vol. 5 (Rio de Janeiro: Sul Americana, 1968), 647.

[313] Merquior presents this bilateral dialogue between criticism and poetry in order to refute it, but makes evident the centrality of this claim, in *Razão do Poema: Ensaios de Crítica e de Estética* (Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks, 1996), 51. Already in 1948, Sergio Buarque de Holanda writes in his review of the *geração de 45* that "The opinion according to which a word is only an aesthetically significant element, a colorless and neutral thing, is making its way amongst us and leaves its devastating marks on our literary criticism and, above all, on our poetry" (Holanda, *O espírito*, 576).

[314] Coutinho, *A Literatura*, 197-8.

vocabulary of praise for the poets of '45. In his view, their texts demonstrate an admirable "preoccupation with language, with the careful search for the accurate word and image."[315] In choosing his terms, Coutinho implies that there exists an "accurate word and image" that fits perfectly into a specific poem, evoking once again the idea of the literary text as an integrated whole or a jigsaw puzzle, this time from the perspective of the writer. And, as we've seen in the previous chapter, he employs similar adjectives to describe his ideal reader as well as who is expected to conduct an "exact and accurate analysis of literature (close reading)," a "careful and objective observation of facts."[316] The form of these poems, then, is understood to encourage the reader to similarly engage with language in a "disciplined" and "well governed" form, "accurate[ly]" organizing the words on the page into a stable whole, and "careful[ly]" suppressing any possible (and perilous) "savage" interferences from within. In articulating his critique ("the careful search for the accurate word and image"), Coutinho is in fact paraphrasing one of the well-known poems of the *Geração de 45*, "The Unrevealed Rose" (*A rosa irrevelada*, 1949). In this poem, Domingos Carvalho da Silva (himself involved in compiling *A Literatura*) depicts the creative process in terms that bluntly critique romanticism, and fit perfectly with Coutinho's view of effective readerly labor: "Run about the world and seek new words for a poem/… Do not look for longings and tenderness/ or for a singing bird in a cage./ …Bring back from the night words for a poem./ The unrevealed death for a poem."[317] For Coutinho, both reader and writer must ignore "longing and tenderness… a singing bird in a cage" for the sake of searching for the accurate "words for," or of, "the poem." What is overlooked by Coutinho, though, is the possible "death for a poem" that Silva warns might occur in this process.

Ironically, Lispector's *The Apple* is all about the "search for the accurate word"; in fact, with slight changes, Silva's poem and Coutinho's description of the aesthetics of '45 can function as a synopsis of the novel's plot. The readers meet the protagonist, Martin, when he becomes a fugitive from the law after attempting to kill his wife. He tells himself that he has committed this crime to avenge his partner's adulterous affair, but later on in the plot he comes to the realization that his reason was in fact much more abstract and existential; the murder was his way of forcing himself out of normative society, the world of "dead language" and "the speech of others." Martin flees the big city to hide from the police and finds himself aimlessly wandering the backlands of north-eastern Brazil. During these days of rumination, he makes up his mind to embark on an attempt to abandon his language, along with his very humanity, for the sake of inventing a "speech of his own" ("his reconstruction had to begin with his own words"). Shortly thereafter, Martin reaches a farm called *Vila Baixa*, owned and sternly administered by a woman, Vitória, who lives with her cousin, Ermelinda. Without disclosing the reason for his presence on the property, Martin requests and is given a job as a farm worker, although he is an accomplished engineer. On the farm, Martin develops a sexual relationship with both Ermelinda and the "*mulatto*" woman who works there, and becomes the object of Vitória's sexual fantasies. This does not prevent him from carrying out his plan of self-dehumanization, and he shifts from identifying with rocks to becoming-cow in a Deleuzian sense. Vitória is, from the outset, suspicious of the fact that an engineer from the city had decided to take a job on the farm. One day, a regular guest at the house, a character referred to as "the professor" confronts Martin with these suspicions and, with Vitória's support, informs the police of the fugitive's whereabouts. Martin is arrested and learns that his

[315] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 184.
[316] Ibid., 206.
[317] Domingos Caravalho da Silva, "The Unrevealed Rose," in *Modern Brazilian Poetry: An Anthology*, trans. John Nist (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 139.

wife, whom he thought he had killed, has survived his murder attempt. The novel ends with the protagonist's decision to continue his journey of self-recreation in jail and to write there "a book of words" where he will have "the courage to leave unexplained what cannot be explained."[318] Martin, then, like the speaker in Silva's poem, "run[s] about the world and seek new words for a poem," or a "book of words" in this case. And to quote Coutinho's depiction of the Generation '45, Martin too is "preoccup[ied] with language, with the careful search for the accurate word and image." However, his quest is not "objective" but explicitly subjective: the protagonist is striving to find what he would experience as an "accurate word," a language unfeigned or artificial, a "speech of his own." In the poignant words of Hélène Cixous, "[Martin] had to accomplish a break in order to escape the ready-made, the world of likeness, that is to say, of death in life."[319]

And indeed, *A Literatura* accuses Lispector's characterology of being overly subjective, just like her protagonist's language. It states: "Lispector's characters… cannot go beyond themselves, which results in the author's reduction of reality into mere subjectivity," and elsewhere, "the existential jargon serves here again to hide the vacuity of reflection, since being objective seems to mean for Martin (as well as for the novelist) only the containment of the world within the self."[320] More generally, nova crítica historiography portrays Lispector's work in terms diametrically opposed to the poetry of '45. She is accused of being too romantic and sentimental ("The author fails due to a lack of [the characters'] intense and concrete interaction with the world. Instead, the text is formed on romantic grounds, disguised by an existentialist jargon… romantic sentimentality grows wild [literally, set loose]."); and of being too doubtful of individual agency ("This leads not only to her limited universe, to the subjectivation of reality, but also to outrageous interferences in the autonomy of the characters).[321] These attributes link back in almost every respect to the "savage" tendencies of the Brazilian reader that the nova crítica is trying to restrict through exact reading. For these thinkers, the Brazilian subject engaging with texts is prone to abstractness ("our tendency towards… generalizations"), to subjectivity ("our idealization of the personal," or "*subjetivismo*"[322]), and to romantic sentimentality ("our romantic tendency towards excessive liberty" and "emotional response"[323]). In order to deem these inclinations "curable," as the Brazilian New Critics do, one must assume complete agency on the part of the subject (the individual's ability to deliberately suppress one's internal alterity). This explains why the New Critics consider a fault that Lispector interferes "in the autonomy of the characters," that is, in their capacity to choose and neatly navigate their own fate. No wonder, then, that Lispector's text is depicted in terms such as "going wild" or "set loose" (*tem vez livre*). Her novel is understood by the authors of *A Literatura* to exacerbate the Brazilian "bestial" temperament and consequently to work against the pedagogical role of exact reading. But the dynamic between *The Apple* and exact reading is far more complex than a categorical refusal. This is aptly noted by the Brazilian New Critics themselves. Luís Costa Lima – the nova crítica thinker in charge of the Lispector entry in *A Literatura* – sharply identifies through his vocabulary (whether consciously or not) the specific interplay Lispector establishes in *The Apple* between inviting and rejecting the Brazilian New Critical method.

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[318] Lispector, *The Apple*, 32, 33, 44, 166, 423.
[319] Hélène Cixous, *Reading with Clarice Lispector*, trans. Verena Andermatt Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 61.
[320] Lima, *A literatura,* 529, 533.
[321] Ibid., 547.
[322] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 75, XI.
[323] Ibid., 121; Lima, *A literatura*, 641.

The terms at the center of Costa Lima's criticism of Lispector are "deceit" and "totality." These correspond to the two major problems he identifies in her work: its un-totalizing form, which inhabits the reader's ability to put together the jigsaw puzzle of the text, and its deceptive qualities, which give the reader the false sense that such a solution is attainable, and in this way encourages her to continue that pursuit via exact reading. These defects, Costa Lima believes, come most clearly to the fore in *The Apple*, from Lispector's works published to that point, since it is "the most characteristic of her novels." Under the telling title, "The Deceit of Language" (*O engano da linguagem*), Costa Lima claims that Lispector's writing style operates like a "trap" (*armadilha*): "Its simplicity is deceptive, giving the reader the impression of an endless plateau, of a horizontal surface… [her language] seemingly succeeds in stifling the dangerous forces of life" when, in fact, "this clarity hides its very reversal so that even within the most common of objects undesired questions could be concealed."[324] It is not the presence of "undesired questions" or "dangerous forces" within the text that the Brazilian New Critic finds flawed, but the novel's fundamental "falsity." The misleading simplicity of Lispector's language is exemplary, in his mind, of an overall discord in her novel between what he calls "form" and "style." While the writer's "sharp perception of details" and her "construction of a poetic prose," i.e. "form", position her "among our very best writers," Lispector's "style," by which he means the integrality of her texts, is lacking:[325]

> The single occurrence does not articulate into a totality. This flaw is important not only for understanding the tone of the work, but for understanding the very source of its weakness… as the characters grow, they tend to intellectualize and thus turn false since they are incapable of showing more than thoughts, reflections and small cruelties."[326]

According to Costa Lima, Lispector's characters are sealed within their minds without the agency required to break through and engage with the concrete world. This is why he blames the novel for "generalization" and abstraction, as mentioned above: the readers, who are affixed to the characters' point of view, hardly get information about the reality surrounding the characters since the latter seem to be simply uninterested in the details of the everyday world. This tendency makes Lispector's characters unreliable ("false"), in the eyes of Costa Lima, and prevents the novel from "going beyond the singular" to represent a world in its totality, a falseness that, he claims, is then duplicated on the level of language.[327] It is this lack of totality, which prevents the reader from arranging the pieces of the text into a stable whole, that brings into play mysterious "dangerous forces." These are precisely the "savage" tendencies and distracted "butterfly thought" that the nova crítica was ardent about excluding from the reading process, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. In that sense, Costa Lima is right on the mark.

That is, though Costa Lima mobilizes his terms to accentuate the "incapacities" of *The Apple*, he discerns what I believe are in fact prominent qualities of the text. Examining them with spectacles other than those of the nova crítica unexpectedly leads the way to the novel's own strategy of readerly exhaustion. In *The Apple*, Lispector indeed sets a "trap" and establishes the semblance of a "totality" in order to motivate her reader to employ exact reading to its maximum degree. She does so only to then expose the limitations of this method and direct that reader at an

[324] Lima, *A Literatura*, 530.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Ibid., 526.
[327] Ibid., 536.

alternative pattern of engagement with her novel. Put differently, Lispector exhausts her reader's efforts of attention so that the forbidden "savage"-like "butterfly thought" would resurface and intervene in the reading process.

- **A GENRE IN THE DARK**

It is not only Costa Lima who shrewdly identifies *The Apple* as concealing a "trap" at its heart. Hélène Cixous, one of Lispector's most passionate and persistent readers, insists that "*The Apple in the Dark* is a most deceptive book. It is represented like a novel, but it is the opposite. It is a mystical path of such density that is becomes perhaps even more unreadable than *The Passion*. The book is double".[328] Cixous' analysis focuses on the novel's network of libidinal economies (which I engage below), but the question of genre leaps out of her quote as well; *The Apple* presents itself as "a novel" when it is in fact a "mystical path." In a similar vein, Vilma Arêas and Berta Waldman argue in their thoughtful article on the novel that "one can quite easily identify in the text elements of the epic mixed with those of the farce, the western, the mystery movie or book, with those of the *folhetim* novel and the romance novel – a variance established within what seem to be the contours of a crime fiction, an expectation that ends up being thwarted."[329] This genre confusion is also identified by Benjamin Moser, who observes in his Introduction to *The Apple* that "the detective-story setup is a flimsy pretext for the real drama, which is linguistic and mystical."[330] And yet, the role of genre-instability in this well-crafted (and eleven-times-drafted) novel – the effects it elicits from the readers and the possible meaning it carries – have not been so far discussed. It is my sense that *The Apple* aims to masquerade itself, especially through its first chapter, as a distinct combination between the crime novel (presenting a mystery to be solved) and an allegory (displaying elements whose meaning must be supplemented from the outside), while in effect, as Cixous points out, *The Apple*'s lion's share is a "mystical path," that is, a text of philosophical qualities, which mainly preoccupies itself with the relationship between language and subjectivity. It remains to be asked, then, what motivated Lispector to open a 400-page long existential treatise with the semblance of an allegorical crime novel. Why mislead the reader in such a way? What could possibly be gained by such a manipulation of readerly genre expectations?

Lispector's deception begins as early as the novel's mysterious title, *The Apple in the Dark*, which intimates a story of great passion and a lurking danger. It then continues uninterrupted in the novel's first line, which similarly promises a deliciously captivating narrative: "This tale begins in March on a night as dark as a night can get when a person is asleep."[331] A moment later, Martin is depicted standing on the porch, looking anxiously outside so as "to not miss anything that was going on."[332] His alert gaze focuses specifically on a Ford parked at the driveway of a the deserted "put up for sale" hotel to which he arrived, the readers are told, "two weeks before."[333] The Ford, they learn, belongs to "a German" who, along with "a servant" ("if he *was* a servant"), is the only

[328] Cixous, *Reading with Clarice Lispector*, 66.
[329] Vilma Arêas and Berta Waldman write: "Será facil percebemos, quando a este último nível, a exsistencia, no texto, de ingredients da épica misturando à farsa, ao western, ao filme ou literature de mistério, ao folhetim e à tradição da novelística amorosa – divergências establizados pelo traco abrangente da narrativa policial, que ao final do romance acaba por se frustrar" ("Eppur, se muove," *Remate de males* 9 [1989]: 162).
[330] Moser, Introduction to *The Apple in the Dark*, vii.
[331] Lispector, *The Apple in the Dark*, 3.
[332] Ibid., 4.
[333] Ibid.

other guest in the building.[334] Though Martin reminds himself that he is ready to set off on a "new flight" if the "two men should seem too curious about the identity of the guest," he falls asleep.[335] Then, suddenly – the air "in suspension" – he realizes that he had just heard the roar of the engine, "the car had disappeared."[336] The startled protagonist quickly calculates that "it would take some time for [the German] to get there and return with the police," and fearing that "the servant… would at this very moment be outside the door of that very room with his ear alert to the slightest movement," he decides to "slip away"[337]:

> Without looking back, guided by a slippery adroitness of movement, he began to climb down the balcony by placing his unexpectedly flexible feet on the outcroppings of the bricks… Now only his spirit was alert… with a soft jump that made the garden gasp as it held its breath, he found himself in the middle of a flower bed, which ruffled up and then dosed up. With his body alert the man waited for the message of his jump to be transmitted from secret echo to secret echo, until it would be transformed into distant silence… The night was delicately vast and dark.[338]

With this suggestive final sentence, *The Apple*'s first chapter ends. It animates a diegetic world of "alert" ears, spirits and bodies, "secret echoes," mysterious villains, a man on the run, and a plausible police chase. It is a world that solicits tension and suspense ("the garden gasp as it held its breath") not only in its characters but also, I contend, in its Brazilian exact-readers, heightening the intense attention they are directed to apply from the outset. Later on, these readers will learn that the apparent mystery presented to them in the first chapter evaporates without a trace in the course of the novel, rendering their effort of attention ostensibly futile.

Another fragrance of mystery is added to *The Apple*'s fictional world via the indefinite quality of its constitutive elements, what Costa Lima calls the "generality" of the novel. The characters, objects, and geographical places that populate the novel – "the German," "the Ford," "the heart of Brazil," "the professor," "the farm" – are for the most part unspecified enough to imply that they stand for something bigger than themselves. And indeed, as evidenced by the scholarship on this work, this poetic principle triggers a critical tendency to view *The Apple* as an allegory and to fill in its gaps, to complete it as a puzzle of a different sort. However, Lispector's diegetic world is built in such a way that each element hints towards at least two contradictory meanings, making it impossible to fully decipher her allegorical riddle. As in the case of Lispector's purported crime mystery, her semblance of allegorical totality turns out to be a "deceit." For example, Martin is given no last name throughout the novel, and the readers know almost nothing about his appearance, age, or his former life apart from the fact that he used to be a statistician and had a son from the wife he tried to murder. As a consequence, Kristin Pitt suggests that Lispector's Martin is an iteration of José de Alencar's protagonist in his Brazilian national allegory *Iracema*, mentioned in the previous chapter.[339] Since the former Martin represents the Portuguese colonialist, Pitt reads Lispector's text as an allegorical rewriting of hegemonic

[334] Ibid., 6.
[335] Ibid.
[336] Ibid., 8.
[337] Ibid., 9.
[338] Ibid., 9-10.
[339] Kristin E. Pitt, "Discovery and Conquest through a Poststructural and Postcolonial Lens: Clarice Lispector's *A maçã no escuro*," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 50, no. 1 (2013): 184-200.

"narratives of conquest and discovery."[340] From a different point of view, critics such as Beatriz de Castro Amorim and Mara Negrón-Marrero, view Martin as standing for the biblical Adam, and Lispector's novel, on the whole, as a subversive retelling of the Garden of Eden narrative.[341] By contrast, Maria José Somerlate Barbosa claims that Martin is only a parody of the biblical Adam, and that he in fact represents aggressive modern patriarchy.[342] In accordance with gender norms, Martin, Rebecca E. Biron argues, represents the specifically Brazilian social patriarchal violence.[343] Hélène Cixous, however, takes Martin's crime to represent the exact opposite. For her, the protagonist's attempted murder stands for the cables and ropes that one has to aggressively cut in order to break loose of the hegemonic order: "Given the nature of his crime, one could think that Martin is a real man. In fact, everything is reversed. A close reading shows that he is the most feminine of all characters."[344] Similar allegorical readings have been offered for Lispector's figure of the "The German." The alleged villain in *The Apple*, about whom we hear almost nothing throughout the rest of the novel, has only his national title attached to him, which leads Benjamin Moser to suggest the book be regarded as "a Jewish creation allegory":

> The word "German" in a work by a Jewish writer of the 1950s, was not a neutral description, especially when applied to a figure of harassment and oppression. And "Ford," the only brand named in the book, suggests Henry Ford, the notorious anti-Semite whose racist writings were widely distributed in Brazil. Both names suggest that the German's victim must be Jewish.[345]

This small sample testifies to the novel's internal mechanism of soliciting puzzle-solving.[346] Yet, the contradictory nature of these various "solutions" (Martin is both man and woman, oppressor and oppressed, Adam and anti-Adam) speak to the unsolvability of this riddle. This is not to say that these readings are in any sense *wrong*, but to suggest that the carnivalesque dance that appears when these different readings are put together acts out a tension inherent to the novel: *The Apple* at once encourages and frustrates its allegorical reading. This might explain why the criticism around *The Apple* is replete with its depiction as "difficult" to read. Júlio César Vieira and Osmar Oliva, for example, open their article on the novel with a description of its reader:

> Reading *The Apple in the Dark*… is experienced first and foremost as a challenge. The uninformed reader, accustomed to the plot linearity of the traditional narrative, tends to find it difficult to follow the progress of this book, which the author claims to be her most structured… The model-reader of this novel, to use Umberto Eco's term (2004), must be

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[340] Ibid., 198.
[341] Beatriz de Castro Amorim, "Between Heaven and Hell: A (Re)evaluation of Genderic Problems in Lispector's *A maçã no escuro* and 'Perdoando Deus,'" *Brasil/Brazil* 5, no. 8 (1992): 29-51; Mara Negrón-Marrero, *Une genése au 'féminin': Étude de* La pomme dans le noir *de Clarice Lispector* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997).
[342] Maria José Somerlate, *Clarice Lispector: Des/fiando as teias da paixão* (Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS, 2001).
[343] Rebecca E. Biron, "Crime and Punishment Reconsidered: Lispector's *A maçã no escuro,*" *Murder and Masculinity: Violent Fictions of Twentieth-Century Latin America* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), 67-89.
[344] Antonio Ladeira, for his part, agrees with Cixous that Martin is a feminized man but also believes that the novel retells the story of patriarchal masculinity in Brazil ("Patriarchal Violence and Brazilian Masculinities in Clarice Lispector's *A maçã no escuro*," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 86, no. 5 (2009): 690-705).
[345] Moser, Introduction to *The Apple in the Dark*, viii.
[346] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 216.

> prepared to accompany a slow movement, rife with reflection, to which the reader must be attentive if s/he is to perceive the richness of the text in question.[347]

The thinkers of the nova crítica have been right, then. Lispector sets a trap for her readings through a "deceit of language." *The Apple* is structured thus that it keeps its readers "uninformed" – or, more accurately, misinformed – which causes them "to find it difficult" to follow the plot. To adjust, Vieira and Oliva suggest, these readers "must be attentive"; but it is a unique kind of attention that this novel invites.

- **A CATCH**

The exact reader, the nova crítica stipulates, should engage in both "puzzle-solving" and "vigilance" during the reading process, and what can better promote this readerly state of mind than the genres of allegory and crime fiction, respectively? While the first is literally structured as a riddle, or as a "mosaic" in Walter Benjamin's terms, the latter, with its intense effect of suspense, encourages the reader to be constantly on the lookout for either the criminal or the police.[348] Lispector's trap is thus cunningly set in place; the first chapter of her novel not only directly encourages exact reading, but categorically demands its application by presenting the reader with a literary form that pushes the mental states this method requires to their maximum degree. By the end of the first chapter, the text had stimulated the Brazilian exact reader's attention and vigilance: it encouraged her to be on guard for Martin's adversary, to catch the hints about Martin's murder, to identify the cues as to the allegorical meaning of the novel's essential features, and to seize the internal "savage" before it rears its ugly head. In other words, it prompted its reader to constantly be involved in the act of "catching."

And, indeed, "catching" is the activity at the core of exact reading. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the thinkers of the nova crítica understand what they consider to be the most efficient readerly mental state in terms of intense light. In contrast with the "dispersed" and "scattered" form of thought they identify as characteristic of Brazilian "nature," these critics aim to create "a critical consciousness for Brazilian literature" that "restricts" its "vision" while reading. That is to say, for these thinkers, the mental process of selection is valued over that of inclusion. The reader is expected to focus her mental "vision" on the principal elements of the text rather than wander off from one to the other indiscriminately. This preference might seem at odds with the nova crítica's insistence on the "totality" or "wholeness" of the literary work, terms that suggest incorporation rather than exclusion. But, as Eduardo Portella sharply notes in *A Literatura*'s entry on the nova crítica: "To this criticism I call *totalizing*, since it is interested in understanding the literary work in its totality. A criticism informed by a totalizing and hierarchical

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[347] Júlio César Vieira and Osmar Oliva, "Crime e libertação - um estudo de *A maçã no escuro* de Clarice Lispector," *Revista de Letras* 51, no. 2 (2011): 171. In a similar manner, Sônia Maria Machado writes that "The work of Clarice Lispector is considered difficult to understand by a great many readers: 'I don't see where she's going,' 'what she wants to say'… if learning means being able to linger in between the right and wrong, then learning means confronting the challenge of reading *The Apple in the Dark* ("Uma Tentativa de Entender *A maçã no escuro*," *Travessia* 3 [1981]: 20).

[348] For Walter Benjamin, the force of allegory – and specifically that of the seventeenth century *trauershpiel* – is embedded in its being a "failed" riddle, one whose fragments never come together neatly, just as the mosaic achieves its beauty precisely be exposing the imperfect integration of its parts: "the value of fragments to thought is all the greater the less direct their relationship to the underlying idea, and the brilliance of representation depends as much on this value as the brilliance of the mosaic does on the quality of the glass paste" (*The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne [London: Verso, 2009], 29).

view of the literary fact [emphasis in original]."[349] The exact reader's "totalizing" gaze is also necessarily a "hierarchical" one. In order to form a whole out of a literary work, the reader must rank its elements by importance. She must identify and "catch" those that function as the main building blocks so that she may later construct a totality from them.

The temporality of exact reading is thus inherently bifurcated. The reader must be both in the present, catching the most important details from the material in view, and in the future, constantly trying to imagine how these various elements would fit into a future formation of the text as an integral whole. Put differently, exact reading involves a constant anticipation of and preoccupation with things to come. And, in accordance with this dual temporal process, *The Apple* seems to facilitate the reader in "catching" its critical parts. In fact, "facilitate" might be an understatement; the text singles out its crucial moments with intense rhetorical power.

Following the escape from his forlorn hotel, Martin finds himself treading across the "heart of Brazil," a desert-like landscape that, though never located geographically, brings to mind the Brazilian north-eastern backlands, the *sertão*. This space, which in the Brazilian imaginary carries a mythic quality of being outside the reach of the law in the general sense of the word, enables Martin to plunge into an intense attempt to overcome the limits of the self: "With this enormous courage the man had finally stopped being intelligent."[350] As a consequence, the text itself teeters on the brink of intelligibility as it tries to depict through language a man wishing to abandon the symbolic altogether: "The man had rejected the speech of others and did not even have a speech of his own."[351] The narrative overflows with bizarre descriptions ("time was fortunately passing by with dogs sniffing at the street corners"), with quasi-nonsense metaphors and similes ("His muscles contracted savagely against the dirty conscience that had formed itself about the fingernail"; "like a rat whose only individuality was what he had inherited from other rats"),[352] with seeming contradictions ("as if not understanding were a kind of creation"; "the man was his own Prohibition")[353], and with amorphous statements ("he knew it was the sun that was inflating his words"; "fences enclosing fields that would not have been fields had it not been for the arbitrary fences").[354] To this list, one can add ossified clichés, repetitions, and aphorisms, which stand at the center of Arêas and Waldman's exploration of the novel, mentioned above.[355] In order to guide the reader within this confusion, the text seems to set down anchors in the form of reassuring clear-cut sentences. These usually open with an empathic marker: "suddenly," "unexpectedly," "at last," "for the first time," "That's it, yes!," "Stunning victory!," "Martin finally reached a state," "He finally confessed," to name just a few. These lexical cues, comprised of temporal expressions, exclamation points, and fact-like assertions, give the reader the impression that she had just encountered a segment of great significance within the text – a moment of revelation, dramatic change, or a resolution to a fundamental problem. It can only be expected, then, that the Brazilian exact reader would pause at these segments of the text, scrutinize them, and then flag them as conquered: they have been understood and can now be collected as a stone to be placed within a well-formed mosaic, an endeavor that sets in motion the logical and analytical faculties the nova crítica reveres.

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[349] Portella, *Tempo Brasileiro*, qtd. in *A Literatura*, 639.
[350] Lispector, *The Apple*, 31.
[351] Ibid., 32.
[352] Ibid., 50, 60.
[353] Ibid., 32, 227.
[354] Ibid., 40, 46.
[355] Arêas and Weldman, "Eppur," 164-67.

Unfortunately, these cues quite quickly and very consistently turn out to lead nowhere. *The Apple* retreats from its promise of certainty and nullifies its previous self-assured statements in a variety of crafted ways. The promises, for example, that "it was a silence as if something were going to happen beyond a man's perception" leads to a "few trees were swaying, and the bugs had already disappeared"; and the suspenseful assertion that "for the first time since he [Martin] had started walking, he stopped," ends up with "then he started walking again."[356] A similar disappointment follows many of the characters' epiphanies, which are almost always camouflaged by the omniscient narrator in an intentionally ambiguous free indirect discourse. This is the case when the novel appears to finally reveal what has led the protagonist to murder his wife (not yet knowing that his attempt had failed): "Then – by means of a great leap of a crime two weeks before he had taken the risk of having no security, and he had reached a point of not understanding."[357] The fact-like tone of this phrase along with its poetically concise vocabulary ("a great leap of a crime"), gives the impression of a final resolution. Yet a page later, this assertion is invalidated when we witness Martin think, "'Crime?' No. 'The great leap?' These did not sound like his words, obscure, like the entanglement of a dream."[358] This revelation is followed by another one, brought about by Martin's confrontation with the backlands' stones, which he treats as his audience. The protagonist requests: "Try to imagine a person… who did not have the courage to reject himself. Therefore, he needed an act which would make other people reject him, and he himself would not be able to live with himself after that."[359] By this logic, Martin committed his crime in order to be expelled from the world of the known. But a moment later, the narrator of *The Apple* adds, "It is quite possible that he [Martin] had been lying to the stones."[360]

Through these repetitive false alarms, Lispector makes palpable for the readers their own cognitive process involved in exact reading, that is, their exercise of disciplined attention towards comprehension and accumulation. Yet *The Apple* also seems to raise the question about the afterlife of such "intense" attention, in nova crítica's terms; that is, what happens when such a cognitive effort is excessively prolonged? Following another false cue ("That was it – he had felt victory"), the novel reads,

> That was what it was, then. And Martin asked himself with intensity and pain, "could that be all it was?" because his truths did not seem to be able to bear attention for a long time before they became deformed… it was at the cost of a certain control, then, that Martin stuck to one truth only and with difficulty erased all others. (Without him realizing it, his reconstruction had already begun to gasp).[361]

According to *The Apple*, controlled attention involves an erasure and a sort of cognitive stiffness ("Martin *stuck* to one truth"). But this effort at accuracy eventually leads to "deformation." That is, Martin's problem of attention is temporal; his truths do not "seem to be able to bear attention for a long time." Lispector, I maintain, is interested in that liminal space of transformation from "intensity" (echoing the nova crítica) to where mental focus begins "to gasp." By promising her readers a thrilling detective novel and a decipherable allegory, she is amplifying to the maximum

[356] Lispector, *The Apple*, 20.
[357] Ibid., 31.
[358] Ibid., 32.
[359] Ibid., 37.
[360] Ibid., 40.
[361] Ibid., 165

degree of attention (both internal and external) her readers are culturally requested to pay, in order to then leverage the languor, which is "the cost of a certain control." Ingeniously, she returns to Alencar's reader who "reposes, cradled in his hammock, soft and snug" through the practice that deemed this reader a "savage that takes refuge… in the oscillation of the hammock."[362]

- **EXHAUSED READING**

The single occurrence indeed "does not articulate into a totality" in *The Apple*, as Costa Lima proclaimed. This novel is an ouroboros snake eating its own tale; a moment after establishing something solid, it undoes its very foundation, burns the bridges it builds. Lispector herself suggests a metaphor for this temporal manipulation when reverting to Martin's sense of time via another outlandish simile: "Time was fortunately passing by. So much that it was like the meal one eats in the daytime, and then goes to bed and wakes up vomiting in the middle of the night… everything going so well! … But in the middle of the night you would suddenly wake up vomiting."[363] *The Apple*'s movement forward is marked by a repeated vomiting of its own history. The novel leads the reader who attempts to collect pieces and place them in a future whole, deceived to think that "everything [is] going so well," to find time and again that all of the pieces have been demolished.

This awkward temporality is in keeping with Lispector's general doubt about the possibility of predicting any sort of future (fictional or concrete) from the past or present. Just before her death in 1977, she translated *The Bluff of the Future* (*Le Bluff du Futur*, or in Portuguese *O Blefe do Futuro*) by French economist Georges Elgozy, in which he attacks "futurology" as "the modern disease of naively assuming that the future is strictly determined by the past, when history, whether modern or ancient, in fact teaches us that it is the unexpected that always occurs."[364] *The Apple*, I believe, indeed resists "futurology." The hyperbolic state of attention it elicits and this mindset's eventual inadequacy exhaust the reader into abandoning her accumulative work towards constructing a future whole. The languished reading that follows the "intense" initial one involves the foregoing of selection. Instead of preoccupying oneself with deciding what might be central for a future potential totality, having learned that such decisions are constantly revoked within the novel, the reader is encouraged to engage with Martin's revelations without being tempted to declare them understood. This unique practice can also be thought of as an "ad-hoc" reading: an engagement with the current segment of the literary text without the intervention of any "anticipatory urge," to borrow Bruno Carvalho's term.[365]

That Lispector's advocated reading method involves depleted attention is corroborated when looking at one of her *crônicas* published only two years after *The Apple*, "The Miraculous

[362] Coutinho, *Correntes*, 145.
[363] Ibid., 47.
[364] Georges Elgozy, "Le bluff de futur," *La revue administrative* 166 (1975): 385; translation mine.
[365] Both Bruno Carvalho and Gabriel Giorgi have recently presented excitingly ideas about Lispector's treatment of the future, but approached this topic from a different angle. For Carvalho, Lispector's subversion of the "anticipatory urge," which he identified in *The Hour of the Star* (*A Hora da Estrela*), is linked to the urban modernization taking place in Brazil of the sixties, while for Giorgi, Lispector gestures towards a "counter-future" through her engagement with Judith Butler's concept of "precarity" or the "precarious life." These ideas were presented in the conference *The Clarice Factor: Aesthetics, Gender, and Diaspora in Brazil*, March 23-29, 2017, Columbia University.

Catch of Fish" (*A pesca milagrosa*).[366] In this text, Lispector compares the art of writing to that of reading:

> Writing, therefore, is the use of a word as bait: the word fishes for what is not a word. Once this non-word takes the bait, something has been written. And when the between-the-lines has been caught, the word can be thrown away with relief. But this is where the analogy breaks off: the non-word, when taking the bait, incorporates it. What remains, then, is to read "distractedly."[367]

Reading is catching, in accordance with the nova crítica's conceptualization of this practice. But, for Lispector, it is not the words and their meaning that should be apprehended, but what lies between them, the present-absence of the text. Since one cannot rid herself of the word altogether (it is "incorporated" within the non-word), the reader must approach the text in a state of distraction, verging on meditation or hypnosis, to be able to grasp the "non-words" simultaneously with the words themselves. By excessively amplifying the reader's efforts at attentively catching the words of the novel and logically placing their meaning in an integrated whole, Lispector hopes to exhaust her into catching the non-word, distractedly. In another *crônica* from the same collection, "Writing, Humility, Technique" (*Escrever, humildade, técnica*) Lispector continues to depict the method of reading she imagines for her texts, and links effective reading not with the capability to solve the puzzle-text, but with a readerly position of inherent incapability:

> This incapacity to attain, to understand, makes me instinctively… what? It makes me search for a mode of communication that would lead me more immediately to understanding. This mode, this "style" (!), had been called many things, but never what it really is: a humble search… when I speak of 'humility'… I refer to the humility that arises from the conscious acknowledgment of being truly incapable. And I refer to humility as a technique… only if we approach the thing with humility, will it not utterly escape us.[368]

Understanding, then, can only be achieved through a reading "technique" – a distinctly nova crítica term – that involves a sense of *in*capacity (*incapacidade*) and *dis*traction (*distração*). These words, like the state of mind Lispector is eliciting in *The Apple*, are structured around and dependent on the lexical root which it then negates. One must diverge (*dis*) from a certain track (*tractus* "course, space, duration") to be distracted, and must not (*in*) grasp (*capax*, "able to hold much") to be incapable. In other words, the mindset that she calls for is inherently linked to (rather than cancels out) its opposite; distracted or exhausted reading is a result of an engagement with an attentive one.

In *The Apple*, as well, "distraction," "incapacity," and "understanding" are linked together as a technique, or an "attitude":

> Because understanding is a mode of looking. Because understanding is an attitude. Just as he now stretched his hand in the dark to catch the apple, and felt his fingers so ungainly

[366] The "*crônica*" is a Brazilian genre, mostly journalist, which exists on the intersection between autofiction, the short story, and the essay. The *crônicas* mentioned here were first published in the second half of Lispector's *A legião estrangeira*, titled "Fundo de gaveta" (1964).
[367] Clarice Lispector, *A legião estrangeira* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1983), 143; translation mine.
[368] Clarice Lispector, *Para não esquecer* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1979), 21; translation mine.

> [*desajeitados*] for the love of the apple. Martin did not search for the name of things anymore. It was enough to have known them in the dark. And to rejoice in it, ungainly. And later? Later, when he reenters clarity, he will see the things in his hands, and will identify their false names. Yes, but by then he would have already known them in the dark, like a man sleeping with a woman.[369]

Echoing how the nova crítica describes attention in terms of light, Lispector too presents "understanding" as a mode of "looking," as an attitude – a form of engagement – with the "thing" under inspection. But, as she makes clear through Martin, this mode of looking, of "catching" the apple, is intrinsically linked for her with the *un*gainly, or in Portuguese, the *un*ordered (*des-a-jeito*). That is, the comprehension towards which *The Apple* is steering its readers requires a certain abandonment of control, and can thus only occur in the state of blindness, in the dark, or while "sleeping," the latter bringing to mind bodily pleasures and desires ("like a man sleep with a woman"). This form of understanding can also be linked with the pure-present, if we turn to a different field altogether, that of psychoanalysis. Without making a claim as to a possible influence, the method Lispector hints at in *The Apple* recalls both the listening method Freud recommends his colleagues practice as early as 1909 and this method's later developments. In his "Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psycho-Analysis," Freud claims that "deliberate attention," a mindset centered on the process of selection, should be replaced by the analyst during therapy with a state of "evenly suspended attention."[370] He writes,

> For as soon as anyone deliberately concentrated his attention to a certain degree, he begins to select from the material before him… and in making this selection he will be following his expectations and inclinations… if he follows his expectations he is in danger of never finding anything but what he already known.[371]

Instead, the therapist is requested to "avoid so far as possible reflections and the construction of conscious expectations, not to try to fix anything he heard particularly in his memory and by these means catch the drift of the patient's unconsciousness with his own unconsciousness."[372] This state of mind, he remarks in his early *Interpretation of Dreams*, "bears some analogy to the state before falling asleep"; it is in the liminal space between wakefulness and deep sleep that an alternative state of stimuli reception can potentially occur.[373] Freud's demands are translated in 1967 into temporal terms by the British psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion, who writes in his seminal "Notes on Memory and Desire,"

> Memory is always misleading as a record of fact since it is distorted by the influence of unconscious forces. Desires interfere, by absence of mind when observation is essential, with the operation of judgment… Psychoanalytic "observation" is concerned neither with

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[369] Lispector, *The Apple*, 332.
[370] Sigmund Freud, "Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psycho-Analysis," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 12 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 111-120.
[371] Ibid., 112.
[372] Sigmund Freud, "Two Encyclopedia Articles," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 18 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 238.
[373] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 4 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 102.

> what has happened nor with what is going to happen, but with what is happening… Every session attended by the psychoanalyst must have no history and no future. In any session, evolution takes place. Out of the darkness and formlessness something evolves.[374]

No equivalence can or should be drawn between Lispector's exhausted reading mode and Bion's "no memory, no desire" prerequisite. Books are not patients and readers are not therapists. We should also keep in mind that Freud himself, as his written interpretations testify, did not always follow his own rule of thumb and avoided "expectations," or prefigured constructions, such as the Oedipus complex, when engaging with either patients or works of literature.[375] What is however enlightening in this juxtaposition is Freud and Bion's association between a non-selective mindset, fatigue, "the darkness and formlessness" (cf. Lispector's "non-word") and the ability to gesture towards a present-oriented reception, withholding "the operation of judgment." In fact, Bion's claims, "Psychoanalytic 'observation' is concerned neither with what has happened nor with what is going to happen, but with what is happening." In insisting that "[e]very session attended by the psychoanalyst must have no history and no future," Bion is articulating what I believe *The Apple* is implicitly trying to convey to its readers.

If we follow Lispector's *crônicas*, then reading with "no history and no future" should promote "understanding" in the specific sense of "catching" or coming closer to "the thing" ("only if we approach the thing with humility, will it not utterly escape us"). This idea is conveyed by way of negation within the fictional world of *The Apple*. The character of "the professor" approaches "the thing" with nothing but "history" and "future" and consequently finds himself unable to write or read. An acquaintance of Vitória who occasionally visits the farm, "the professor" is considered by the residents of the *Vila Baixa* to be the epitome of the educated intelligentsia and of proud masculinity. "No one laughs at the professor; he won't tolerate that," Vitória apprises Martin, "The students laugh at other teachers, but not at him."[376] Indeed, the professor is no laughing manner. He is the one who encourages Vitória to hand Martin over to the police, and who is the self-appointed persecutor in the mock-trial he conducts at the farm. But behind the professor's back, the novel mocks him. This is made especially palpable when Vitória suggests that the brilliant professor should become a writer,

> "The professor," she said with a confused and imploring voice, and Martin did not know whether what she was saying was praise or an excuse, "the professor ought to write a novel!" "I couldn't," the teacher burst out, "It's as simple as that! I couldn't," he exclaimed wearily. "I couldn't because I have all the answers! I already know how everything will come out! I've never been able to get out of this impasse! I have an answer," he said, spreading out his arms in perplexity. "I have an answer for everything!"[377]

Though this paragraph considers the position of the writer in relation to knowledge, Lispector's previous comparison in "The Miraculous Catch of Fish" between writer and reader, and this *crônica*'s preoccupation with the temporality of one's engagement with fiction, suggests that we may read about the professor's writing "impasse" with the reader in mind. If the professor in *The*

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[374] Wilfred Bion, "Notes on Memory and Desire," *Psychoanalytic Forum* 2, no. 3 (1967): 271.
[375] I discuss attention is relation to Freud as a reader and writer (rather than a therapist) in "A Leap of Faith into *Moses*: Freud's Invitation to Evenly Suspended Attention," in *Freud and Monotheism: Moses and the Violent Origins of Religion*, eds. Karen Feldman and Gilad Sharvit (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 108-37.
[376] Lispector, *The Apple*, 272.
[377] Ibid., 276.

Apple has an affinity with the exact reader, he is, of course, an absurd and exaggerated version of that figure. Yet, they both share the predicament of *already* knowing, or desiring to know, "how everything will come out." Lispector seems to suggest that the constant imagination of a possible future totality paradoxically limits the reader's possibilities of knowing the text. *The Apple*'s exact readers cannot but feel this constriction when falling time and again into the novel's traps that expose their deep desire to know. Nonetheless, this well-orchestrated "failure" unexpectedly opens up a potentially alternative reading mode. Lispector overextends the readers' attention to such a degree that they are too exhausted to inhibit or *exact* their inattentive "butterfly form of thought." In this state of mind, the "non-word" can appear; after all, it is Lispector's stance that if we are to approach the "thing" – to catch the apple – then we must "read 'distractedly.'"

- **THE GENDER OF EXHAUSTION**

As we can see at this point, Lispector intricately weaves distraction, repose, and incapacity into a unique technique of reading in *The Apple*, a novel written while Brazilian culture was overtaken by the nova crítica's norm of interaction with the literary text. And yet, my argument that Lispector enters into conversation in this novel with exact reading can be easily countered from a biographical standpoint. After all, following her husband in his world tours as a diplomat, Lispector began writing *The Apple* in 1951 while in Turkey, continued it in England, and brought it to a close in Washington D.C., just before returning to Brazil in 1956. In truth, however, during her years abroad, Lispector stayed closely attuned to the occurrences in Brazil, one might even say she never fully left home: "I lived mentally in Brazil, I lived on borrowed time," she confessed about her experience abroad.[378] During her years in "exile," as she referred to it, Lispector visited Brazil frequently, remained highly involved in the world of Brazilian print media to the extent that she was offered a personal column in the prestigious magazine *Manchete*, and she was in constant touch with the intellectual milieu that admired her since *Near to the Wild Heart* – she regularly corresponded with Fernando Sabino, Erico Verissimo, and Rubem Braga, for example, and hosted in Washington San Tiago Dantas, João Cabral de Melo Neto, and Augusto Frederico Schmidt, to name just a few.[379] Moreover, during these same years, Lispector wrote her acclaimed short story collection, *Family Ties* (*Laços da família*), which describes with great accuracy the Brazilian upper middle-class Rio of the time, demonstrating once again how au courant Lispector was with the Brazilian scene.[380] But the best evidence of Lispector's (most probably unaware) conversation with the nova crítica and "the state of the national critical mind" it set in place, to quote Denis Lynn Heyck, is to be found in her verbatim repetition of nova crítica terms in *The Apple.*[381] Time and again Lispector refers in her novel to "vigilance" (*vigilância*), "exactitude" (*exatidão*), and "objectivity" (*objetividade*), terms she rarely uses in her other works. Yet, for the most part, these terms are summoned only to then have their traditional meaning distorted. Martin, for example, is said to have "already begun to apply himself to a task of infinite exactitude and vigilance"; but in

[378] Leo Gilson Ribeiro, "Tentativa de explicação," *Correio da manhã*, March 21, 1965; qtd. in Benjamin Moser, *Why This World*, 236. For Lispector's ample correspondences during her time abroad, see *Correspondências* (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 2002).
[379] For a detailed description of Lispector's years outside Brazil, see Nádia Batella Gotlib, *Clarice: uma vida que se conta* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1995), 188-313; and Moser, *Why This World* 200-40.
[380] Being so true to Brazilian culture, *Family Ties* was considered right upon publication "the most important story collection published in this country since Machado de Assis" (letter from Erico Verissimo [1961], qtd. in Moser, *Why This World*, 231).
[381] Heyck, "Coutinho's Controversy," 100.

Lispector's version, these processes are presented not as related to alert watchfulness, but as similar to "constructing a dream."[382] In a similar manner, "objectivity" is associated not only with the seemingly unrelated fatigue ("that first day of objectivity was like walking in his sleep"[383]), but with animality as well, the very source of non-analytic "subjectivity" for the nova crítica ("if that attempt at innocence made him reach objectivity, it was the objectivity of a cow: no words"[384]). This is also true for "vigilance," affiliated in *The Apple* with disinterest, blindness, and a surrender rather than with a mastering of the natural world ("But if his compact absence of thought was a dullness it was the dullness of a plant… with that delicate tension with which a blind plant can feel the air in which its hard leaved are imbedded. The man had reduced his whole self to that kind of vigilance" [385]). In this way as well, then, Lispector dialectically mobilizes the readerly procedure presented by the nova crítica, simultaneously adopting and distorting the capacities associated with the exact reader.

But I would like to suggest that Lispector's ruminations about the practice of reading emerge long before the publication of *The Apple* (or even *The Foreign Legion*, where the above-quoted *crônicas* first appear). These early contemplations lay the ground for Lispector's later interaction with the critical discourse that comes to rule Brazil of the 1960s, facilitating the entrance of the exact reader into her diegetic universe. As early as her debut novel mentioned earlier, *Near to the Wild Heart*, Lispector dedicates an entire chapter to a description of a reading scene, one which marks a key moment of change in the relationship between the protagonist Joana and her husband Otávio. The chapter's title, "The Little Family" (A *pequena família*), which appears in close proximity to "The Marriage" (*O casamento*), hints at a possible tightening of the emotional link between husband and wife, but reveals itself instead to denote the upcoming birth of Otávio's child from his mistress. The vast majority of the chapter follows Otávio at his work desk, laboring over his article on Civil Law; and, indeed, he views this process as "labor." Otávio understands himself to be an "intellectual worker" (*um trabalhador intellectual*) who must abide by certain rules of work (*a regra de trabalho*), and goes back and forth between reading and writing as the two main and inseparable tasks that comprise his endeavor[386]; he writes down his thoughts, reads them, rereads the notes he had written the day before, and ends up picking out of the library the primary source he is working with, Spinoza's *In litteris*. Surprisingly, however, instead of encountering there the writings of the Jewish Dutch philosopher, he finds another text awaiting his reading within the book: "A page from a notebook was tucked between its pages. He looked at it and discovered Joana's uncertain handwriting. He leaned over it avidly. 'The beauty of the words: God's abstract nature. It is like listening to Bach'... Joana always caught him off guard."[387] This encounter with Joana's readerly comments jolts Otávio, and he finds himself utterly unable to further his "work." His wife's words conjure her presence "in her moments of *distraction* [emphasis added], her face white, vague and light. And suddenly great melancholy descended over him. What exactly am I doing? He wondered and didn't even know why he had attacked himself so suddenly. No, don't write today." Joana's "distraction," which Otávio associated with her note, brings about an irremediable interruption in his process of intellectual labor ("he had attacked himself so suddenly"); but alongside its aggression, this caesura is also experienced by the

[382] Lispector, *The Apple*, 182.
[383] Ibid., 182.
[384] Ibid., 188.
[385] Ibid., 103
[386] Lispector, *Wild Heart*, 112, 110.
[387] Ibid., 115.

protagonist as a relief: "Otávio felt almost happy. Today someone was giving him time off [literally, "rest," *descanso*]." This sense of freedom leads Otávio to write his wife a counter-note ("telling her he wouldn't be home for lunch. Poor Joana"), and he heads off to meet his lover, Lídia.[388]

Joana's reading, then, and the reading experience it elicits, are associated with her inattention and respite. These stand in stark opposition to Otávio's experience facing both Spinoza's text and his own writings about it. The husband is depicted as being constantly on guard against diversions from what he considers to be his central line of thought ("he'd allowed his pen to run a little freely in order to rid himself of the persistent image or idea that may have decided to dog him and stanch his main stream of thought").[389] He also feels himself to be under tight internal supervision, which he relies upon to orient his thoughts ("Now he was going to work. As if everyone was watching approvingly, closing their eyes in their assent: yes, that's right, very good").[390] Otávio's engagement with the text is anything but "distracted" or "restful"; it requires militant self-discipline ("Well, now order. Pencil down, he told himself, free yourself of obsessions. One, two, three!" [391]), and is experienced as constraining and hostile ("Like that, like that, don't avoid it… yes, yes, that was it, don't avoid myself, don't avoid my handwriting, how light and horrible it is, a spider's web").[392] In fact, Otávio himself recognizes the dichotomy between his and Joana's reading modes, and pits his own vigilance against her alleged lethargy ("I'm an intellectual worker, Joana is asleep in the bedroom… She has been defeated by sleep, defeated, defeated").[393] Yet this is not to say that Lispector simplistically views Otávio's interaction with the text as unworthy. She puts in his mind and notes Spinozian ideas that are pivotal to her work.[394] What does seem to be the case is that Joana's sensate reading, being able to see and hear the text ("The beauty of the words," "It is like listening to Bach"), appears to Lispector to be a vein of approaching texts not sufficiently explored, one outside "the comfort of order."[395] Indeed, when embarking on his intellectual endeavor at the beginning of the chapter, Otávio thinks to himself, "What fascinated and terrified him about Joana was precisely the freedom in which she lived," to which he later adds: "Joana thought without fear and without punishment. Would she end up mad or what?"[396] Can we think then of Joana's reading – or the reading that Lispector more generally promotes – as necessitating a complete abandonment of law or order?

Hélène Cixous would probably say yes. Though her extensive interpretations of Lispector's oeuvre focus mostly on the side of writing rather than reading, it is her claim that this body of work presents an *écriture* that, due to its embrace of the *féminine*, is situated not before the law but utterly outside of it. In her famous juxtaposition of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Lispector's *Near to the Wild Heart* she writes, "She [Lispector] is not under the spell of transgression, while in the Joycean dilemma, nothing can function without transgression. There

[388] Ibid., 116.
[389] Ibid., 109.
[390] Ibid., 112.
[391] Ibid., 111.
[392] Ibid., 111.
[393] Ibid., 112..
[394] For a recent detailed study of Lispector's affinity with Spinoza's philosophy, see Adam Morris, "The Uses of Nonsense: Antimodernism in Latin American Fiction 1920-1977," PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, Department of Iberian and Latin American Cultures, 2015.
[395] Lispector, *Wild Heart*, 115.
[396] Ibid., 127.

must be a law so it can be transgressed… Joana does not appear before the law."[397] The application of Cixous' feminist view to the problem of reading in Lispector's oeuvre can be supported by José Merquior, an ardent advocate of the nova crítica, who depicts exact reading in markedly gendered terms: "the nova crítica, has its desire at bottom located in the revelation of forms that hold a truly muscular poetic truth, very far from any pre-configured forms or corsets."[398] In other words, if masculine exact reading is within the law, then *lecture féminine* must be outside of it. Though Cixous no doubt identifies a pertinent drive propelling Lispector's work, *The Apple*, as I read it, seems to somewhat torque her position. Just as Martin chooses to kill his wife, an utterly traditional act in the terms of social patriarchal law, in order to break with the order of things, so does Lispector comply altogether (in fact, all too much) with the law of attentive reading as construed by the nova crítica in order to develop an alternative from *within* it rather than from *outside* it. If we are asked by Lispector to think of exact reading as showing an affinity with patriarchy, then it seems that only through the interaction with it, rather than its eschewal, can a readerly alternative present itself. This unique dialectics can also be thought of in terms of self and Other. That is, it is through the engagement with the non-self, or in Cixous' terms, the social order from which the self is excluded, that a new potentiality can arise.

This idea is explicitly presented by Lispector is her epigraph to *The Passion According to G.H.* (*A paixão segundo G.H.*), where she quotes Bernard Berenson: "A complete life may be one ending in so full identification with the non-self that there is no self to die." And though there is nothing in the art historian's words to hint at a possible link between the identification with the non-self and the act of reading, this epigraph appears in Lispector's novel just after her note "to possible readers" (*a possiveis leitores*), where she openly discusses the readerly subjectivity she believes her text demands or can perhaps form. She writes,

> This book is like any other book. But I would be happy if it were only read by people whose souls are already formed. Those who know that the approach, of whatever it may be, happens gradually and painstakingly—even passing through the opposite of what it approaches. They who, only they, will slowly come to understand that this book takes nothing [literaly "pull out," *tirar*] from no one. To me, for example, the character G.H. gave bit by bit a difficult joy; but it is called joy.[399]

To approach anything via reading, "whatever it may be," passes through its opposite. This statement can be viewed as the explicit articulation of the implicit strategy employed in *The Apple*: the ability to read *in*exactly must begin with the adoption of the Brazilian New Critical technique. We recall that *The Passion* was published in 1964, only three years after *The Apple* and alongside the *crônicas* mentioned above. Therefore, *The Passion* too is written against the backdrop of the nova crítica's presence within Brazilian culture. That might explain why the novel takes for granted that reading holds the capacity to shape subjectivity. After all, it is only on the basis of such presumption that Lispector can worry about the effect her book might have on readers whose souls are not "already formed." But Lispector's most overt gesture towards exact reading in this passage takes place in the penultimate line. Those readers who will be able to "catch the drift" of

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[397] Hélène Cixous, "Writing and the Law: Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, and Lispector," in *Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kakfa, Kleist, Lispector, and Tsvetayeva*, trans. Conley Verena Andermatt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 12.

[398] Merquior, *Razão do Poema*, 51.

[399] Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*, trans. Idra Novey (New York: New Directions, 2012), xi.

the text (to summon Freud back again) will also understand that it does not call for ex(tr)acting (*tirar*) anything internal. Instead, the reading process, Lispector imagines, as Berenson's quote hints, involves a close synergy with an internal "non-self": "A complete life may be one ending in so full identification with the non-self that there is no self to die." That is, while the nova crítica urges the reader to exact the savage "non-self" from within, Lispector exhausts her reader into engaging with "dispersive and butterfly-like form of thought" in order to experience the invaluable "difficult joy."[400]

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Recently, quite a while after I've put on paper my long-brewing thoughts about *The Apple*, I was surprised to find these ideas reflecting back at me from a different book altogether. This uncanny encounter occurred when I read a critical work on the master of mystery, D. A. Miller's *Hidden Hitchcock* – how apt indeed. In this enticing book, Miller argues that a unique game of attention takes place between Hitchcock and his viewers, and I couldn't help but feel that Lispector is winking at me from her famous "between-the-lines." Miller writes,

> In his supremely lucid narrative communication, nothing deserves our attention that his camera doesn't go out of its way to point out… but as anyone who has seen a Hitchcock film knows, the director primes us to be considerably more alert than his spoon-feeding requires. In addition to our instrumental attention, we find ourselves possessed by a watchfulness that seems to have no object or use… A strangely futile vigilance, it irritated our vision only by virtue of being palpably in excess of what we are being *asked* to see; ready to be as observant as Sherlock Holmes, we are challenged with the most elementary cases… I postulate a game he [Hitchcock] would be playing with that absurdly, pointless watchful spectator…and whom I call the Too-Close Viewer… It is as though, at the heart of the manifest style, there pulsed an irregular extra beat, the surreptitious "murmur" of its undoing that only the Too-Close Viewer could apprehend.[401]

In *The Apple*, a very different "extra beat" awaits the Too-Close Reader. While Miller identifies in a dazzling variety of films "a perverse counternarrative" that only the excessively alert viewer can apprehend ("a small continuity error made on purpose, or a Hitchcock cameo fashioned so as not to be seen, or a narrative image secretly doubling for a figure of speech in the manner of a charade"), Lispector confronts her readers – "possessed by a watchfulness that seems to have no object or use" – with a static, at times nonsensical, narrative that depicts via language a protagonist's attempt to undo traditional communication. And yet, Lispector's ghost speaks through Miller's book. After all, she chooses to masquerade her novel as an allegorical detective novel precisely in order to prime her readers to "be considerably more alert" than required. This is her way of bringing about "a strangely futile vigilance" that "irritates," or exhausts, her reader "by virtue of being palpably in excess" of what that reader is being *asked* to see. With the bait of

[400] Cixous also links Lispector's work with the "savage": "What does it mean to work on texts that are 'near to the wild heart'? Reading Clarice's text, I was struck by its extraordinary power… At the same time, it gives the impression of being poorly written, it does not display a mastery of form and language and does not raise the question of art… One has to have a touch of somethings savage, uncultured, in order to let it happen. Is it the contrary of having been so much of a student, of a scholar, that one thinks that a book is a book, and that, if one vaguely had the desire to write, one says: I have to write a book" ("Writing and the Law," 1).

[401] D.A. Miller, *Hidden Hitchcock* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 2-5.

Martin's unknown crime, the German's threatening identity, the mysterious servant, and the protagonist's courageous escape, Lispector enjoins her Brazilian readers to "be as observant as Sherlock Holmes," in Miller's words, or as observant as the exact reader. But, as in the case of Hitchcock, these readers are doomed to find their arduous attempts futile; they encounter nothing but "the most elementary cases," or, in Lispector's novel, no case at all. The readers of *The Apple* never reveal who the German or his servant were, and Martin's crime, as we now know, turns out to have been a "failed" one. It is no coincidence that Lispector's technique of "deceit" reverberates through a study of Hitchcock; this momentary coalescence intimates once again that she is manipulating the effect of suspense specifically for the sake of turning "pointless" the efforts of her culturally construed "watchful" reader. And so, while a Too-Close Viewer is born in front of Hitchcock's screen, a specifically Brazilian exhausted reader emerges as she leafs through *The Apple,* in the dark.

THIRD PART | ISRAEL

Chapter Five

THE TEL AVIV SCHOOL AND MAXIMALIST READING: A. B. YEHOSHUA AND THE ISRAELI ANXIETY OF SOCIAL DISINTEGRATION

A text is a body of language full of gaps, ellipses, unlinked units, to be read and understood, i.e. to be filled out and reorganized in the mind of the "proper" reader.

–Benjamin Harshav and Ziva Ben-Porat

There is a need to return to something stable but today expectations are diminished. The center has broken own and it makes it impossible to present a comprehensibly ordered picture of Israeli society.

–A.B. Yehoshua

Few are the Hebrew writers who were as associated with a specific political stance, and a militant right-wing one at that, as Uri Zvi Greenberg (1896-1981). Known as the "poet of the Revisionist [Zionist] movement" and himself a member of parliament, UZG (or אצ"ג as he is referred to by his Hebrew acronym) – with his fervent modernist-expressionist work – was a central figure in the pre- and early independence Israeli cultural arena. His political commitment, however, was not without its price; as Orit Meital has recently demonstrated, since UZG's activism and journalistic publications left no doubt as to his political agenda, his intricate poetry too was almost always read (and still is) in the narrow terms of the national Zionist project. More precisely, Meital shows that around the 1930s, a persistent critical tradition of reading UZG's poems as national allegories was established, assuming that they recount the Zionist struggle the poems' singular form or content notwithstanding.[402] In that sense, UZG's reception bespeaks the more general tendency in pre-1970s Israeli literary criticism to examine Hebrew literature solely through the lens of a teleological Zionist ideology: a critical perspective that takes Hebrew literature to always portray what is believed to be the ineluctable historical movement towards a "national revival" in a Jewish, Hebrew-speaking, Israeli state.

It was a well-orchestrated and irreverent move, then, on the part of Benjamin Harshav (formerly, Hrushovski) – a central player in the introduction the Tel Aviv blend of New Criticism and Russian Formalism into Israeli culture – to publish in 1968, in the very first volume of his journal, *Ha-Sifrut* ("Literature"), a lengthy article on UZG's poetry, analyzing it in explicitly apolitical formalist terms.[403] In fact, Harshav opens his article with an admonition of the Israeli nationalist tradition of interpretation, and presents his alternative in terms of a new mode of reading, "an accurate and detailed analysis… from close by":

> The poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg is one of the most monumental and exceptional phenomena in the poetic history of the people of Israel… His poetry's brazen affinity with ideology and politics made it so that many have viewed him solely through these perspectives: they've seen him as either a prophet or a legislator [מחוקק] and nothing

[402] Orit Meital, *To Hate What We Loved* [לאהוב את אשר שנאנו] (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uchad, 2018).
[403] Benjamin Harshav, "The Rhythm of Open Spaces: The Theory and Practice of Rhythm in the Expressionist Poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg" [ריתמוס הרחבות: הלכה ומעשה בשירתו האקספרסיוניסטית של אורי צבי גרינברג], *Ha-Sifrut* 1 (1968): 176-205.

> more… In any case, we know very little about the *poetic* nature of Greenberg's poetry. The time has come for an accurate and detailed analysis of this poetry, one that would approach it from close by [שיגש לשירה הזאת מקרוב], to see it as it is. For that to occur, we must give up ideological criteria (both literary and political) and the essentialism that presents "Greenberg" as if he were one monolithic poet… The road is long and the subject matter is varied. In this article I will deal with one problem alone – the rhythm in his [Greenberg's] poetry and theory [תורתו].[404]

As I will go on to discuss, Harshav's thinking was deeply indebted to Czech Structuralism and Russian Formalism, among other theoretical orientations, all advocating for a break with "ideological criteria" when approaching literature. But Harshav's vocabulary here echoes the New Critical method of reading specifically, urging the reader, in the spirit of their critique of the intentional and affective fallacies, to "give up" both readerly "ideological" agendas and an "essentialist" view of the writer for the sake of practicing close reading: an "accurate and detailed analysis" from "*close by*" (and I have demonstrated in the previous chapter what a central role "accuracy" played in the New Critical project). In this chapter, I argue that the New Critical method of close reading in its Israeli iteration – one which reaches its peak not with Harshav but with his students, Menakhem Perry and Meir Sternberg – involves self-suspension via attention, as we've seen in the American and Brazilian cases as well. But while it was subjectivity as a life force that the reader was instructed to hold off through attention in the American case, and the internal "savage" that the Brazilian thinkers strove to remove from the reading process, the Israeli critics – in an endeavor to battle the historically-established habit of reading any Hebrew work as a national allegory – urged the reader to postpone her specifically Zionist associations during the reading process, that is, her particularly Israeli "ideological criteria." Instead, this reader was encouraged to cognitively engage with literature generally and with Hebrew literature specifically for its formal "*poetic*" nuances and, most importantly, to attentively expose the work's "integrational" structure, to my mind a pivotal term in the Israeli adaptation of close reading.

The centrality of "integration" in the conceptualization of close reading is highly telling, since it gives voice to the paradox I find at the heart of the Israeli version of this method: though close reading was designed by to mold an *apolitical* reader, it was adopted in order to help resolve a *national* crisis. More specifically, I argue that the Israeli version of close reading was informed by the acute internal conflicts that surfaced within the ostensibly unified young nation of the late 1960s-1970s. During that time, the concept of social disintegration in its various Hebrew articulations ("פיזור" [dispersal]; "התפרקות" [falling apart]; "שבר" [breach]; or the Hebraized "דיסאינטגרציה" [*disintegratzya*]) saturated the political discourse. Concomitantly, the Israeli version of close reading was conceptualized in diametrically opposite terms as necessitating a mental effort of "integration," the word itself suggesting that this method's unintended political undertones. The Israeli critics who adopted the New Critical method instructed their readers to invest attention – a mental state, as we've seen, which was associated with close reading from the outset – in the task of linking together to the maximum degree the various elements of the text. This universal and analytic reader, proficient in integration, was imagined, I argue, as providing a possible solution to Israeli internal struggles by uniting, if only in thought, the distinct sectors of the increasingly balkanized Israeli society.[405]

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[404] Ibid., 176.

[405] My argument is in line with Hamutal Tsamir, who claims that the very universalization of the subject in the Israeli discourse of the fifties and sixties had a national import. In positive terms, it allows for political work to be

The project of universalizing the Israeli subject was not unique to the field of 1970s literary criticism. Already in the early 1950s, there famously gathered in Jerusalem a new coterie of vanguardists, to be later known as the "Statehood Generation" poets, who explicitly claimed their aesthetics to follow an "impersonal imperative," to quote Chana Kronfeld.[406] One of the founders of this literary circle and its flagship journal, "*Likrat*" [Towards], was the abovementioned Harshav, who served as the key intellectual of the group. His cofounder was Natan Zach, the predominant Israeli poet of the 1950s-1960s and the leader of the Statehood Generation, who was also responsible for articulating the group's poetics (a third founding member, Yehuda Amichai, who did not fully abide by Zach's imperatives, will be discussed in the following chapter). The universalizing thrust of this group's poetry expressed itself especially in its vocal lyrical "I," which for a long time was taken to represent Zach's call for a poetry that would represent not the Israeli national collective, but rather the universalized individual ("I'm a citizen of the world," Zach declares in one of his celebrated poems).[407] However, as Michael Gluzman recently demonstrated, the Statehood Generation's focus on the poetic "I" was not in fact an apolitical universalizing move, but an expression of a particular collective and political melancholia, which he terms "the melancholia of sovereignty."[408] He finds in Statehood Generation poetics traces of the "sense of loss and lack" that permeated Israeli society after the War of Independence and the establishment of the state in 1948. In this sense, my chapter expands on Gluzman's argument. I maintain that the universal anti-nationalist thrust that manifested itself in the poetry of the 1950s and 60s spread in the 1970s, via Harshav and Zach among other cultural figures, into the realm of literary criticism, to carry there as well an implicit political valence. In the 1970s, the "melancholia" Gluzman keenly points to is converted into anxiety: the fear that the fragile unity that had provided Israeli society with the illusion of national coherence is in a rapid process of erosion. In response, the Israeli critics adopted close reading, adding to it a particular political dimension: it was to transform the Israeli reader into cognitively astute "citizens of the world" who would hence be able to participate in the specifically national mission of unifying the internally conflicted Israeli society of their time.

Both Zach's poetic "impersonal imperative" and Harshav's purportedly apolitical "close by" reading of UZG are deeply linked to American New Criticism and the high modernism it promoted. In fact, Harshav and Zach's circle of *Likrat* was one of the main gateways through which New Criticism entered the Israeli sphere.[409] After years in which Jewish culture in the

done implicitly. This is the case in the de-nationalization of the reader as well, which allowed the presentation of the reader as universal and cognitive, while in fact conferring on her mind abilities that were aimed at mitigating a national anxiety (*In the Name of the Land: Nationalism, Subjectivity and Gender in the Israeli Poetry of the Statehood Generation* [בשם הנוף: לאומיות, מגדר וסובייקטיביות בשירה הישראלית בשנות החמישים והששים] [Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 2006]).

[406] Kronfeld, *The Full Severity of Compassion: The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, 22.

[407] Natan Zach, "I'm a Citizen of the World" [אני אזרח העולם], in *Various Poems* [שירים שונים] (Tel Aviv: Alef, 1967), 66-7.

[408] Michael Gluzman, *The Poetry of the Drowned: Melancholy and Sovereignty in Hebrew Poetry after 1948* [שירת הטבועים: המלנכוליה של הריבונות בשירה העברית בשנות החמישים והשישים] (Tel Aviv: University of Haifa Press and Yedi'ot Acharonot Books, 2018).

[409] Two more important figures in the importation of New Criticism into Israel are Shlomo Tzemach and Aryeh Ludwig Strauss. The first was responsible for the translation of key New Critical articles in his journal, *Bekhinot* (*Investigations*, 1952-1957), such as T.S. Eliot's "Experiment in Criticism" (1929), John Crowe Ransom's "Criticism as Pure Speculation" (1941), and Allen Tate's "Is Literary Criticism Possible" (1952), even though his own critical practice was far from theirs (for more, see Chapter Six). Strauss, who published in *Investigations* (see "On Hymn 124, Psalms" [על מזמור קכ"ד מספר תהלים], *Bekhinot* 1 (1952): 26-32), was a practitioner rather than a theoretician of close reading, and was considered a precursor of the TA School by its members.

Yishuv steered away from anything Anglophone following the British mandate (1917-1948), Zach – later to become a scholar of modernist English and American poetry – openly modeled *Likrat*'s poetics on that of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, suggesting from the get-go that his project was not at all apolitical; after all, via Pound and Eliot, Zach declares himself not a "citizen of the world" but a citizen of the white hegemonic Anglo-American West specifically. A central venue through which Zach familiarizes himself with American high modernism is the seminars given at the Hebrew University by Shimon Halkin, the legendary chair of the Hebrew Literature Department. Halkin, who was the teacher of Zach, Harshav, Amichai, and later on Menakhem Perry, was an Eastern-European immigrant who spent most of his life in New York; he was an ardent reader of contemporary American literature, fluent in the work of T.S. Eliot, a translator of Walt Whitman, an admirer of both American romanticism and modernism, and highly versed in New Criticism.[410] And though his sociological-cultural interpretations of Hebrew literature were very much infused with the abovementioned Zionist teleological ideology, his students testify that in the classroom, he was a New Critic par excellence. As the literary critic Ariel Hirschfeld plainly puts it: "The Halkin era was characterized by its affiliation with the dominant trend of Anglo-American mid-century literary studies, the school of New Criticism."[411]

It was Harshav, among Halkin's students, who went on to study with a New Critic himself; after graduating from the Hebrew University, he did graduate work at Yale under the guidance of the celebrated New Critic and Czech Structuralist René Wellek, and returned to Israel in the mid-1960s with an in-depth knowledge of New Criticism and Structuralism, in addition to a profound acquaintance with phenomenology and formalism (the poet Moshe Dor recalls that already in the 1950s, the *Likrat* members "were inspired and terrified by his erudition").[412] Against this backdrop, Harshav founds in 1967 the Department of Poetics and Comparative Literature (directly translated in Hebrew as The Department of General Literary Theory) at Tel Aviv University, which became a leading voice in Israeli and international literary scholarship ("there are many centers of literary scholarship in the world," writes Alan Mintz in 1984, "but there are few as energetic and concentrated as the Department of Poetics and Comparative Literature at Tel Aviv University").[413] As the department's title evinces, Harshav structures it as theoretically rigorous, in an attempt to move away from Halkin's Hebrew Literature Department and the nationalist, impressionistic, and biographical interpretation style it represented for him.[414] Yet, I believe that Halkin (and Wellek's) New Criticism had a strong, even if more covert, presence in the scholarship produced at Harshav's young TAU department. Undoubtedly, on the macro level of the theoretical and historical study of literature, the department was indeed deeply invested in Structuralist thought in its different variations, which governed its widely-read English journal *Poetics Today* and its preceding version *PTL* (*Poetics and Theory and Literature*);[415] but I contend that on the micro level of studying the single text – what Harshav termed the sub-field of "interpretation" – the School drew heavily on

[410] On Halkin, see, for example, Shmuel Werses, "The Portrait of Shimon Halkin as a Young Poet," *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* (1990): 19-38.
[411] Ariel Hirschfeld, "The History of the Department of Hebrew Literature" [תולדות החוג], https://hebliterature.huji.ac.il/book/export/html/14915.
[412] Moshe Dor, "Poets of the Future: The Days of *Likrat*" [פייטנים עתידים לבוא: ימי *לקראת*], *Siman Kri'a* 9 (1979): 342.
[413] Alan Mintz, "On the Tel Aviv School of Poetics," *Prooftexts* 4, no. 3 (1984): 215.
[414] Tel Aviv University as a whole understood itself as a reaction against and an alternative for the more conservative Hebrew University; see Uri Cohen, *Academy in Tel Aviv: The Rise of a University* [אקדמיה בתל אביב: צמיחתה של אוניברסיטה] (Tel Aviv: Magnes Publishing House, 2014).
[415] For detailed discussion of the TA School's interaction with various theoretical movements, see Mintz, "On the Tel Aviv School."

the New Critical practice and theory of close reading (Harshav's "reading from *close by*").[416] This New Critical predilection was recognized by several scholars, Brian McHale and Eyal Segal especially, but to my mind has yet to receive the extensive critical attention it deserves.[417]

This chapter focuses on what I call the long 1970s (1967-1984), during which the Israeli version of close reading with its aesthetic and political values occupied the national cultural center. I will return to the 1950s and early 1960s, with *Likrat* and Zach as central players in the following chapter, but here, I begin with the establishment of the Department of General Literary Theory in 1967 in the immediate aftermath of the Six Days War, and end in the mid-1980s, when Harshav leaves permanently for the U.S. and Israeli literature breaks with New Critical thought and aesthetic criteria.[418] I devote the first section of the chapter to the exploration of the New-Critically informed Israeli protocol of close reading, termed "maximalist reading." I follow Harshav's students – Menakhem Perry and Meir Sternberg (who later became central cultural figures) – and their imperative to "maximize" the text as related to the concept of attention-as-integration. The second and third sections discuss the 1970s' translated and local prose-fiction, produced against the backdrop of the Israeli shift during the 1960s away from poetry with the emergence of a new generation of prose-fiction writers, famously dubbed by Gershon Shaked "The New Wave in Hebrew Literature."[419] More specifically, the second section demonstrates how Perry and Sternberg also followed the American New Critics in their admiration for William Faulkner, but adapted their readings of his oeuvre to fit the Israeli model of attention and readerly subject formation. In the third section, I focus on the work of A.B. Yehoshua, a writer who publicly models his work on Faulkner's. I show how the critical discourse around Yehoshua's work – a discourse

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[416] As Harshav explicates in the by now legendary diagram and article that opens the first issue of *Ha-Sifrut*, there are three main intertwined objects of study to the "science of literature": (1) the single text, whose field of study is "interpretation"; (2) the essence of literature, studied as "poetics"; and (3) "literature generally, in its historical existence" ("On the Fields in the Science of Literature: A Diagram" [סכמה של תחומי מדע הספרות], *Ha-Sifrut* 1, no.1 [1968]: 1).

[417] Among the studies that recognize a New Critical imprint on the Tel Aviv School are Brian McHale and Eyal Segal, "Small World: The Tel Aviv School of Poetics and Semiotics," in *Theoretical Schools and Circles in the Twentieth-Century Humanities: Literary Theory, History, Philosophy*, ed. Marina Grishakova and Silvi Salupere (New York: Routledge, 2015); Esther Fuchs, who describes the Israeli critical discourse of the 1960s and 1970s as a "New Critical rebellion against the socialist realist platforms of the Palmah Generation" (*Israeli Mythogynies: Women in Contemporary Hebrew Fiction* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987], 3); and Ariel Hirschfeld's essay which claims that "this shift [towards New Criticism]… developed via Halkin's students (Harsahv, Ha-Ephrati, Perry) into the Department of General Literary Theory at Tel Aviv University, which saw itself as spearheading Israeli literary theory" ("The History of the Department of Hebrew Literature.")

[418] The early 1980s also witnessed a radical shift in Israeli political and military reality, marked by the First Lebanon War (1982); the dramatic rise of neoliberalism; and a significant aesthetic transformation in Hebrew literature generally, and prose-fiction specifically, events that help delineate a tentative finish line. In the 1980s, as various scholars have noted, previously silenced voices make their forceful appearance on the Israeli literary map, radically changing its norms in terms of both form and content. There is a drifting away from the confined definition of what "Jewish literature" stands for, which allows *Mizrahi* literature especially to develop in full force. See, for example, Dror Mishani, *There Is Some Kind of Absurdity in This Mizrahi Matter* [בכל העניין המזרחי יש איזה אבסורד] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2006); Ariel Hirschfeld, "One Identity Ends and the Other Begins" [נגמרת זהות ומתחילה אחרת], in *The Beauty of the Defeated* [יופיים של המנוצחים] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishing), 441-60; Hanan Hever, *Literature Written Here* [ספרות שנכתבת מכאן] (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot Acharonot Books, 1999). For the rise of neo-liberalism in Israel, see Ronen Mandelkern, "The Concise History of Neoliberalism in Israel," in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Molad, 2015), 271-91.

[419] Gershon Shaked, *A New Wave in Hebrew Literature* [גל חדש בסיפורת העברית] (Tel Aviv: Po'alim Publishing, 1971).

deeply informed by Israeli New Critical readings of Faulkner – reveals the latent link between the imperative of cognitive and formal integration, and the angst over social disintegration.

- **MAXIMALIST READING AND ATTENTION-AS-INTEGRATION**

The Israeli 1970s are famous for their radical political and social instability, witnessing dramatic military events and significant revolts against mainstream loci of power – both Jewish and *Ashkenazi*. Among these earthquakes were the Six Days War and its dissolution of clear national borders (1967), the *Mizrahi* uprising and its expression in the struggle of the local Black Panthers in the early 1970s, the first clear appearance of "the public voice of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel,"[420] the massive number of casualties in the Yom Kippur War (1973), and the consequent game-changing elections of 1977, in which the Labor party lost to the Right Wing "*Likud*" party for the first time since the establishment of the state. Under these conditions, the fractured nature of the young and immigrant-based nation was exposed, and the widespread ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious tensions, along with their accompanying prejudices and discrimination, rose to the surface. These changes were experienced as a threatening process of "disintegration," especially by the white liberal left that was losing its political standing, a group which included the majority of the Israeli intellectual milieu. This is, for example, how Ariel Hirschfeld describes the 1970s:

> [T]he political turnover [the *Likud*'s ascendency to power] shook up [Israeli] society's profile. That moment made it possible to view Israeli society as an assemblage and not as one thing; an assortment of ethnic groups (*edot*) and communities, settlements and regions, a rabble of human beings who could be very different from each other.[421]

In the same spirit, the critic Nisim Kalderon states that "since 1977… a new and lasting chapter in the social life of Israelis has opened… the melting-pot dream was torn apart and exposed violence, resentment, and deafness. It is a deafness of one cultural code to another."[422] Gershon Shaked remarks that "Second generation Zionists no longer saw themselves as a unified group of adolescents, but as a fragmented group, craving unification."[423] And when the celebrated "New Wave" writer, Amos Oz, engages this issue, he locates the roots of this disintegration in the years following the 1967 Six Days War:

> When you build a home, one made to endure for generations, and you build it for tenants of different tastes and lifestyles, you must take it all into consideration… even if the existential threat hovering above us would have ended with the war of 1967, we should have come up with an "architectural decision," but we avoided that decision. Now the building is about to collapse.[424]

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[420] Oren Yiftachel, "'Ethnocracy' and Its Discontents: Minorities, Protests, and the Israeli Polity," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (2000): 745.
[421] Hirschfeld, *The Beauty of the Defeated*, 49.
[422] Nisim Kalderon, *Multiculturalism Versus Pluralism in Israel* [פלורליסטים בעל כרחם] (Haifa: University of Haifa Press, 2000), 11.
[423] Gerson Shaked, *Wave After Wave in Hebrew Literature* [גל אחר גל בסיפורת העברית] (Jerusalem: Keter, 1985), 179.
[424] Amos Oz, *Under This Blazing Light* [באור התכלת העזה] (Tel Aviv: Po'alim Publishing, 1979), 130.

Similarly, Hanna Soker-Schwager, in her analysis of Yaakov Shabtai's canonical novel, *Past Continuous* (*Zikhron Devarim*, literally, "memorandum"), which "captured the portrait of Israeli society [of the 1970s] and predicted the turnover of 1977," claims that the author centers his work on a "torn subject" who is haunted by the "three foci of conflict in the Israeli political reality of the 1970s… the forefathers' generation versus that of the 'lost' sons…, the ethnic struggle between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."[425] And Hannan Hever characterizes the entire 1970s as haunted by a fear of a socio-political "apocalypse," expressed through a split between "the need to warn against the dangers awaiting the Israeli collective, and the premonition that the right political move will not be made in the 1970s."[426] In this "apocalyptic" atmosphere of fragmentation, the Israeli government of 1968 also implemented a new policy in the education system called, not surprisingly given the contemporary context, "School Integration" (אינטגרציה חינוכית); this program, whose title had since been conventionalized into an Israeli turn of phrase, included placing students from privileged and underprivileged ethnic and socio-economic (solely Jewish) groups together in Israeli middle schools in order to increase educational equality and decrease social divides.[427] Both concept and the anxiety over social (dis)integration were thus omnipresent.

It is precisely this conflicted and fractured political climate that Harshav returned to from Yale in the mid-1960s, to find a receptivity to his work's deep investment in "integration" and "disintegration" in their various semantic forms. However, his was an explicitly apolitical engagement with these concepts. Within his newly formed Department of General Literary Theory, Harshav established the Tel Aviv School of Poetics and Semiotics, from which would emerge some of the most important Israeli literary scholarship and scholars (such as Ziva Ben-Porat and Itamar Even-Zohar, in addition to Perry and Sternberg, to be discussed below). In the context of the TA School, Harshav develops his over-arching theory, which he tellingly calls "Integrational Semantics" (a term he begins utilizing in the 1970s and adopts as the official title in the 1980s).[428] As McHale and Segal note, "Integrational Semantics" functioned as the "'big tent' under which nearly the whole range of Tel Aviv poetics research gather[ed]."[429] Importantly, both this theory and the research it yielded were conceived of by the TA scholars as "scientific" in the sense of the German *Literaturwissenschaf*, whose aim is "a systematic and integrated study of Literature."[430] This scientific aspiration was expressed via the very title of the School's flagship Hebrew journal, *Literature: A Quarterly Journal for the Science of Literature* (*Ha-Sifrut: riv'on le-mada ha-sifrut*); in the opening words of the journal's manifesto: "This journal, first of its sort

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[425] Hanna Soker-Schwager, *The Wizard of the Tribe from the Worker's Quarters: Yaakov Shabtai in Israeli Culture* [מכשף השבט ממעונות העובדים: יעקב שבתאי בתרבות הישראלית] (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uchad, 2007), 172, 175.

[426] Hever, *Literature Written From Here*, 98.

[427] For more about the Israeli integration policy in the education system, see Nura Resh and Yechezkel Dar, "The Rise and Fall of School Integration in Israel: Research and Policy Analysis," *British Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 6 (2012): 929-51.

[428] Harshav uses the Hebraized "integration" (*integratzya*) as early as 1972 ("הבנה כרוכה בתהליך של אינטגרציה סמנטית") (*Fields and Frames: Essays on Theory of Literature and Meaning* [שדה ומסגרת: מסות בתיאוריה של ספרות ומשמעות] [Jerusalem: The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, Tel Aviv University, 1972], 14). He continues to employ the term in English throughout the 1970s, discussing, for example, his "theory of the process of semantic integration in understanding language" (*Structuralist Poetics in Israel* [Tel Aviv: Department of Poetics and Comparative Literature at Tel Aviv University, 1974], 1). He then adopts it as the official title of his theory in the 1980s.

[429] McHale and Segal, "Small World," 200.

[430] Harshav and Ben-Porat, *Structuralist Poetics in Israel,* 4; Harshav borrows this definition from Wellek and Warren who write: "[A]s we have envisaged a rationale for the study of literature, we must conclude the possibility of a systematic and integrated study of literature" (*Theory of Literature* [New York: Harvest Books, 1984], 38).

in Hebrew, brings both good tidings and a challenge. Good tidings since it launches a new phase in the study of literature in Israel. A challenge, since it would demand of us the development of a systematic discipline at the highest scientific level possible today." The scientific urge of the School did not preclude it from having a declared national goal. As the manifesto makes clear, the School strove to introduce the national literature into the realm of World Literature, and to radically expand the category of Israeli literature so that it includes voices previously considered as Other, like those of Yiddish and Arabic literature, restoring the multilingual formation of Jewish literature in general and of Hebrew literature in particular[431]: "The question closest to our hearts: does Hebrew literature in its multiple forms, and the texts produced by the people of Israel in Yiddish and other languages, receive a literary examination as careful and comprehensive as that accorded in relation to other literatures?"[432] In that sense, the school engendered a much-warranted revolution in the sphere of Hebrew literary criticism. It strove to dislodge literary interpretation from its Zionist teleological confines and opened the door to a more capacious and multilingual conception of Jewish, rather than solely Hebrew, literature. Yet the School aimed to achieve its national goal precisely by avoiding any national imprint on the its methodology. In order to make sure that Hebrew and Jewish literatures were not read as a Zionist "tools of indoctrination" or "vehicles of ideology," to quote Harshav and Ziva Ben-Porat, the TA School organized itself around the image of an "epistemic' reader, who does not impose his own idiosyncrasies but who constructs only such meanings which can be justified from within a given text."[433] This universal reader does not impose her Zionist, Jewish, or Israeli identity on the text, but is able to look at it through a universal, analytic, and systematic lens. One of the implicit goals of the School, then, was to produce such a "scientific," non-idiosyncratic reader of Israeli literature. It is my contention that TA School members astutely recognized the pedagogical impulse embedded in the American New Critical creed, and that they adopted the Anglophone school as a method of subject formation.

The TA School's interaction with American theory was in no way one of passive reception. These scholars modeled much of their approach on Wellek, whose *Theory of Literature* served in many ways as the School's "Bible."[434] Like Wellek, the School's members were invested in the intersection between East European literary theory and Anglo-American ideas, and in that spirit, they brought foreign sensibilities to bear on close reading as well. They titled their practice "maximalist reading" and "attached reading" interchangeably (terms whose etymology I will return to), and reconfigured the method in accordance with Roman Ingarden's phenomenology, a theory that stresses the active realization (*Konkretisierung*) of the text by the reader. More specifically, the TA scholars believed the American New Critics depicted the reading process in too static of a light, imagining the reader to perceive the literary text in one stroke as a fixed and unchanged entity. As Menakhem Perry writes: "The Anglo-American 'New Criticism' is based, essentially, on a static vision of the poem," neglecting the "temporality of the reading process."[435]

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[431] In the journal *Ha-Sifrut*, Yosef Sadan and Sasson Somekh regularly published articles on Arabic literature; Benjamin Harshav, Menakhem Perry, and Uriel Weinreich were central voices in the discussion of Yiddish literature; and Joseph Yahalom, Israel Levin, and Zvi Malachi dedicated much of their articles to the tradition of the *Piyyut*, associated with *Mizrahi* culture (i.e., that of Jews of North African and Middle-Eastern descent).

[432] *Ha-Sifrut* 1 (1968): 1.

[433] Harshav and Ben-Porat lament that "literature became a tool of indoctrination in the Israeli school system" and "criticism was interested primarily in literature as a vehicle of ideology" (*Structuralist Poetics in Israel*, 4).

[434]Menakhem Perry, interviewed by the author, July 6, 2016.

[435] Menakhem Perry, "'O Rose Thou Art Sick': On the Devices of Meaning Construction in William Faulkner's 'a Rose for Emily,' and Reflections on a Theory of Rhetoric in Literature" [על תחבולות בניית המשמעות ב"ורד לאמילי" לוויליאם פוקנר והפלגות לתיאוריה של הריטוריקה בסיפורת], *Siman Kri'a* 3/4 (1974): 428. A version of this article in English

As a response, the School relied on Ingarden and zoomed in on the reader's cognition in order to render the dynamic nature of reading. It was this exploration of New Critical close reading through a phenomenological lens that allowed the TA School to be ahead of its time and develop a reader-response theory before and in tandem with such reception theories as Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser's (to later become among the School's most central interlocutors).[436] Going beyond the School's explicit declarations, I would suggest that its emphasis on the active role of the reader in "realizing" the text was not only a revision of close reading, but also a recognition of the impulse already implicit in New Critical theory. As I've shown in earlier chapters, the American New Critics themselves implicitly instructed the reader in producing the text as an ostensibly "static" independent entity via her arduous cognitive process of attention as self-depletion. Similarly, I contend that the Israeli critics strove to mold a "scientific" reader by educating her in utilizing "attention-as-integration," that is, suspending national and parochial identification and investing cognitive efforts in the integration of the text, a process I elaborate on below. To push this claim even further, I surmise that while the TA School made explicit (and celebrated) the New Critical implicit assumption about the reader's active role in creating the text, the Israeli critics shared with their American colleagues the tendency to keep covert their vision of close reading as a practice that shapes its very reader.

For the TA Scholars, integration is both the basic characteristic of literature and the main end of close reading. As Harshav and Ben-Porat assert, "a work of literature is a certain set of language elements, called the text. A text implies a whole network of linkings between elements, to be made by the reader."[437] Here as elsewhere, it remains ambiguous throughout the School's writings whether the "linkings between elements" are an inherent trait of the literary work to be uncovered by the reader or a result of the reader's active mental construction; is integration to be "made" or to be "found" by the reader? The former option would imply, in the spirit of Russian Formalism, that "literariness" is an intrinsic feature of specific texts. Under this assumption, the reader should be instructed in identifying rather than engendering links. The latter option is more radical. It implies that the close reader should be endowed with the ability to produce "linkings" where they might never have been before. It is this possibility that arises from Harshav and Ben-Porat's later definition of literature: "a text is a body of language full of gaps, ellipses, unlinked units, to be read and understood, i.e. to be filled out and reorganized in the mind of the 'proper' reader."[438] Thus, works of literature consist of "unlinked units" and it is the reader – whose mind has been made "proper" – who is responsible for reorganizing the text into a "network of linkings." As we shall see, a middle ground between the two options can be found in TA theory, as it was in the American and Brazilian cases as well: the reader is indeed trained in forming rather than recognizing connectivity, but she is also directed towards texts that are assumed to encourage this mental endeavor. That is, the School endorsed the creation of, and educated its readers to favor, literary works that fit with what they conceived of as an aesthetics of attention. However, before exploring what formal features the TA critics identified as inducing integration, it is pertinent to first follow their perception of the mind of the "proper" reader.

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was later published as "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates Its Meanings [With an Analysis of Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily']," *Poetics Today* 1, no. 1/2 (1979): 35-64; 311-61.

[436] In my mind, the American reader-response theories as well developed out of rather than against the New Critical creed. In that sense, it is not coincidental that Stanley Fish was a student of Cleanth Brooks; see Beck and Rhoades, "'Stanley Fish was My Reader,'"211-27.

[437] Harshav and Ben-Porat, *Structuralist Poetics in Israel*, 13.

[438] Ibid., 15.

It is here that we arrive at the intersection of attention, integration, and maximalization. For the TA Scholars, close reading signified a maximal realization of possible intra-textual links, a task contingent on the reader's capacity to attend. In his "An Outline of Integrational Semantics," Harshav writes:

> Though some of the specific techniques as observed here may be conventions of literature, and the close and exhaustive attention to the details may be borrowed from literary interpretation, there is nothing literary about semantic integration itself. We merely attend to a "maximal reading" of the text. The technique of this very elementary example of semantic integration is valid for any text containing scattered elements for the presentation of one reference or one *fr* [frame of reference].[439]

To differentiate from the examples above, Harshav here is explicit about the generative role of the reader in constructing textual links. Literature appears more integrated than other texts not due to its unique nature (its "literariness"), but as a result of reading "conventions." When engaging with literature, readers are taught to "maximize" the links between "scattered elements," a "technique" that could potentially be applied to any text whatsoever. The basic readerly activity responsible for producing integration, we are told, is "close and exhaustive attention to the details." And this mental task is so familiar and engrained that we should "*merely* attend" in order to perform a "maximal reading." Still, Harshav sets the bar very high as to what the reader's attention should achieve: "[W]e may speak of an ideal 'maximal' meaning of a text, based on the assumption that all possible interconnected constructions of meaning are necessary and that there is a maximal functionality to all elements and orders of elements in a text."[440] Ideally, then, the "proper" close reader will realize via attention "all possible interconnected constructions of meaning" and prove functional "all elements and orders of elements in a text." Clearly, Harshav and his colleagues are well aware that no "ideal" readers truly exist, but in presenting this horizon of expectation, they pedagogically outlined a model to strive for, if not to achieve.

The understanding of attention as the labor of maximal integration explicates the School's choice to translate the English "close reading" into both "attached reading" (*kri'a tzemda*) and "maximalist reading" (*kri'a maximalit*), interchangeably. "Maximum" connotes of course both quantitative and qualitative abundance. And indeed, the School conceptualized close reading at its *best* as the assembling of *the greatest amount* of textual elements under one interpretation, or, in the School's terms, the creation of maximal linkage (*rav-kishuriyut*) among elements, described as "patterning" (*tivnut*). I will mostly employ the term "maximalist reading" since it translates quite easily into English, while "*Kri'a tzemda*" holds a range of connotations in Hebrew that are difficult to consolidate into one English term. The term "*tzemuda*" resonates in Hebrew with two central meanings, an adjectival and a verbal one. The adjective "*tzamud*" resembles the English "close" but denotes a tighter, physical proximity, significantly "closer" than "close" (*karov*): "*tzamud*" hints at being attached, having an intimacy with the text (perhaps even an overbearing one). Accordingly, TAU scholars demanded of their readers a forensic examination of the text, a scrutiny of details considerably more intense than that exhibited in the American or Brazilian case. The second meaning of "*tzamud*," as a participle derived from the three-letter verbal root *tz-m-d*, evokes the verb *le-hatzmid*, which signifies coupling, pairing, bringing elements together, namely,

[439] Benjamin Harshav, "An Outline of Integrational Semantics," in *Explorations in Poetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 100.
[440] Harshav and Ben-Porat, *Structuralist Poetics in Israel*, 15.

an act of consolidation or unification, and this is where "integration" comes into play. The School's members imagined the process of reading first and foremost as an act of centralization, of "exhausting" or "maximizing" the possible connections between the apparently "peripheral" details of the text and its core, or between the work's larger units, such as subplots, and its overarching structure.

While Harshav sets the theoretical foundations for the ideal of maximalist reading, the majority of his work was not conducted in the field of "interpretation" but in those he referred to as "poetics" and the study of "literature generally, in its historical existence." In fact, in his work on the meaning of sound patterns he implicitly casts doubt on his own assumption that in a literary work "all possible interconnected constructions of meaning are necessary and that there is a maximal functionality to all elements and orders of elements in a text."[441] Nonetheless, his conceptualization (rather than practice) of literary interpretation as dependent on attention-as-integration became deeply ingrained in the TA School scholarship, embraced and amplified by his students and colleagues.

This is already evident in the 1971 volume of *Ha-Sifrut*, where the section "Important Figures in Literary Theory" is dedicated to I.A. Richards. The opening article is written by Naomi Tamir, then completing her dissertation on the British thinker under the guidance of Harshav.[442] However, as the article openly declares, its agenda was not to focus on the British scholar in isolation, but to demonstrate his theory's inextricable link to both the American strand of New Criticism, and to Czech Structuralism. Tamir aspires to bring Richards' theory in line with Wellek's view of the literary object in *Theory of Literature* (1948), and Monroe C. Beardsley's in *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (1958), as well as to free Richards from the American New Critics' allegations that he defined "the work of art through its creator and consumer while ignoring the work itself."[443] In response, she labors to demonstrate that Richards too saw the literary work as autonomous. Tamir writes,

> From my selective readings in Richards' oeuvre there arises a theory of literature that views the poem as an autonomous and complex object in which every element must fit in with the rest and serve a purpose, be functional. The various elements maintain reciprocal relations and are interdependent… The power of poetry is in its minute, delicate details and their interconnections, which is why poetry necessitates an intensive, recurring reading practice that involves attention to the smallest of details… Even though his critics did him no justice and distorted several of his ideas, Richards' theory was able to influence the field enormously: it was able to direct attention to the work of literature itself, to its complex language, to what distinguishes it from other phenomena.[444]

Tamir's vocabulary attests to her TA School interest in "integration," which leads her to depict Richards' work in terms quite distinct from the conventional view. Instead of focusing on his pedagogical project, a-historicity, or psychological orientation – the traditional lens through which his "practical criticism" is described – Tamir understands the import of Richards' vision to lie in

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[441] See Benjamin Harshav, "The Meaning of Sound Patterns in Poetry: An Interaction Theory," *Poetics Today* 2, no. 1 (1980): 39-56.
[442] Naomi Tamir, "I. A. Richards as a Theoretician of Literature" [א.א. ריצ'רדס כתיאורטיקן של ספרות], *Ha-Sifrut* 4, no. 3 (1973): 442.
[443] Ibid., 441.
[444] Ibid., 442, 472.

his assumption that in the poem, "every element must fit in with the rest and serve a purpose, be functional. The various elements maintain reciprocal relations and are interdependent." This is, of course, almost a verbatim repetition of Harshav's abovementioned dictum, and it implies that the poem *is* essentially integrated: in the poem "every element *must* fit," and "the various elements *maintain* reciprocal relations [emphasis added]." Immediately following, however, when the term "attention" enters her vocabulary, Tamir presents a different view. The poem's elements are not essentially interrelated, since they "necessitate" a reader who will conduct the "intensive" labor of integrating these details.

By and large, Tamir leaves veiled the prescriptive thrust of the TA School's theory, as it is communicated through Richards' theory. She never fully admits to the mental education required for "attention to the smallest of details" to take place. This pedagogical facet comes most forcefully and explicitly to the fore in the influential work of Menakhem Perry, "more than any other member of the Tel Aviv School… directly involved in the creation of cultural opinion and fashion in Israel," according to Alan Mintz. Perry writes:[445]

> [T]he drama of reading will push to the focus of attention "unconsidered and unnoticed details, from the rubbish heap, as it were, of our observations" (to borrow Freud's wording in "The Moses of Michelangelo"), and these accumulated details will suddenly "click" into a convergence that will offer us a new key to the main aspects of the story. And the other way around: only in light of a decision to raise the threshold of exhaustion will my reading proposal be considered effective and preferable. Anyone not seeking a maximal reading will have no need for my reading hypothesis.[446]

For Perry, the reader must "decide," and is guided by him to do so, to "raise the threshold of exhaustion" for the various "rubbish heap" details to appear linked together. That is, Perry openly sketches the reciprocity between the reader's active and education-based capacity to "focus attention" and the view of the story as integrated. It might be surprising to encounter Freud of all thinkers in Perry's lexicon, but it is a TA School Freud, one who is focused on fully exhausting the functionality of details occurring in the patient's oral or written text, a debatable view in the context of Freud's psychoanalytic theory more generally.[447] What Perry, however, leaves vague in his description of "the drama of reading" are the attributes that qualify a text as suitable (or unsuitable) for the labor of attention and the process of integration. He thus guides his reader to assume that "details will suddenly 'click' into a convergence" in any text sufficiently attended to. He repeats this claim more clearly in a much later text, published in 2017, where he argues that all texts are amenable to maximalist reading, independently of their form, content, or even "literariness":

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[445] Mintz, "On the Tel Aviv School," 227.

[446] Menakhem Perry, "Counter-Stories in the Bible: Rebekah and her Bridegroom, Abraham's Servant," *Prooftexts* 27, no. 2 (2007): 278-9.

[447] Perry is referring here to the very specific Freud-as-reader whom one encounters in the interpretations of Jensen's *Gradiva*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, or Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* These literary analyses earned Freud his reputation as a hyper-observant (Eve Sedgwick would claim, paranoid) *archeologist* or *detective*: a reader whom no detail escapes, who ties all elements of the text together with perfection, and who is able to demonstrate how the most trivial of features is in fact crucial. However, I believe that there is an alternative Freudian reader who emphasizes a different state of attention as necessary for valuable interpretation. See Yael Segalovitz, "A Leap of Faith into *Moses*: Freud's Invitation to Evenly Suspended Attention," in *Freud and Monotheism: Moses and the Violent Origins of Religion* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018).

> Over the past thirty years I've subversively implemented a reading practice considered "literary" to texts from other fields… When [the result of] a "maximal reading" in a personal diary shocks us… it clarifies that what is considered unique to literature is in many ways a result of a reading strategy, and that we should describe the singularity of the poetry and prose-fiction in different terms."[448]

In this version of maximalist reading, it is the reader alone who confers unity on the various details of the text via her capacity to attend, suggesting that maximalist reading is a "strategy" that fits all texts, notwithstanding their genre or formal attributes. This is the version that Brian McHale and Eyal Segal rely on when they claim,

> Tel Aviv poetics is *constructivist* in spirit… [C]onstruction implies the process by which readers *make* meaning, in a strong sense of that phrase, by interacting with texts. They do so by linking up textual elements… and producing *patterns* of meaning, then integrating these patterns into even more comprehensive patterns of meaning – hence the term *integrational semantics* [emphasis in original].[449]

Though McHale and Segal do not discuss what "attention" means for the TA critics, their vocabulary points to the roles conferred on the reader's mind by the School: the reader is taught to construct meaning by "linking up textual elements" and "integrating" them into patterns of increasingly larger scope. However, McHale and Segal seem to accept Perry's declaration that the School did not single out specific texts or formal features as more generative of this mental process (and indeed, throughout his career, Perry interprets "non-literary" texts such as diaries and court rulings to corroborate his claim).[450] But Perry's claim is qualified when examined alongside the literary archive of work taught and researched in the context of the TA School, especially during the 1970s and 1980s. In contrast with Perry's universalist take, the School showed a clear preference for performing maximalist readings on highly constructed modernist texts, like those by William Faulkner or A. B. Yehoshua, while other literary works were deemed unsuitable for maximalist reading, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter dedicated to the fiction of Yehuda Amichai. Unpacking the characteristics that qualified a literary work for the effort of maximalist reading not only offers a better understanding of the TA School's definition of attention, but also provides important insights into the political impulse that drove the School's investment in the process of mental integration.

- **FAULKNER: A RIDDLE OF UNITY**

In 1962, following William Faulkner's death, the Israeli literary critic Shlomo Grodzensky, himself an American highly versed in the New Critical idiom, mourns on the pages of the Hebrew daily *Davar* the striking absence of Faulkner translations into Hebrew. In the process, he introduces Faulkner's work to the Israeli audience as bound to the history of New Criticism:

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[448] Menakhem Perry, "The Poetry of Details" [שירת הפרטים: למה כתבתי את *שב עלי והתחמם*], *Moznayim* 91 (2017): 59.
[449] McHale and Segal, "Small World," 202.
[450] See, for example, Perry's interpretation of the judges' verdict in the case of the former Israeli justice minister, Haim Ramon, "The Kiss: A Story in Three Variations" [הנשיקה: סיפור בשלוש ווריאציות], *Ha'aretz*, March 5, 2007. www.haaretz.co.il/literature/1.1391540.

> It appears that not even one of William Faulkner's works has yet been translated into Hebrew, and it's no wonder. It would take a true artist to translate his unique style into Hebrew … Faulkner is the son of his land [the South], which was shaped by a captivating dramatic and tragic history. The defeat of the South in the Civil War was not only military and political… Yet, for years, this pain did not find its expression either in literature or in historical or political thought. It was a given that the defeat of the South signified the victory of justice, progress, and national unity over stagnation, conservatism, and the cruel abuse of the black slaves. It is only in the twenties and thirties that other voices came rising from the South. In Nashville, Tennessee, there came together the "Fugitives," a group of poets and thinkers, among which were two of the most brilliant minds of American literature: Allan Tate, and John Crowe Ransom… the position occupied by this group can too easily be judged as reactionary and even "fascist"… but one thing is beyond doubt: the positive and fruitful influence this "Southern renaissance" had on American literature, which became richer in content, perspectives and dimensions…. Faulkner is the most momentous and productive figure to grow out of the South.[451]

In Grodzensky's view, Southern culture and both the New Critics and Faulkner within it stand on the side opposite to "national unity." That is, for him, Faulkner – as the predominant literary voice in the "Southern renaissance" generated by the New Critics – speaks to the acute pain experienced by the disintegrating South in the aftermath of its horrendous history of abuse. I believe that it is precisely the link Grodzensky identifies between Faulkner and social disintegration that granted Faulkner his canonical position in Israel of the 1960s-80s; and indeed, Grodzensky's review marks the beginning of his oeuvre's entry into the cultural center.[452] During the 1960s and 1970s, one after the other, *The Town*, *The Mansion*, *The Reivers*, *The Unvanquished*, and *Light in August* were translated into Hebrew, followed by "A Rose for Emily," "Barn Burning," "The Bear," "Was," *Sanctuary*, and *As I Lay Dying*.[453] These translations received immediate positive attention and were embraced not only by the Israeli readership but by many Israeli writers as well; New-Wave novelists such as Amos Oz, Binyamin Tammuz, and later on David Grossman acknowledged their reliance on Faulkner as an aesthetic model, a move that was most pronounced in the work of A.B. Yahushua, as will be discussed in the following section. [454]

The TA School critics played a crucial role in this rapid and impressive process of Faulkner's canonization, attesting once more to their close affinity with the American New Critics.

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[451] Shlomo Grodzensky, "William Faulkner," *Davar*, July 3, 1962, 7.

[452] There is a peak in Israeli new papers publications on Faulkner between 1960 and 1974. See the Historical Jewish Press: "פוקנר," chart, Historical Jewish Press, http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=search&text=%D7%A4%D7%95%D7%A7%D7%A0%D7%A8#panel=search&search=0.

[453] Translations until 1980 by chronological order: *The Town* and *The Mansion*, translated by Arnon Ben-Nahum, published in 1962; *The Reivers*, translated by Aliza Netzer, published in 1963; *The Unvanquished*, translated by Vira Israelit, published in 1968; *Light in August*, translated by Rina Litwin, published in 1968; "A Rose for Emily" and "Barn Burning," translated by Yael Renan, published in 1972; "The Bear" and "Was," translated by Amazia Porat, published in 1973; *Sanctuary*, translated by Amazia Porat, published in 1976; *As I Lay Dying*, translated by Rina Litwin, published in 1980.

[454] Yehoshua explains: "In the 1970s a whole lot of Israeli literature began to use the Faulknerian method of multiple voices in the novels… This technique was used in [my works] *The Lover*, in *A Late Divorce*, in Amos Oz's *The Black Box*, in *The Smile of the Lamb* by David Grossman, in some books by Binyamin Tammuz, and in many others" (Bernard Horn, *Facing the Fires: Conversations with A.B. Yehoshua* [Syracuse.: Syracuse University Press, 1997], 52).

Like their American colleagues, the Israeli scholars were invested in writing scholarship about Faulkner, in translating and publishing his books, in inserting his oeuvre into the academic curriculums, and in advancing his reputation via popular newspaper reviews. This investment in Faulkner cannot be detached from what Chana Kronfeld describes as the overall "shift in the dominant extrinsic modernist model from a Russian and French one… to the Anglo-American prototypes" in Israel of the 1950s and 1960s.[455] However, the School's focus on Faulkner was specific even within the Anglo-American canon; in fact, their advancement of Faulkner was successful to such an extent that he becomes the most widely translated and studied High Modernist in Israel for most of the 1970s and 1980s, superseding such canonical writers as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. In that vein, Faulkner figured heavily in *Ha-Sifrut*, more than any other Anglo-American writer, such that *Light in August* was analyzed in three consecutive early issues (1968, 1970, 1971),[456] and "A Rose for Emily" was first mentioned by Perry and Sternberg in their seminal article, "The King Through Ironic Eyes" (1968), later becoming the primary example in their theory of "Literary Dynamics" (1979).[457] Moreover, the celebrated journal *Siman Kri'a* (*Exclamation Mark*), founded by Perry in 1972, opened his first issue with Perry's own translation of "A Rose for Emily" (under the pseudonym Rachamim Nof), and with Yael Renan's translation of "Barn Burning" (Renan was a faculty member of the TA department), followed by Perry's publication of Faulkner's translated *The Wild Palms* in Siman Kri'a Publishing House. And the School's members regularly taught Faulkner's novels and short stories in required undergraduate courses in the department, a pedagogical tradition that trickled down the Israeli high school system of the 1980s and is still traceable today.[458]

Yet, unlike Grodzensky's reading of Faulkner, the TA School depicted the writer in explicitly apolitical terms, detaching him from the Civil War's "dramatic, fascinating, and tragic history." Instead, they highlighted the ostensibly neutral (i.e., apolitical) formal features of Faulkner's work and the cognitive work they believed it enhanced. In that spirit, for example, Perry's interpretation of "A Rose for Emily," to be discussed below, endeavors to prove that Faulkner's depiction of Emily as associated with the "old traditional South" does not function as a historical and political commentary but rather as a rhetorical device used to create a surprise ending.[459] These apolitical readings of Faulkner, I would contend, were informed by the School's aspiration to mold a scientific, universal reader, disengaged from her national affiliations. For

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[455] Kronfeld, *Margins of Modernism*, 125.

[456] Rina Litwin, "William Faulkner's *Light in August*: Following the Appearance of the Hebrew Translation" ["אור *באוגוסט* לויליאם פוקנר: עם הופעת התרגום העברי"], *Ha-Sifrut* 1, no. 3-4 (1968-9): 590-98; Meir Sternberg, "On the Principles of Composition in Faulkner's *Light in August*" [על עקרונות הקומפוזיציה של *אור באוגוסט* לפוקנר], *Ha-Sifrut* 3, no. 2 (1970): 498-538; Tzefira Porat, "Dolls Stuffed with Sawdust: Tragic Fate and Comic Freedom in William Faulkner's *Light in August"* [בובות של נסורת: גורל טראגי וחירות קומית ב*אור באוגוסט* לויליאם פוקנר], *Ha-Sifrut* 2, no. 4 (1971): 767-82.

[457] Menakhem Perry and Meir Sternberg, "The King through Ironic Eyes: The Narrator's Devices in the Story of David and Bathsheba and Two Excursuses on the Theory of the Narrative Text" [המלך במבט אירוני: על תחבולות המספר בסיפור דוד ובת שבע ושתי הפלגות לתיאוריה של], *Ha-Sifrut* 1 (1968-1969): 283. A later version of the article was published in English as "The King through Ironic Eyes: Biblical Narrative and the Literary Reading Process," *Poetics Today* 7, no. 2 (1986): 275-322. For Perry and Sternberg's theory of Literary Dynamics, see Menakhem Perry, "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates Its Meanings [With an Analysis of Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily"]," *Poetics Today* 1, no. 1/2 (1979): 35-64, 311-61. This article was simultaneously published in Hebrew, "הדינמיקה של הטקסט הספרותי: איך קובע סדר הטקסט את משמעויותיו", in *Ha-Sifrut* 28 (1979): 6-46.

[458] Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" and "Barn Burning" are still today part of the small group of translated short stories included in the Israeli literature high school matriculation exam.

[459] Perry, "'O Rose Thou Art Sick'."

Perry and Sternberg in particular, Faulkner's strength lay in improving the reader's capacity to integrate via his work's attention-provoking puzzle-like form; Faulkner's texts, they claimed, present themselves as disjointed, while implicitly informing the reader as to how they could and should be made cohesive. Along these lines, Sternberg reads *Light in August* as a novel that gives the impression of depicting two unrelated plotlines when in fact it leads the sufficiently attentive reader to notice their allegorical integration; and Perry interprets "A Rose for Emily" as intentionally providing the reader with two contradictory characterizations of Emily, only to then manipulate the close reader into unifying them into a complex picture of her figure. According to Perry and Sternberg, for this unique Faulknerian structure to be "realized," it must be met with a "proper" universal reader, whose mind is trained enough in attention-as-integration to accurately follow the text's latent instructions.[460] As a consequence, they viewed Faulkner's work as a fertile practice ground for the reader's cognitive labor of attention-as-integration, ameliorating her general capacity to skillfully engage with literature more generally. This makes Faulkner's work, of course, especially conducive to maximalist reading, in contrast with Perry's comment above that this "strategy" is contingent solely on the reader, rather than on the literature she reads.

Faulkner's ability to disguise integration as fragmentation, which the TA scholars so deeply appreciated, was never given a name in the School's context. In a later stage, the literary critic Nili Levi suggested to call it "a dismantled center" structure, when harkening back to the School's work on Faulkner in order to characterize the writing of Yehoshua Kenaz (A.B. Yehoshua's contemporary).[461] However, Levi's term may be partly deceptive since "the center" in Faulkner, as seen by Perry and Sternberg, only *appears* to be "dismantled" in the eyes of untrained readers. Consequently, I suggest referring to this formal structure as one of "difficult integration:" a structure which, on the level of plot, characters, or theme, is designed to present the reader with a challenge of integration. Interestingly, Frederick Jameson recently characterized (or, more accurately, admonished) Faulkner's work in terms similar to those of the TA School: "This is the deeper structure of Faulknerian cataphora, to construct a secret and a mystery which is the result only of the author's withholding information, rather than latent in the plot itself… In Faulkner, only the reader is inflicted with this mystery."[462] For Jameson, the Faulknerian model is emblematic of a modern catastrophe, the loss of historical storytelling, or *récit*, but for Perry and Sternberg, there is nothing more productive than inflicting the reader with mystery.[463] It is precisely

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[460] The Israeli reception of Faulkner complicates Pascale Casanova's analysis of Faulkner's global reception. According to Casanova, in the "centers" of the "World Republic of Letters" Faulkner's "technical innovations" were understood and valued only as formalist devices," while "in the outlaying countries of the literary world they were welcomed as tools of liberation" (*The World Republic of Letters* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004]: 336). On the one hand, the reception of Faulkner in Israel (which can be considered one of the "outlaying countries") is aligned with the "center" due to its emphasis on Faulkner as a formalist; on the other hand, as I demonstrate in this and the following chapters, the ostensibly apolitical Israeli interpretations of Faulkner carried an implicit political valence. Moreover, the Israeli literary rewritings of Faulkner, such as those by A.B. Yehoshua, explicitly viewed Faulkner's work as political in nature.

[461] According to Nili Levi, Sternberg found in Faulkner a specific "organizing compositional principle" in which several different plotlines are presented simultaneously as if unlinked (*From Stone Street to the Cats: The Narrative Art of Joshua Kenaz* [מרחוב האבן אל החתולים: עיונים בספרות של יהושע קנז] [Tel-Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uchad, 1997], 86-7).

[462] Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism,* 176.

[463] As Dorothy Hale puts it, Jameson, from a Marxist point of view, "believes that the modern novel narrative time is overwhelmed by the expansion of anti-narrative time – thus eliminating the genre's dialectical projection of the realm of freedom and possibility," a failure that is expressed in Faulkner's oeuvre through the infliction of the reader with an unnecessary sense of suspense ("Faulkner's *Light in August* and New Theories of Novelistic Time," in *A Question of Time: American Literature from Colonial Encounter to Contemporary Fiction*, ed. Cindy Weinstein

the challenge to solve the mystery, constructed through form, which forces the reader to come face to face with the problem of integration, and to practice her mental capacity for attention.

To digress for a moment from Faulkner, we can already note that Perry and Sternberg implicitly view good literature as literature that poses integration as a difficult yet conquerable readerly assignment. This is articulated in their famous "The King through Ironic Eyes," the key text of their co-authored theory of "Gap Filling." In this study, Perry and Sternberg turn to the biblical story of David, Uriah, and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), which, they claim, encourages the reader to shift uneasily between two "mutually exclusive systems of gap filling," i.e., two paradigms that can explain many of the story's details but cancel each other out. The text encourages the reader to develop two hypotheses about David: that the king thinks Uriah knows about his affair with Bathsheba, or that he believes Uriah does not know. Obviously, David cannot hold both beliefs simultaneously, but the text, Perry and Sternberg insist, provides the reader with equally compelling evidence to support each of these contradictory options. The result, the critics claim, is that the reader strains her attention in an effort to assemble and unify the story's details until she finally realizes that even though only one option can be true in terms of the diegetic world, both hypotheses lead to a similar negative judgment of David's personality. If David decided to kill Uriah even though the latter does not know about the affair, then the king would be a "cruel tyrant"; and if he murdered Uriah because he was terrified of the latter's reaction to affair, then the king would be a "weak, colorless figure." [464] That is, the semblance of disintegration enables the Bible to attract the reader's attention and manipulate her into lingering with the subtlety of the text, thus allowing her to sense the moral judgment passed on a God-elected king, which can only be communicated with extreme innuendo. Put differently, what seemed like a text that lacks unity, that resists the unification of its various details, is revealed, when due attention undergirds the process of integration, to be a tightly organized text, one which shrewdly uses its internal tension to propel the reader to integrate on a higher level: David is seen "through ironic eyes" no matter what he thought about Uriah. In this sense, as McHale and Segal point out, Sternberg and Perry's "The King through Ironic Eyes" emphatically resonates with the New Critical notion of "irony," identifying literature's strength in its ability to balance contradictory elements.[465]

Sternberg's 1970 analysis of *Light in August* locates Faulkner's "difficult integration" not in the work's depiction of character motivation as in the Biblical story, but in plot structure. And while the role attention plays in "difficult integration" remains implicit in "The King through Ironic Eyes," it is openly discussed in Sternberg's piece. *Light in August*, Sternberg claims, invites the reader to understand the novel in two seemingly unrelated ways: as the story of Joe Christmas, and as that of Lena Grove. This is not a case of "mutually exclusive systems of gap filling" since these two hypotheses are not contradictory; nevertheless, *Light in August*, like David's story, makes it intentionally difficult for the reader to reconcile the interpretive possibilities she is presented with into a cohesive whole. Traditionally, Sternberg explains, novelistic integration is viewed as driven by causal relations, by the consistency of the protagonist or narrator's identity, or by a stable "focus of interest."[466] But in *Light in August* the two protagonists, Grove and Christmas, never as much as meet one another, giving the sense that the novel is split into two

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[Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018], 269). For Perry and Sternberg, on the other hand, the invocation of suspense, even where no mystery exists in the plot (i.e., the "expansion of anti-narrative time"), is conducive to the enhancement of the reader's attention faculties.

[464] Perry and Sternberg, "Ironic Eyes," 304.

[465] McHale and Segal, "Small World," 199.

[466] Meir Sternberg, "Composition in Faulkner's *Light in August*: On the Poetics of the Modern Novel" [על עקרונות הקומפוזיציה של אור *באוגוסט* לפוקנר: על הפואטיקה של הרומן המודרני], *Ha-Sifrut* 2, no. 3 (1970): 510.

distinct narratives and thus lacks coherence. In Sternberg words, *Light in August*'s "different centers of gravity, progressing in chiefly distinct narrative paths do not focus [the reader's] attention or interest, but work to scatter it, pulling it in different and even opposite directions."[467] Indeed, Sternberg claims, many have fallen prey to this distracting thrust, leading to the widespread critical assumption, spearheaded by Malcolm Cowley, that the "Faulknerian novel is frequently loose, even fractured, and characterized by a pronounced disunity."[468] But a sufficiently skilled reader (such as Sternberg himself) will notice that the novel itself signals the reader as to how to counter this mental "scatter": if one attentively follows the novel's instruction, Sternberg demonstrates, it is revealed that *Light in August*'s two plotlines are closely-knit via "allegorical cohesion."[469] That is, these plot lines are metonymically and metaphorically similar, even if utterly detached in the diegetic world. For example, both narratives portray a preoccupation with the "movement of escape" and "the experience of foreignness," a similarity the novel flags to the reader through "repetition clusters":[470]

> The central principle of composition in Faulkner's novel is the intentional shattering of part or most of the reality-like linkages between reality-based narrative frames… in order to encourage the reader, or even coerce him, to look for purely literary linkages (clusters of figurative language, repetitions, and analogy in the different layers of the text). [The novel] thus directs the reader's attention to them [the literary links], so as to expose him to the novel's meaning or meanings.[471]

It seems that Sternberg views the reader's mind as primarily reactive rather than active; the novel "encourage[s]" and "even coerce[s]" the reader to pay attention to allegorical literary links. But the more Sternberg depicts this process, the clearer it becomes that only a maximalist reader can accurately realize the novel's instructions, such that the agency in reaching unity shifts between the text's guiding powers and the reader's capacity to attend. *Light in August*, he writes, "directs the reader's attention" to seeing its allegorical coherence, and "only a reader who fully realizes the text's potentials [of unity] can grasp the meaning of these [analogical] links and the light they shed on the work."[472]

The second section of Sternberg's article is a spectacular performance of the critic as a maximalist attentive reader, while also demonstrating how these readerly reactions are provoked by Faulkner's artful design of difficult integration. According to Sternberg, in *Light in August*, and even more so in *The Sound and The Fury*, while Faulkner intentionally makes the unification of the narrative difficult, he never abandons his struggling reader.[473] The reader, he claims, approaches the text with "the basic assumption or hypothesis… that the work is unified,"[474] and Faulkner, for his part, "organizes the sequence of the plot units in order to direct the reader more precisely to the units he must juxtapose… so as to strengthen the reader's assumption [about

[467] Ibid., 504.
[468] Ibid., 498.
[469] Sternberg relies in his argument on Harshav's differentiation between reality-like and purely literary patterns, in the spirit of Jakobson's poetic function. According to Sternberg, the language of Faulkner's novel, as an extreme example of the modernist novel, grants dominance to the purely literary patterns, very much as in the case of poetry.
[470] Sternberg, "Composition in Faulkner's *Light in August*," 526.
[471] Ibid., 514.
[472] Ibid., 515.
[473] Ibid.
[474] Ibid., 508.

textual unity] and prevent his discouragement."[475] Sternberg further underscores his argument through a dialogue with the American critic Frank Baldanza, who similarly identifies clusters of repetitions in *Light in August*, but claims that "their influence on the reader may be largely without his conscious attention."[476] In response, Sternberg argues the a lack of "conscious attention" to analogical unity is likely to occur in traditional novels, like those of Jane Austen for example, which are "tightly integrated through reality-like linkages," and therefore not impressing the analogical unity on the reader's mind (though, he adds, a reader qualified in "a full, rich reading" would notice these as well).[477] But it is much harder to not consciously attend to analogical unity in *Light in August*, since no other integrational paradigms are to be found: "The writer *forces* the reader… to make purely literary linkages."[478] In that sense, *Light in August* serves as a pedagogical tool: it "develops in the reader a specific awareness of analogical linkages between elements," thus making her more aware of the process of unification generally and more skilled in its execution. To wit, *Light in August* forces the reader to practice her skills of attention as unification, and it takes a skilled reader to "follow the text's instruction."[479] After all, as the beginning of his article makes clear, Sternberg is able to identify in *Light in August* the analogical unity that escaped so many proficient critics, Cowley included, thanks to his own skills of maximalist reading.

Likewise, Menakhem Perry's 1974 reading of "A Rose for Emily," published in *Siman Kri'a*, focuses on the apparent incoherence of Faulkner's work, a feature expressed in this short story, he contends, via Emily's personality. And Perry too positions himself early on in the article in opposition to the tradition of "inattentive" readings common in response to Faulkner's "best short story"[480]:

> During these years [the 1930s], "A Rose for Emily" served as an example of Faulkner's weakness as a writer… critics saw it as no more than a horror story that does not point to any abstract meaning "beyond it"… Lionel Trilling wrote that "'A Rose for Emily' is… a trivial story in its horror, since it signifies nothing"… The psychopathological view of Emily… [also] does not exhaust what the story constructs, and does not stand alone at the center of the reader's attention… the story orchestrates a clever system of techniques structured to provoke readers to build around Emily a set of "high" meanings, understanding her actions as principled, ideological, and value-laden, and see her as a monumental figure (even if controversial)… While construing her psychopathological facet, the story also makes sure to shift it away from the reader's center of *attention* [emphasis in original]… when I speak of the rhetoric of "A Rose for Emily," and of literature more generally, I mean the ways in which the story controls the reader's response, making him realize specific potentialities rather than others.[481]

The same tension we've seen in Harshav and Sternberg appears in Perry's depiction of the reader's attention as well. On the one hand, "A Rose for Emily" is treated as an agent capable of controlling the reader's attention, implying that the reader's response relies not on how experienced a reader she is, but on her innate cognitive tendencies ("the story orchestrates a clever system of techniques structured to provoke readers"). In that spirit, Perry cites scholars of cognitive psychology in order

[475] Ibid., 518.
[476] Ibid., 526.
[477] Ibid., 529, 530.
[478] Ibid., 530; emphasis added.
[479] Ibid., 516.
[480] Perry, "'O Rose Thou Art Sick,'" 424.
[481] Ibid., 423-5.

to justify the story's ordering of elements: due to the cognitive "Primacy Effect," for example, Faulkner's readers will be more impacted by Emily's dramatic funeral than by her unkempt home. On the other hand, as evinced by the opening of Perry's article, most critics' attention did not accurately respond to the story's "clever system of techniques." As a result, these critics were unable to grasp the story's crafted cohesion, and consequently, its overall meaning. Only a specific reader, then, practiced in integration, can attune her attention correctly, and Perry will guide her in doing so. This idea falls in line with Perry's later claim, quoted above, that "what is considered unique to literature is in many ways a result of a reading strategy," shifting the agency from the text to the reader. One of Perry's footnotes reconciles these two thrusts: "when I refer to the *reader*'s response [emphasis in original], I do not mean the subjective response of one reader or another, but the responses that can be deduced from the *work itself* [emphasis in original]."[482] It is the encounter, then, between a "clever" work that both challenges and guides the reader's attention and a reader practiced in the "reading strategy" of integration that allows the work's cohesion to appear; and there is no work that better promotes such a reader-text exchange than Faulkner's.

▪ EARLY MARRIAGE AND *LATE DIVORCE*: FAULKNER AND YEHOSHUA

Sternberg and Perry's readings of Faulkner systematically stir away from the "tragic history" at the heart of Faulkner's work, as mentioned above. Their reading of his oeuvre as offering a fertile ground for practicing attention-as-integration – a reading conducted under the umbrella of Harshav's "Integrational Semantics" – can therefore seem purely formalist, i.e., apolitical and ahistorical. After all, their interpretations imply that if one reads Faulkner properly, maximizing the integration of the work's scattered elements, one will become a more attentive reader of literature more generally, no political strings attached. However, to my mind, this understanding of Harshav, Perry, and Sternberg is partial at best. In fact, the School's choice to follow the American New Critics in centering on Faulkner – whose work the Israeli critics depicted as enhancing readerly integration – had everything to do with the American author's depiction of a culture in a state of disintegration. This social condition resonated strongly with the racial, ethnic, and religious rifts and anxieties that were exposed during the 1970s in the very fabric of Israeli society, anxieties which found its implicit expression in the School's "scientific" theory. This political facet of maximalist reading reveals itself when the TA School's analyses of *Light in August* and "A Rose for Emily" are translated into the Israeli rewritings of Faulkner and their local critical reception.

At the center of Faulkner's literary adaptation into Hebrew stands the work of A.B. Yehoshua, who began publishing short stories in 1962 and transitioned to novelistic form in the late 1970s with *The Lover* (1977) and *Late Divorce* (1982).[483] This genre transition, explained by critics as a shift from Kafkaesque allegories to a stream of consciousness technique, was precipitated, as Yehoshua himself repeatedly declared, by his reading of Faulkner, both in the original and in translation. And Yehoshua's fascination with the American author cannot be understood without the mediation of the TA School. Not only did he feed off their public endorsement of Faulkner, but Yehoshua was also personally engaged with the School's projects:

[482] Ibid., 425.

[483] A. B. Yehoshua, *A Late Divorce*, trans. Hillel Halkin (New York: Doubleday, 1984). All quotes from the novel are taken from Halkin's translation into English, apart from those related to the tenth chapter ("The Final Night"), which was not included in the American publication of the novel. Hence, quotes from it will rely on the 2010 reedited edition, and will be translated by me. The American translation follows the 1982 Hebrew edition of *A Late Divorce*. For a discussion of the differences between the 1982 and 2010 editions, see f.n. 507 below.

he regularly published reviews and essays in *Siman-Kri'a* – the journal Perry founded and edited from 1972-1991, and his own work has been edited from the early 70s onwards by Perry's publishing house.[484] When this close affiliation is taken into consideration, it turns out that Yehoshua not only espoused the TA School's understanding of Faulkner as cultivating a maximalist attentive reader, but also shrewdly identified this pedagogical capacity as holding national significance. As a consequence, Yehoshua makes manifest that he mobilizes Faulkner's training of the reader in integrating the ostensibly fragmented text, not only in order to enhance her capacities as a reader of literature, but also for the sake of instructing her in cognitively uniting the fractured Israeli body politic.

This political conception of "difficult integration" plays itself out most emphatically in Yehoshua's Faulknerian novels, where the tension between unity and disunity is presented to the reader both through a puzzle-like narrative structure organized around internal monologues, and via the diegetic world which depicts a society on the verge of, yet never fully in, disintegration. In this manner, Yehoshua's work vacillates and functions as a point of conjunction between the two meanings of "integration" that circulate in Israeli culture of the 1970s: on the one hand, the desire to cultivate a cognitively integrating reader and a body of Israeli literature that would aesthetically provoke this mental labor; and on the other hand, the anxiety of social disintegration that permeates the public discourse. The easy intermingling of the two in Yehoshua's work attests, I believe, to the political shadow that haunts the ostensibly purely "scientific" research of the TA School. This is not to say that Yehoshua's work did not itself engage in political repression at this point in time. As Dror Mishani recently demonstrated, Yehoshua of the 1970s and early 80s steered away from the question of *Mizrahi* exclusion, which bore upon him personally, and presented his Israeli-Arab characters in highly ambivalent light, in line with the values of the Israeli liberal left of his time.[485] Yehoshua, after all (very much like the abovementioned Zach), aligned himself via Faulkner with masculine, white, and western modernism, thus breaking away from anything levantine. However, unlike the TA School critics who promoted his work, Yehoshua explicitly engaged with the political gaps opening up around him.

There is nothing new in claiming that Yehoshua's *The Lover* and *A Late Divorce* depict the fragmentation of Israeli society in the 1970s. In fact, these novels are regularly read as national allegories, very much in the vein of the interpretive tradition the TA School was fervently trying to battle. *A Late Divorce* follows the story of Yehuda Kaminka, who returns to Israel from the U.S. in order to seek a divorce from his wife, who is hospitalized in a mental ward, only to finally be murdered by his wife's friend. And this narrative, which slowly unfolds through a series of the family members' internal monologues, is conventionally taken to allegorically portray the disintegrating Israeli social fabric. Shmuel Huppert's review, "The Centre Cannot Hold," is paradigmatic in this regard, claiming that the novel's "disintegration reaches beyond the personal to the collective. Naomi, who, losing her sanity, tries to murder her husband, embodies the violence of her family, and of Israeli society, whose tribal-traditional-fatherly center no longer holds it together […] the Kaminka family, and schizophrenic Naomi, are a symbol of the conflicts,

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[484] A.B. Yehoshua, "Some Notes on the Israeli Literary Review [*Recenzia*] with a Review Enclosed" ["כמה הערות על הרצנזיה הישראלית בצירוף רצנזיה"], *Siman Kri'a* 7 (1977): 422-5; "Writing Prose: A Conversation with A.B. Yehoshua" ["לכתוב פרוזה: שיחה עם א.ב. יהושע"], interview by Menakhem Perry and Nissim Calderon, *Siman Kri'a* 5 (1976): 280.

[485] Dror Mishani, "A.B. Yehoshua and His Father Jacob Visit S. Y. Agnon" [א.ב. יהושע ואביו יעקב מבקרים אצל ש.י. עגנון], *Ot* 7 (2017): 215-26. Ranen Omer-Sherman suggests that Yehoshua takes a much more radical stance in relation to the Israeli occupation and the status of Arab-Israeli citizens in his 2001 novel *The Liberated Bride* [*הכלה המשחררת*] ("The Guests and Hosts in A. B. Yehoshua's *The Liberated Bride*," *Shofar* 31, no. 3 [2013]: 25-63).

violence and self-destruction that characterize Israeli existence."[486] Similarly, Yosef Oren argues, "What the plot and story [of *A Late Divorce*] are missing can be fully complemented if we recall that the novel's events parallel those of the state," and Haim Chertok states, "In both *A Late Divorce* and *The Lover* [Yehoshua] seems to use [the family] as a figure, almost a trope for the conflict and disintegration of Israel as a whole."[487] What these critics, however, do not take into account is the affinity between Yehoshua's obsession with social disintegration and the TA School's ideal of maximalist reading. They also rarely discuss the link Yehoshua might have found between Faulkner's own investment in the American social dismantling and his own, and the ways in which Yehoshua formally thematized the fluctuation between unity and disunity in both novels.[488]

The truth is that Yehoshua is attracted to Faulkner's novels precisely because they deal with (dis)integration both formally and thematically. He makes that clear when explaining in retrospect – tellingly, to his American interviewer, Joseph Cohen – that his interest in Faulkner's narratological "method of multiple voices" was fueled by a political preoccupation:

> [Faulkner's] monologue provided a form to mirror… the gradual crumbling of the center of national values and cultural experience, a process that only intensified in the eighties… because the ideological center of Israel was dismantling itself, we [the writers of the 1970s] felt we didn't have the possibility of really representing the Israeli society through an authoritative, controlling, single voice… We felt that if you really want to represent Israeli reality in the 1970s – and this was our starting point – you have to bring it to the reader through different voices. There was no authority anymore as there had been in the 1950s and 1960s… In the 1970s, when I started to write my novels, I felt incapable of taking the controlling position and responsibility of an omniscient narrator who can really control the novel and speak on behalf of one hero.[489]

Like Sternberg and Perry, Yehoshua identifies Faulkner's work as puzzle-like: it presents the reader with a fictional reality refracted "through different voices." But while the TA Scholars

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[486] Shmuel Huppert, "The Centre Cannot Hold: An Exploration of A.B. Yehoshua's New Novel, *A Late Divorce*" [המרכז שאיבד את כוחו המלכד: עיון ברומן החדש של א.ב. יהושע *גירושים מאוחרים*], *Zehut* 3 (1983): 190, 194.

[487] Yosef Oren, "The State's History as a Marriage Plot" ["תולדות המדינה כסיפור נישואים"], *Yedi'ot Acharonot*, July 16, 1982; Chaim Chertok, "A.B. Yehoshua: Dismantler," in *We Are All Close: Conversations with Israeli Writers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), 45. Hillel Barzel's essay advances a similar argument: "Without its ideological parallels, the work we're confronted with remains lacking, and many of its parts unexplained, notwithstanding the effort invested in imbuing the novel with validity and communicability to make it stand on its own without the need to search for overarching meanings" (Hillel Barzel, "*A Late Divorce* by A.B. Yehoshua: Parallels and Similarities" [נישואים מאוחרים לא.ב. יהושע: מקבילות ותאומיות], *Alei si'ach* 19-20 [1983-4]: 103). And Yerach Gover once again uses the term "disintegration" to describe Yehoshua's aesthetics and politics: "The basic condition of *The Lover* is that of emotional impotence and inability to love. Each stage in the novel is simultaneously private and social. Disintegration is a consequence of distorted, mechanical relations, of domination and mastery" ("Were You There, or Was It a Dream?: Militaristic Aspects of Israeli Society in Modern Hebrew Literature," *Social Text* 13/14 [1986]: 42).

[487] Joseph Cohen, *Voices of Israel: Essays on and Interviews with Yehuda Amichai, A.B. Yehoshua, T. Carmi, Aharon Appelfeld, and Amos Oz* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 59.

[488] Exceptional in that sense is Joseph Cohen, who, perhaps since he himself is American, points to the similarity between the social world depicted by Yehoshua and Faulkner: "Yehoshua views the shredding fabric of Israel in much the same way that Faulkner described the disintegration of the post-bellum American South." However, Cohen does not discuss the two authors' engagement with (dis)integration on the level of form (*Voices of Israel,* 59).

[489] Ibid., 51-52.

depict *Light in August*'s unrelated plot-lines or the contradictory character depiction in "A Rose for Emily" in a manner that highlights only the cognitive challenge these puzzles impose on the reader, Yehoshua depicts the Faulknerian apparent fragmentation in narratological terms that right off the bat hold political implications. He focuses on Faulkner's technique of internal dialogue and views the mental labor this perspectivism demands of the reader as mirroring a social and political crisis. The reader is forced by Yehoshua to slowly and patiently put together the various details and motivations that arise from each internal monologue in order to get a picture of the novels' overall occurrences, following Perry's command to "push to the focus of attention unconsidered and unnoticed details." As Joseph Cohen puts it, "the puzzling over required of the reader by *A Late Divorce* is similar to the suspense that develops in a detective novel."[490] Yet this process, per Yehoshua, is political, providing the reader with a sense of "the gradual crumbling of the center of national values and cultural experience." That is, Yehoshua's withdrawal from an "omniscient narrator" is designed to reflect and impart to the reader the "dismantling" characteristic of the "Israeli reality of 1970s." Where Yehoshua remains loyal to the TA School is in his assumption that, while Faulkner's puzzles provide an "experience" of disintegration, they in fact reveal an essential structural *in*tegration. He conveys this belief when writing,

> [The] center has now collapsed and we cannot act as if it still exists. In the coming years we will have to find our way in an Israel that no longer has a center... There is a need to return to something stable but today expectations are diminished. The center has broken down and it makes it impossible to present a comprehensibly ordered picture of Israeli society… He [Faulkner] exemplifies the best of world writers. It is unfortunate that in the modern world, there are more "theme-writers" than "world-writers." But it is no longer possible to close off a universe the way Faulkner did… I am a "theme" writer. I would be happy if I had a world, but I don't. The problem today is to find a "theme" capable of filling the void of a "world" that is no longer there…. Again, I return to Faulkner. The actions in his novels can occur within a three mile radius, there are all those family connections, and other kinds of connections, such as those between *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Sound and The Fury*.[491]

Yehoshua communicates a deep ambivalence in this paragraph. On the one hand, he gives the impression that his and Faulkner's diegetic universes are altogether different. In Yehoshua's fictional world, the "center has now collapsed" and "a 'world' […] is no longer there," while Faulkner is able to "close off a universe" brimming with "connections" of various kinds. For that reason, Yehoshua defines Faulkner's novels as "world literature," namely, works of fiction capable of unifying a sphere of life, a social group, notwithstanding its internal incoherence, and places his own under the category of "theme" literature, which leans on a central topic to fill "the void of a 'world' that in no longer there." Yet, despite these avowed differences, Yehoshua ultimately chooses Faulkner's "world" literature as his model, subsequently hinting at his underlying desire, or even hope, to be able to "present a comprehensibly ordered picture of Israeli society" against all odds. That is, by emulating Faulkner's "world" literature on the level of point of view and plot structure, Yehoshua is trying to "close off" via aesthetic means an Israeli universe that is socially breaking apart, and to thus forge a reader that will be able to (re)integrate her dismantling socio-

[490] Ibid., 60.
[491] Cohen, *Voices of Israel*, 72-75.

political world. All told, Yehoshua writes that "there is a need to return to something stable," and that he "would be happy if [he] had a world."

The term "world," then, functions for Yehoshua on both an aesthetic and political level: it is the political Israeli reality that pushed him to adopt a new aesthetic form, and via this form he aspires to shape a reader that will able to cognitively cohere to "an Israel that no longer has a center." This is also what Yehoshua understands Faulkner to have achieved: the American writer was able, through his internal monologues, to depict an integral picture of the American South, without neglecting to convey its disintegration. This view is very much in line with Eric Sundquist's famous argument about Faulkner's "sequester[ed] modes of consciousness," which grant his novels a "disintegrated yet tenuously coherent form,"[492] representing an acute political schism within American society, "the sectional conflict over slavery that grew into the Civil War."[493] According to Sundquist, in his book tellingly titled *The House Divided*, Faulkner's formal structure "is largely determined by Faulkner's struggle with the race question, so that narrative unity/disunity stems directly from his strategies of confronting this theme."[494] Yehoshua, who similarly identifies and carefully (though only partially, to recall Mishani) depicts deep racial, national, religious, and class gulfs in Israeli society, turns to Faulkner's "sequester[ed] modes of consciousness" because they produce a "disintegrated yet tenuously coherent form," as the TA School claimed about Faulkner's work more generally, which responds to a nationally "divided" house.

Yehoshua locates Faulkner's ability to balance unity and disunity not only in the technique of internal dialogue, but also in Faulkner's choice to focus on the social structure of the family specifically. To emphasize the schisms in Israeli society, Yehoshua recounts that "in Israel all you have to do is take a walk Friday afternoon in Jerusalem and pick seven or ten people in the street and ask each of them, what is your political program, what is your cultural program: you would find huge gaps, unbelievable distances between people who had been walking on the same pavement just an hour before."[495] This social formation could have easily functioned as the model for Yehoshua's long 1970s novels, following Israelis who randomly share the same geo-national space. But Yehoshua follows in Faulkner's footsteps and centers each of his novels on one family alone since he believes it is this character system that allowed the American writer to form a "closed off universe," even if destabilized. According to Yehoshua, "all those family connections" portrayed in *The Sound and The Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* permitted Faulkner to depict a universe "within a three mile radius" and to forge a continuity between the different Yoknapatawpha novels. And indeed, as in Faulkner's novels, the families at the core of *The Lover* and *Late Divorce* symbolize in their particularity the decay of the larger social structure, and openly speak to questions of race and social class. But while Faulkner's families usually represent one social class within the overall structure of the South, Yehoshua's families are more diverse, consisting of different social types, to represent Israeli society more generally.[496] In *The Lover*, for instance, the protagonist's (Adam) daughter, Dafi, is the representative of the young Israeli generation; she has an affair with Na'im, one of the first Israeli Arabs to appear in mainstream

[492] Eric J. Sundquist, *Faulkner: A House Divided* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 32-3.
[493] Sundquist, *A House Divided*, ix.
[494] J. F. Desmond, "Review of *Faulkner: A House Divided*," *World Literature Today* 58, no. 4 (1984): 610.
[495] Horn, *Facing the Fires*, 51.
[496] As Bernard Horn puts it, "Both Yehoshua and Faulkner ground their novels in a realistic depiction of the disintegration of the family. But while Faulkner uses the Freudian material as a psychological allegory to illuminate the inner life of the family, Yehoshua uses his Freudian material as a psychohistorical allegory to move from the family to history" (*Facing the Fires*, 63).

Israeli literature with his own distinct voice (even if a threatening one, potentially shattering the family/national structure),[497] and is the granddaughter of Veducha, who having been born in the year that stands for the birth of the "Zionist dream" (1881), lends herself to be read as the embodiment of Zionism more generally.[498] Similarly, in *A Late Divorce*, Dina, Yehuda's daughter-in-law, is marked by her religiosity against the backdrop of the overt secularism of the Kaminka family, and Refa'el Calderon, Yehuda's son's lover, stands out as a *Mizrahi* Jew against the family's self-proclaimed *Ashkenazi*-European superiority.[499] These different social types constantly enter into violent conflict with each other, but Yehoshua's families never disintegrate altogether, testifying once again to the writer's vacillation between the wish to communicate disintegration and the desire to resist it. In fact, as Nehama Aschkenasy argues, the fate of Yehoshua's families as presented at the end of his novels is far more optimistic than Faulkner's. In *A Late Divorce*, for example, "the family does survive the trauma of the divorce, the sudden death of the father, and the hysterical times that the narrative has recorded… It seems that if in Faulkner's fictional South the lost time is unredeemable and irretrievable, Yehoshua's novel does offer a modicum of hope for the future, albeit imbued with anxiety, sadness, and regret."[500]

Yehoshua further communicates his entrapment between and investment in the imperative to integrate, informed by the TA School, and the anxiety of utter fragmentation, via the two epigraphs opening the second and ninth chapter of *A Late Divorce*. The first, by Yeats, gives voice to the dismantling force that permeates the novel's narration and plot: "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."[501] By contrast, the final quote by Eugenio Montale expresses the uncanny sense that under apparent fragmentation there lies cohesion: "I still am haunted by the knowledge that,/ whether separate or apart, we are one thing."[502] The readerly work Yehoshua finds necessary for navigating these two thrusts is hinted at in the first epigraph in the novel, taken from Quentin's monologue in *The Sound and The Fury*: "Benjy knew it when Damuddy died. He cried. *He smell hit. He smell hit*." As I've discussed in Chapter 2, Benjy is known for his capacity to compensate via his senses for the difficulty in unifying the various pieces of information he receives from his environment: he "smells" Damuddy's death, and "hears" Caddy's absence. Yehoshua's novel similarly demands of the reader an extraneous integrating effort, yet she is encouraged to face that challenge not through her senses but through her cognition, in line with the ideal of the attentive maximalist reader.

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[497] Paradigmatically, Alan Mintz claims that "the publication of A. B. Yehoshua's first novel, *The Lover*, in 1977 marked a turning point in the representation of the Arab… when he [Na'im] first speaks a third of the way through the novel, it has the force of a stunning debut. It is the first time in Hebrew literature that an Arab character is given his or her own voice and allowed to articulate an inner life that is not largely a projection of a Jewish fantasy or dilemma" ("Fracturing the Zionist Narrative," *Judaism* 48, no. 4 [1999]: 408). However, the ideology behind Na'im's "social discourse" has been greatly criticized ever since; a particularly forceful critique in that regards was that of the Israeli-Arab author Anton Shammas in his novel *Arabesques*, where Yehoshua's stance towards Israeli-Arabs is mocked through the character of Yosh (Yehoshua) Bar. For more, see Hannan Hever and Orin D. Gensler, "Hebrew in an Israeli Arab Hand: Six Miniatures on Anton Shammas's *Arabesques*," *Cultural Critique* 7 (1987): 57-9.

[498] Joseph Cohen writes: "Yehoshua's six characters in *The Lover*, as real and believable as they are, function simultaneously as symbols for the author's political and social concerns." *Voices of Israel*, 57.

[499] According to Nehama Aschkenasy, the characters of *A Late Divorce* fit quite neatly with those of *The Sound and The Fury* ("Yehoshua's *Sound and Fury*: *A Late Divorce* and its Faulknerian Model," *Modern Language Studies* [1991]: 92-104).

[500] Aschkenasy, "Yehoshua's *Sound and Fury*," 103-4.

[501] Ibid., 31.

[502] Ibid., 298. Shmuel Huppert similarly claims that these two quotes form the scaffolding of the novel ("The Centre Cannot Hold," 190).

As in the case of Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, Yehoshua places his ideal reader within the diegetic world of *A Late Divorce*, thus providing a glimpse into his conceptualization of the reading process. His model, it turns out, fits neatly with the TA School's idea of the close reader as straining her attention in order to consolidate apparently marginal details into a coherent narrative. In Yehoshua's eighth chapter entitled "Saturday?," the only one framed as a question or riddle, the readers encounter the world as filtered through the consciousness of Yael, Yehodua's daughter. She presents herself as the one responsible for "zealously assembling" the "tiniest facts" of the event leading to Yehuda's death, what she calls "the story."[503] However, Yael is horrified to discover that she is unable to recall the occurrences of Saturday, the day preceding the murder. The chapter diligently follows her obsessive attempts to "retrieve" that day in order to "centralize," bring "clarity," and "join" together the narrative's parts, notwithstanding her husband's attempts to convince her that this process is of no importance: "Now you're really going off the deep end. Don't tell me you're still looking for that day."[504] The chapter reads,

> Saturday? Saturday? Suddenly, halfway through the story, I'm stuck and can't go on… somehow I lost it – I, who tended each one of those days like a priest at the alter; who stubbornly salvaged them, forever frozen in clarity, from the passage of time; who zealously assembled [literally, centralized] and preserved their story person by person and day by day down to its last detail, color, smell, fragment of conversation, article of clothing, shift of mood and of weather… collecting snatches of memory like the last feathers from a torn quilt… yet as soon as I reached Saturday I drew a blank, I blacked out completely, the music stopped… my mind wouldn't work… I'm trying to think logically about it… I suppose I cooked for the Seder…if only I remembered what I made, I could reconstruct the whole day.[505]

When Kedmi, Yael's husband, humorously declares during the chapter that he intends to write a book, she quickly responds: "I will be your first reader."[506] Indeed, Yael is an ideal and maximalist reader in the TA School's sense. She labors to "collect" and "assemble" into a coherent narrative the smallest of the details in the "story" – "color, smell, fragment of conversation, article of clothing" – salvaging them "from the [story's] rubbish heap" in Perry's words. She is invested in a labor of unification, of "reconstructing" the texture of a "torn quilt," or of harmonizing the "music" that momentarily "stopped." To do so, Yael does not turn to her senses as Benjy does, but relies on the "work" of her "mind" – "think logically about it," she commends herself; in other words, she must attend. This mental endeavor is finally accomplished when Yael's cognition works doubly, straining to decipher two riddles simultaneously: both Saturday's occurrences, and the mysterious reason that propels Kedmi to hide the details of his phone call conversation with her father's young lover, Connie:

> He's hiding something. That smile of his. What's come over him? There's something between them. There has to be. He'd never been so calm otherwise. What is he up to? Can

[503] Yehoshua, *A Late Divorce*, 234, 235.
[504] Ibid., 234, 264, 247.
[505] Ibid., 234-36, 241.
[506] Ibid., 297. In his interview with Bernard Horn, Yehoshua discloses his sense of identification with Yael: "'I [Horn] felt that the voice that was strongly yours was the voice of Yael.' 'Yael's,' he [Yehoshua] said. 'Yes…she is the more normal one, with a certain patience. And compassion. And not so aggressive'" (*Facing the Fires*, 59).

> it be… is she really capable of turning off and leaving us the… but *what face superimposes itself* [emphasis in original]? I can hear the ring of the telephone in the distance… how strongly the memory of it flickers on… of course! How did I ever forget it? Was it that morning? A call from the prison. That man – that prisoner – that murderer of his – had escaped. I have it! They called that morning. It was raining. It was Saturday. That man – that prisoner – that murderer of his – had escaped. They called from the prison. Of course they did. And it was raining. Now I remember. Saturday. I have it![507]

While Yael tries to estimate the probability that Connie has left them with her toddler, that is, with Yael's half-brother ("is she really capable of turning off and leaving us the…"), she also keeps in mind the chapter's imposing question ("Saturday?"). These two puzzles burden Yael's cognition, and we can sense her mental effort through the sudden change in punctuation and the frequent turn to ellipses and italics ("Can it be… is she really capable of turning off and leaving us the… but *what face superimposes itself*?). The protagonist's intense concentration finally generates a third image – a sudden cognitive insight – that "superimposes itself" on the two queries: On Saturday, Yehuda, Yael, and Kedmi were busy tracing Kedmi's client, "that prisoner – that murderer of his," who had escaped from prison to the dismay of his lawyer. Yael thinks of this information in terms of possession, "I have it!" which attests to the sense of victory and relief Yehoshua imagines one to experience with the process of difficult integration. Later on, Yael will conclude: "at least it [Saturday] joined all the others, stubbornly salvaged from the passage of time, forever frozen in clarity, beamed with them on that one bright screen down to the last detail."[508] Like Sternberg and Perry in their reading of Faulkner, the protagonist is able to reconstruct the cohesiveness of an apparently fragmented story with her mind, to force a deviant part to "join all the others."

The figure of the maximalist reader appears once again, and much more bluntly, in *A Late Divorce*'s tenth chapter. This chapter, entitled "The Final Night," was written with the rest of the novel but excluded from publication until 2010, due to what Yehoshua and Perry describe as a mutual writer-editor conclusion that the chapter was not "in unity" with the rest of the novel. "The Final Night" delineates the internal monologue of the family's dog, Horace, who is a "theoretician of literature" named after no other than the great Roman poet; this chapter is much more humorous, sarcastic, and fantastic than the previous – it even rhymes – which led to Yehoshua's hesitations about its publication: "I did not include this final chapter in the novel since I was afraid that its surreal nature would ruin the credibility of the novel *as a whole*."[509] Perry, on his end, confessed

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[507] Ibid., 254-5. Interestingly, the reedited version of the novel published in 2010 mitigates the fractured style of this paragraph, which provides the reader with the sense of Yael's intense thought process. In the revised version the sentences are full, and the ellipses, italics, and exclamation marks disappear, thus that Yael's process of solving the riddle appears almost effortless: "What is he up to? Can it be? Is she really capable of leaving us that child? A face superimposes itself on his [Kedmi's]. I can hear the ring of the telephone in the distance, memory flickers. That's what happened, right, how did I forget […] They called from prison, exactly. It was raining. Now I remember. Saturday. I have it" (A.B. Yehoshua, *A Late Divorce* [*גירושים מאוחרים*], 2010 edition [Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uchad, 2010], 307). In that spirit, Avraham Balban describes the new edition as more "readable," for better or worse: "comparing the two [1982 and 2010] editions is an interesting opportunity to follow Menakhem Perry's editorial lab… in the new edition the editor preferred to decrease the stream of consciousness illusion in order to produce a more readable and fluent text" ("*A Late Divorce* by A.B. Yehoshua: Let Sleeping Dogs Lie" [*גירושים מאוחרים* מאת א.ב. יהושע: להעיר כלבים משנתם], *Ha'aretz*, March 24, 2010, https://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/1.1194521).

[508] Yehoshua, *A Late Divorce*, 264.

[509] Menakhem Perry, "From Bark to Bite: On the Different Ending of a *Late Divorce*" [בין נביחה לנשיכה: על הסיום האחר של *גירושים מאוחרים*], *Siman Kri'a* 21 (1990): 58; emphasis mine.

"to have participated, along with other friends, in the writer's equivocations," and, along with Yehoshua, to have believed that the "Final Night" did not "advance the plot of *A Late Divorce*." Later, the two change their minds, but the terms in which Perry explains his 2010 counter-decision are still in sync with the School's ideal of integration.[510] For Perry, "The Final Night" should now be printed since, he revealed, it in fact "provides a new 'code' for understanding the novel… as a final chapter [it] acts like a magnet that reshuffles the novel as a system by attracting various details from the novel as a whole."[511] This statement echoes Perry's more general notion of maximalist reading as a process of pushing one's "focus of attention" until a sudden "click" or "convergence" offers the reader " a new key to the main aspects of the story."[512] The debate around the chapter's publications, then, takes place in terms of its integration into the novel's larger system, and in that manner, acts out the chapter's plot, which has Horace meta-analyze the reader's work of interpretation generally and integration specifically.

As Perry astutely notes, "'The Final Night' is a parody of several writers and scholars (including me)." That is, the chapter rethinks, through sarcasm, the efficiency of the theory advanced and developed by Perry and the TA School. The chapter also, as Perry asserts, functions as a "self-parody": "A.B. Yehoshua is smacking A.B. Yehoshua through the dog," making fun of the writer's obsession with the "Faulknerian monologue."[513] Indeed, all along the chapter, Horace engages in dialogue with what seems like the reader or the writer, both holding to a TA School standard of "click"-conducing literature: "What would you like me to be? A dog or a symbol of a dog?... First person? Second person? Maybe third?... I would leave with one wolf-like howl… but who would provide you with the code?"[514] That this "code" refers to the TA School's idea of solving the riddle of the text as a unity is made self-evident later on, when Horace mockingly says: "Should I turn the reader into a dog? With great pleasure. Gap filling? Be my guest. The reader as the constructer of meaning, I've heard of that as well."[515] This process, so clearly reminiscent of Perry and Sternberg's Theory of Gap-Filling, is ridiculed by Horace, who insists that no stable order can ever be found, neither in the world nor in texts: "Imitation of what? Of stream of consciousness? Don't make me laugh. Installing a microphone in the brain or soul, you will get nothing but a whirlpool. Not gaps but abysses. Splashes of thought smeared all over quivering objects, voices opened up into sounds, shards of information hiding in memories, emotions snuggling unordered, no organization."[516]

Yehoshua's conclusion on the level of the literary text – "no organization" can be found by a "reader as the constructer of meaning" – has bleak implications if we take into consideration Yehoshua's hope to use Faulkner's novelistic form in order to provide the reader with tools to mentally overcome or solve Israeli social disintegration. While Yael's cognitive efforts are a success story ("I have it!"), Horace suggests a much grimmer point of view: "not gaps, but abysses" are to be found in the specifically Israeli "anarchy… loosed upon the world." When Perry and Yehoshua, then, decide that the final chapter should be excluded since it might "ruin the credibility

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[510] Ibid.
[511] Ibid.
[512] Menakhem Perry, "Counter-Stories," 278-9.
[513] Perry, "From Bark to Bite," 9. Yehoshua also clearly alludes here to S.Y. Agnon's famous and insane dog character, Balak, who, like Horace, stands for the disillusion of the Zionist dream of Jewish integration and unification in the state of Israel (S.Y. Agnon, *Only Yesterday* [תמול שלשום], trans. Barbara Harshav [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000]).
[514] A. B. Yehoshua, *A Late Divorce* [גירושים מאוחרים] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibbutz ha-Me'uchad, 2010), 421.
[515] Ibid., 422.
[516] Ibid.

of the novel as a whole," they might have had a point; "The Final Night" is indeed incompatible to a certain degree with the novel's overall project of demonstrating the feasibility of difficult integration and maximalist reading on both an aesthetic and political level.[517]

To conclude, it might be useful to turn to Gershon Shaked's essay dedicated to *A Late Divorce*, where he, perhaps unwittingly, recycles the TA School's vocabulary around maximalist reading and Faulkner's difficult integration to discuss Yehoshua's depiction of social disintegration, thus acting out the tension between unity/disunity at the heart of Yehoshua's Faulknerian novels.[518] Yehoshua's work had since gone through various transformations, but in the 1982 article, "Behind All This Stands A Great Madness," Shaked writes,

> Yehoshua, almost paradoxically, had reached the other end of his artistic talent. He began with constructing large and meaning-laden structures, in which the various details "fit" easily. These [details] were not as important as the overarching structure (e.g., "the Old Man's Death"). He progressed to the depiction of life through details that made the move to the overarching structure more difficult and complex (e.g., "Facing the Forests," "In the Beginning of the Summer of 1970," *The Lover*). These details resist a quick allegorical interpretation; that is to say, resist a sudden unifying epiphany that would serve as an answer to an urgent social problem, or a complex "psychological" question. In the current novel [*A Late Divorce*] the critic must go through hell in order to reach the interpretive bliss and the allegorical rest. The road to the final over-arching salvation is replete with details, which do not easily "fit in.'"[519]

Shaked echoes here the TA School's preoccupation with details that seem to not "fit" into overarching structures of meaning. Like the School's thinkers, he esteems texts that allow the reader to finally "reach the interpretive bliss," but which do not obviate this process, as Yehoshua did in his earlier works "in which the various details 'fit' easily" into "large and meaning-laden structures." In fact, Shaked characterizes Yehoshua's work exactly in terms of Faulkner's difficult integration, praising the Israeli writer for progressing "to the depiction of life through details that made the move to the overarching structure more *difficult* and complex." After all, the "critic must go through hell" in order to integrate the text's various details. Shaked, of course, does not give due credit to the thinkers from whom he is borrowing his terms. He also, to differentiate from the TA School, puts Yehoshua's formal difficult integration in explicit dialogue with the Israeli disintegrated reality. Notwithstanding his reluctance regarding national allegories, he cannot deny

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[517] In his insightful editorial introduction to a critical collection on Yehoshua's work, Amir Banbaji divides the interpretations of Yehoshua roughly into two groups. The canonical one, he claims, is born out of "the TA School and Science of Literature approach of the 1970s and 1980s," and holds that Yehoshua's work "notif[ies] us" of the Israeli "political paradox" and "internal conflict," only to then use "literature… to transcend the political-social discrepancy." The critical perspective that remained marginal, according to Banbaji, viewed Yehoshua's work as emphasizing "contradicting forces" rather than "encompassing" them. Indeed, if Yehoshua was read against the backdrop of the TA School's readings of Faulkner, it is to be expected that the "integrating" view of Yehoshua's oeuvre would be canonized; what is telling, however, is that the process of integration reemerges in the context of Yehoshua' oeuvre not only as the ability to "transcend" formal "discrepancy," but to overcome "political paradox" as well, ("Yehoshua as Reflected in Hebrew Literary Criticism" [יהושע בראי ביקורת הספרות העברית], in *Intersecting Perspectives: Essays on A.B. Yehoshua's Oeuvre*, ed.by Amir Benjabi, Nitza Ben-Dov, and Ziva Shamir [Tel Aviv: Ha-kibbutz ha-Me'uchad, 2010], 19, 14, 17).

[518] Gershon Shaked, "Behind All This Stands A Great Madness" [מאחורי כל זה מסתתר שיגעון גדול], *Moznayim* 55 (1982): 12-17.

[519] Ibid., 14.

that *A Late Divorce* invites the reader to understand it as a "paradigm for Israeli society (with representatives from Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, and Haifa, *Ashkenazi* and *Sephardi*), and to link between the desire to move abroad from Israel (לרדת; literally, to "descend"), and the desire to divorce, both similarly failing due to the mad nature of the relationship with the mother/land (the father repeats the term "homeland" various times)."[520] Furthermore, Shaked implies that the critic's hellish experience of unifying the novel's various details mirrors the "mad" process of fragmentation inflicting Israeli society due to a "mad… relationship with the mother/land." In other words, regurgitating the TA School's lexicon, its image of the reader, and its aesthetic criteria, Shaked exposes in his interpretations of Yehoshua the social anxiety that whispers through the method of maximalist reading. That is, the urge to integrate, which governs Harshav's capacious Integrational Semantics and is then amplified in Sternberg and Perry's self-avowed "scientific" investigations of Faulkner, echoes a need for an Israeli subject who would be able to cognitively construct a unified whole out of the conflict-ridden Israeli reality of the long 1970s. "The center has now collapsed and we cannot act as if it still exists. In the coming years we will have to find our way in an Israel that no longer has a center," said Yehoshua. And so, if social disintegration was understood as a given reality, unchangeable through political action, then the only way to "find our way in an Israel that no longer has a center" had to be cognitive, mobilized by the capacity to construct unity where it seemed to be, or indeed was, missing.

[520] Ibid., 16.

THIRD PART | ISRAEL

Chapter Six

YEHUDA AMICHAI, CONCATENATED METAPHORS, AND CREATIVE UNINTEGRATING READING

Politically speaking, Amichai was much more radical than his
delightful decorations, witty jokes, and sarcastic puns might lead us to believe.
Unconstrained cynicism and nihilism, even under the semblance of docility,
are never far from the surface.

–Benjmain Harshav

One must be a real literary critic in order not derive any pleasure from
Yehuda Amichai's short story collection, *In This Terrible Wind*.

–Natan Zach

In 1978, Yehuda Amichai, by then a prominent figure within Israeli culture, was asked in an interview with Dan Omer to discuss the relationship between his poetry and prose fiction.[521] Seemingly neutral, this question was in fact highly charged, touching upon the mixed reception of his short story collection (*In This Terrible Wind*, 1961) and two novels (*Not of This Time, Not of This Place*, 1963; *That I had a Lodging Place* 1971), which stood in stark contrast to the admiration his early poetry elicited. "I would say that prose fiction is the soil on which my poetry grows," Amichai answered, suggesting a close and intrinsic affinity between the two.[522] Indeed, when one reads Amichai's *Poems 1948-1962* alongside the contemporaneous *In This Terrible Wind*, similarities abound. This is especially true for Amichai's signature stylistic trait, i.e., his metaphorical language, broadly construed.[523] The figures, symbols, and unexpected analogies that appear in his poems in a condensed, compact fashion stretch out and spread sideways in his short story collection; more specifically, as I will demonstrate, the figurative language in his narratives – which I will term "concatenated" metaphors – sprawl horizontally from tenor to vehicle, or from one tenor/vehicle to another in a dream-like manner that involves a constant shift in the grounds of figurative mapping.

The unique dialogue between Amichai's verse and narrative is evident, for example, when we read side by side the poem "My Father" from *Poems 1948-1962* and the short story "The Times My Father Died" from *In This Terrible Wind*. The first, a six-line poem, opens with a

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[521] Yehuda Amichai, "In This Hot Land Words Must Cast a Shadow" [בארץ הלוהטת הזאת, מילים צריכות להיות צל], Interview by Dan Omer, *Proza* 25 (1978): 5-11.

[522] Ibid., 6. Though the "ground" and "plant" (namely, prose fiction and poetry) are no doubt interlinked for Amichai, his work undoes linear progression from prose to poetry and from literal to figurative. This is typically articulated not in meta-poetic terms but as a reflection on the thoughts and dreams of ordinary lovers. As in his poem "Look: Thoughts and Dreams" [ראי, מחשבות וחלומות]: "Look, we too are going/ in the reverse-flower-way:/ to begin with a calyx exulting toward the light,/ to descend with the stem growing more and more solemn,/ to arrive at the closed earth and to wait there for a while,/ and to end as a root, in the darkness, in the deep womb" (*The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, trans. Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013], 7).

[523] Following Chana Kronfeld's extensive discussion of Amichai's figural language, I use "metaphor" in this chapter as a superordinate category that encompasses not only metaphor proper but also simile and analogy (*The Full Severity of Compassion*: *The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai* [Stanford: Stanford University Press], 349).

startling image: the speaker's father (or his memory) is presented to the reader as wrapped in white paper like two "slices of bread" in a sandwich:

The memory of my father wrapped in white paper like slices of bread for the workday.	זכר אבי עטוף בניר לבן כפרוסות ליום עבודה.
Like a magician pulling out rabbits and towers from his hat, he pulled out from his little body – love.	כקוסם, המוציא מכובעו ארנבות ומגדלים, הוציא מתוך גופו הקטן - אהבה.
The rivers of his hands poured into his good deeds.[524]	נהרות ידיו נשפכו לתוך מעשיו הטובים.

Without delving into a full analysis of this dense poem, I would like to linger on its opening figure. Within the context of Jewish culture, and in that of Amichai's poetry specifically which consistently (and iconoclastically) engages with traditional Jewish sources, the white "wrappings" of the father carry two impactful connotations. The father would have been covered in white in the synagogue, wearing the traditional white prayer shawl, *tallit* [טלית], during the morning prayers (*Shacharit*) or on Yom Kippur. And the evocation of "good deeds" in the final stanza (מעשים טובים), brings to mind Yom Kippur specifically, a time of atonement for one's "meritorious deeds" (in the words of the central prayer: "Our Father, our King, be gracious to us and answer us, for we have no meritorious deeds" [אבינו מלכנו, חננו וענינו כי אין בנו מעשים]). This first shade of meaning granted to the father's white "wrappings" resonates with life; one asks for forgiveness during Yom Kippur in order to be inscribed in "The Book of Life" (ספר החיים), which is also why Jews traditionally wear white on that day, to purify themselves and prove themselves pure, when facing divine judgment. But the father, as we know from the speaker's work of remembrance ("The *memory* of my father"), is no longer among the living, so that his "wrappings" now stand for the white shroud (*tachrichim*, תכריכים) in which deceased Jews are buried. Finally, with Amichai's typical anti-pathos, these two weighty meanings (life and death; atonement and memory) are put together within a simple, quotidian image: the speaker's father and his memory are wrapped in white paper, like a sandwich he takes for work. That is, the father along with his "good deeds" and "love" is present to the speaker not as a consecrated memory that arises solely on special occasions, but as a nourishing memory that continually follows him in his every-day life.

The short story "The Times My Father Died" opens with the very same paradoxical image of the living/dying father wrapped in white:

> One Yom Kippur my father stood in front of me in synagogue. I climbed up onto the seat to get a better view of him from the back. His neck is much easier to remember that his face. His neck is always fixed and unchanging; but his face is constantly in motion as he speaks, his mouth gaping like the doorway of a dark house or like a fluttering bug. Butterfly eyes, or eyes like postage stamps affixed to the letter of his face, which is always mailed to faraway places. Or his ears, which are like sails on the sea of his God. Or his face, which was either all red, or white like his hair. And the waves on his forehead, which was a little,

[524] Yehuda Amichai, "My Father," in *The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, trans. Stephen Mitchell, ed. Robert Alter (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 16. I have slightly modified the first line of the translation to fit with the ambiguity of the Hebrew, which allows the verb "wrapped" to refer both to the father and to his memory.

> private beach beside the sea of the world… That Yom Kippur he [the father] stood in front of me, so very busy with his grown-up God. He was all white in his "shrouds" [תכריכיו הלבנים]. The entire world around him was black, like the charred stones left after a bonfire. The dancers were gone and the singers were gone, and only the blackened stones remained. That's how my father, dressed in his white shroud, was left behind. It was the first time I remember my father dying.[525]

"The Times My Father Died," as its title implies, follows the various moments in which the protagonist experiences his father as dying (e.g., "He died when they [Nazi soldiers] came to arrest him," "He died when we left Germany to emigrate to Palestine," "My father died many times more, and he still dies from time to time").[526] The first among these instances occurs in the synagogue during Yom Kippur, and it is here that what was insinuated in "My Father" is spelled out: the father's white religious garments (*tallit*) are explicitly depicted as "shrouds" (*tachrichim*), thus forcing to the fore the double meaning of the white "wrappings." But what I would like to highlight in the transition from poetry to prose is the expansion of Amichai's metaphorical structure. In the short story, Amichai allows the affinity between the color white and his father to stretch out almost endlessly, a movement the text metafictionally engages with through its gestures towards a geographical drifting (or "sail[ing]") away: The white of the *tallit* and *tachrichim* expands now to the father's face ("white like his hair") that is like a letter (in a white envelope, per the convention), mailed to faraway places; and the ears are like "sails" – again, prototypically white – that cross the boundless "sea of his God." White also stretches into its opposite, the mouth that is like a "dark house," and the entire "black" world around the father that is like "charred stones left after a bonfire." These similes are multiple (x is continually described as being like y and like z), and they also blend into other images: the mouth is like a "fluttering bug," a metaphorical vehicle that is then transformed with slight change into the adjective modifying the tenor, the father's "butterfly eyes." Similarly, "the world" is described through the vehicle of an extinguished "bonfire," but that vehicle in turn becomes the subject of the following autonomous sentence: "The dancers were gone and the singers were gone, and only the blackened stones remained." Amichai's account of the difference between his poetry and prose, it seems, is painfully accurate in its metaphors: his prose fiction is indeed a wide horizontal plane from which a vertical, condensed poetic plant emerges.

And yet, this extraordinary affinity of images notwithstanding, the continuum between Amichai's poetry and prose fiction is severed in the scholarship around his work. As Michael Gluzman recently noted, "The love for Amichai's poetry was and still is reflected in the research around it; [his poetry] receives extensive critical attention," while his prose fiction "has been forgotten almost entirely."[527] Gluzman explains this scholarly split in terms of the trauma Amichai's prose fiction gives voice to: the "ongoing, boundless" trauma of the War of Independence, an expression that was incongruent with the Statehood Generation's imperative of repression. I would like to turn the spotlight on another facet of the Israeli disavowal of Amichai's prose fiction, with a focus on *In This Terrible Wind*. It is my contention that Amichai produced his short stories precisely when the New Critical ideal of maximalist integrating reading (discussed in

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[525] Yehuda Amichai, "The Times My Father Died," in *The World Is a Room and Other Stories*, trans. Yosef Schachter (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984), 185-6.
[526] Ibid., 191, 187.
[527] Michael Gluzman, "Dicky's Death: Yehuda Amichai's Traumatic Text," *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* (מחקרי ירושלים בספרות עברית), forthcoming.

the previous chapter), and the minimalist aesthetics it was associated with, began to take root in Israeli culture via the Hebrew University and the *Likrat* literary group (the avant-garde Statehood Generation poetic circle of the 1950s). In this context, Amichai's metaphorically abundant stories were deemed "loquacious," "wild," and "uncontrolled," and later on – in the context of the Tel Aviv School of Poetics and Semiotics – were systematically ignored. These stories did not jibe – nor were they meant to – with the maximalist readerly expectation of integrating all the elements in the text and their interconnections through the mental labor of attention. In fact, I argue that Amichai's figurative language was devised precisely to bring about a unique state of distraction, which I term "creative unintegration," borrowing from the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicot.[528] As we've witnessed in "The Times My Father Died," and as I demonstrate in detail below, the metaphors of *In This Terrible Wind* work to instigate "distraction" in its most basic sense of pushing the reader's thought thread sideways (from the Latin *dis* [away, aside], *trahere* [to draw]), rather than guide her from and towards a solid integrating center.

This is not to say that *In This Terrible Wind* was written in explicit response to the full-fledged creed of maximalist reading, as we've seen, for example, in the case of Guimarães Rosa and the Brazilian "exact reading" (*leitura exat*a). After all, the clear formulation of this praxis within the Tel Aviv School would occur only a decade later. Instead, Amichai published his short stories when the New Critical foundation, on which maximalist reading would develop, was first set in place: that is, when "integration" was first imagined as a characteristic of both the mental effort a sensitive reader should practice and the quality of a good work of literature. In this context, Amichai theorized and provoked in his prose fiction a mode of reading that works against the binary of integration/disintegration, which in the Israeli context would become a cultural "road not taken."

But Amichai's "creative unintegrating" reading not only cultivated and conceptualized a different aesthetic experience; it also carried a particular political valence. As we've seen in the previous chapter, the anxiety about social disintegration was central to the development of maximalist reading. And Amichai's stories, as well, are fraught with the political, social, and economic conflicts that surfaced in the Israel of the early 1960s and became further polarized in the following decade. Yet Amichai's proposed political solution, communicated via form, is not integration. Instead, his poetics urges the reader to linger with scatter and explore its potentiality. More specifically, by linking together extremely distant realms via common grounds that continually and systematically shift, Amichai provokes the reader to reevaluate the fundamental premise that a stable denominator is a prerequisite for relationality to be established, whether between members of a community or between elements in a metaphorical concatenation. This politically implies an acceptance of difference as an essential and nondetrimental attribute of Israeli society and advances a search for more tentative and particular points of affinity.

Investigating Amichai's politically charged invitation to practice "unintegrating" reading, and the ways in which this offer was declined in Israel of the 1960s and 1970s is not aimed a reproach of the *Likrat* milieu, Amichai's early critics, or the TA scholars for neglecting Amichai's prose fiction. Aesthetic criteria change in accordance with a multitude of cultural, historical, political, and social parameters, and it would be absurd to insist that Amichai's prose fiction holds some universal and atemporal value which should have been identified. Instead, I believe that the critical division between Amichai's poetry and prose fiction is important to follow since it exposes

[528] Donald Winnicott, "Ego Integration and Child Development," in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 56-63.

the reading norms in Israel during the 1960s and 1970s, and the aesthetic and political reasoning that deemed a work of literature culturally valuable during that time.[529]

The first section of this chapter thus follows the reception of Amichai's poetry and prose fiction – and specifically the poem "Rain on a Battlefield" – first in the context of the *Likrat* group and later within the TA School, in order to follow the attributes assigned to his stories' metaphors when read through a New Critical lens. The second section attempts a reading of Amichai's *In This Terrible Wind* that sets aside maximalist expectations. This reading focuses on the story "Class Reunion" [*p'gishat ha-kita*, *פגישת הכיתה*] in order to follow its "concatenated" rhythm, to unpack its distracting mechanism, and to ask what the political implication of its form might be. The two sections together suggest that the apparent dichotomy between Amichai's poetry and prose fiction should be reconfigured as a continuum, such that the breadth allowed by narrative form can be seen as bringing to full fruition the horizontal thrust that inhabits Amichai's poetry as well. Amichai's body of work as a whole articulates an alternative to the New Critically informed Israeli practice of maximalist reading, one which is grounded in distraction rather than attention and which calls into question the very notion of full integration.

▪ MINIMALIST AESTHETICS AND MAXIMALIST READING

One of the most committed and persistent advocates of Amichai's poetry was Benjamin Harshav, the intellectual visionary behind both the *Likrat* group and the TA School. The two met as students at the Hebrew University (both frequenting the New Critical seminars of Shimon Halkin), and Harshav was among the first to read and appreciate Amichai's poems, as the poet himself recalls.[530] Harshav was also the one to introduce Amichai, formerly Ludwig Pfeufer (his name before his family's escape to Israel from Germany in 1936), to the *Likrat* group. "The old literary establishment did not accept him," Harshav writes, so much so that the then prominent literary editor Ephraim Broida shamelessly declared, "One cannot publish him [Amichai], because he simply does not know Hebrew." In that spirit, Shlomo Tzemach sardonically hypothesized, "If I were to be asked (as critics must be asked): what is the asset of Amichai's poetry? I would honestly reply, I haven't a clue,"[531] and B.Y. Michali insisted that Amichai "cuts off the thread of

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[529] Dan Miron claims that the consistent Israeli preference for the "succinct" lyric poem is what brought about the "drastic dwindling of the epic option in modern Hebrew poetry." Though he does not link this tendency with the TA School, he does astutely locate Amichai's poetry at the opposite end of "succinctness." In his view, Amichai does not emphasize the "intensively-lived moment," but rather the "long *durée* of change rather than of fullness… [Amichai's] figurative technique… casts the fragmented materials [of nature] in what the poet will later refer to as the 'cement mixer' of his associative-figurative thinking… which does not cease to mix the crumbs of mimetic reality." Miron acknowledges Amichai's inclination to move away from the "succinct" towards the "associative," but still disregards his prose fiction. Even in his article comparing Amichai with S. Yizhar, "the founding father of Israeli prose fiction," Miron does not as much as mention Amichai's own short stories and novels ("Timespace in S. Yizhar and Yehuda Amichai: Two Cognitive Models in Early Israeli Literature" [זמן־מרחב ביצירות ס. יזהר ויהודה עמיחי: שני מודלים קוגנטיביים בספרות הישראלית המוקדמת], in *Culture, Memory, and History: In Appreciation of Anita Shapira* [תרבות, זיכרון והיסטוריה: בהוקרה לאניטה שפירא] [Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2012], 390, 403, 419).

[530] Amichai, "In This Hot Land Words Must Cast a Shadow," 6. Prior to Harshav, Amichai sent his poems to Leah Goldberg, the predominant woman writer of the previous literary generation (the *moderna*). For more, see Chapter 3 of Kronfeld, *The Full Severity of Compassion*.

[531] Shlomo Tzemach, "*Matzevet ve-shalakhta*" [an untranslatable reference to Isa. 6:13; מצבת ושלכתה], *Davar*, July 5, 1957, 6. In the previous chapter I noted that Tzemach played an important role in the introduction of New Criticism into Israeli culture through his publication of translated New Critical articles in his journal, *Behinot*. Here, we see that his New Critical orientation did not prevent him from continually rejecting Israeli modernism, even when it was aligned with the American modernists the New Critics advanced.

experience, and deadens it in its prime."[532] But Harshav and the other members of the *Likrat* avant-garde circle found Amichai's poetics exciting and surprisingly aligned with theirs, even though he was almost a decade older than most of them. He was regularly asked to contribute poems to *Likrat* from 1952 onwards, and the journal's modest publication house was responsible for the poet's 1955 debut collection, *Now and in Other Days*, which won him rave reviews, and proved to be his springboard into public acceptance. Finally, Harshav took it upon himself, along with his wife Barbara, to translate into English an extensive collection of Amichai's poetry, an invaluable contribution to Amichai's global reputation.[533]

Harshav was especially enthusiastic about Amichai's metaphorical language, which he read as revealing a surprising common ground between ostensibly unrelated domains: "Amichai's strength lies not in the singular metaphor, but in the ongoing collision between two expansive fields of meaning."[534] This account resonates with the New Critics' famous definition of paradox as the "hanging together of the like with the unlike," which the American critics identified in abundance not only in the Metaphysical Poets but in the work of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound as well.[535] And indeed, Amichai not only read and admired the American modernists, but his alliance with their paradoxical thrust via his metaphors made his work attractive to Harshav and Nathan Zach (the leading poet of the "Statehood Generation" and the co-founder of *Likrat*) and, later on, to the TA School critics, all affiliated with the New Critics. For that reason, while critics such as Tzemach claimed this premeditated "collision" to be "nothing but a prank, a trick of the tongue," the *Likrat* group and the TA School members, who modeled their theories on both Anglo-American and Israeli (Statehood Generation) modernisms, were fascinated by Amichai's unexpected "metaphorical bridges."[536] Harshav was highly invested throughout his career in exploring the structure and function of metaphor, an interest which was interwoven with his concern for the mental process of attention-as-integration. Metaphor for him was a formal device that intensified attention, especially when it confronted the reader with the challenge of "difficult integration" – one structured to appear just *nearly* impossible – by forcing together highly distinct frames of reference. For that reason, he discusses Amichai's poetry in the same article in which he claims that T.S. Eliot's startling juxtaposition of "the city" and "the hospital" in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" successfully "activates the reader's sensibilities and the interpreters' dialectical negotiating."[537] In the same vein, Harshav argues that Amichai's poem, "And My Parents Migration" [*va-hagirat horai*, והגירת הורי], encourages difficult integration: "His [Amichai's] mode is direct statement, which often may be taken as a literal sentence… but has to be integrated metaphorically in the basic *fr* [frame of reference]."[538]

Harshav's view was shared by Zach, who similarly identified Amichai's metaphorical sensitivity to be the key property of his poetics, and the one that best engages the reader's mind. In discussing Amichai's poem "Along the Deserted Boulevard" [*le-orekh ha-sdera she-ein ba ish*, לאורך השדרה שאין בה איש], Zach claims that Amichai chose a child as the poem's speaker since "the

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[532] B.Y. Michali, "When Proportion is Lacking" [באין חוש מידה], *Davar*, June 3, 1955, 25.
[533] Yehuda Amichai, *Yehuda Amichai: A Life of Poetry (1948-1994)*, trans. Benjamin Harshav and Barbara Harshav (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).
[534] Benjamin Harshav, "Personal Reflections on Amichai: The Poetry and The State" [הרהורים אישיים על עמיחי: השירה והמדינה], *Alpayim* 33 (2008): 126, 132.
[535] Brooks and Warren, *Understanding Fiction*, 510. For more on this, see Chapter One.
[536] Tzemach, "*Matzevet ve-shalakhta*," 5.
[537] Benjamin Harshav, "Poetic Metaphor and Frames of Reference: With Examples from Eliot, Rilke, Mayakovsky, Mandelshtam, Pound, Creeley, Amichai, and the *New York Times*," *Poetics Today* 5, no.1 (1984): 19.
[538] Ibid., 41.

child's network of associations is much more expansive than that of an adult, who knows the 'right' place of things in the world and is thus limited in the number of reasonable connections that could be made between them. On the other hand, not knowing the [right] place makes possible the most surprising couplings." For Zach, these "surprising couplings" are Amichai's way of producing "gesture via poetry," a concept he explicates by quoting the American New Critic, R. P. Blackmur: "Gesture, in language, is… that play of meaningfulness among words… which is defined in their use together … he [the poet] must do this by making his written words sound in the inward ear of his reader, and so play upon each other by concert and opposition and pattern that they not only drag after them the gestures of life but produce a new gesture of their own."[539]

In other words, according to both Harshav and Zach, Amichai's poetry activates the reader's mind or "inward ear" in a productive fashion. But this was not the case for them with regard to his prose fiction. Immediately following the publication of *In This Terrible Wind*, Zach confesses that the collection is extremely enjoyable. As he remarks sarcastically in the epigraph to this chapter: "One must be a real literary critic in order not to derive any pleasure from Yehuda Amichai's short story collection *In This Terrible Wind*." But it is not pleasure that Zach seeks most in a literary work of art, but rather precision, lucidity, and condensation.[540] As he writes in his influential modernist manifesto, which was to describe the poetics of the Statehood Generation as a whole and was modeled on Pound's aesthetic creed, the poet should "resist excessive figuration… resist the use of the poetic figure if it serves only as an embellishment or an explanatory example, if it lacks a basic expressive impulse, or if it is not "toned down"… by humor, irony, or self-directed humor. Favor "wit" [English in the original Hebrew], lack of solemnity, the restraint of figurative creativity, and emphasize the human voice, the voice of the subject who is given life in the poem."[541] In that spirit Zach concludes that,

> Amichai's image [in *In This Terrible Wind*] is wonderful when it develops his story or "moment"… and it is not good – or far less good – when it serves as a linguistic ornament alone, dimming [the story's] lucidity, or giving the reader the sense that life cannot be touched through words… [At times], Amichai does not know how to concentrate on the crux of the matter, wrap himself around the storyline, and get rid of the fluttering excess for the benefit of more solid and rocklike "materials."[542]

Zach perceptively identifies the formal structure of Amichai's prose fiction metaphor or "image" as working through "excess." But he considers this quality to be a flaw, and deems Amichai's

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[539] Zach, "The Poems of Yehuda Amichai" [שירי יהודה עמיחי], *Al Ha-Mishmar*, July 29,1955. Republished in *Poetry Beyond Words* [השירה מעבר למילים] (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Me'uchad, 2011), 325. Zach quotes R. P. Blackmur from *Language as Gesture* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1954), 6, 13. For Blackmur as a New Critic, see Russell Fraser, "R.P. Blackmur: The Politics of a New Critic," *The Sewanee Review* 87, no. 4 (1979): 557-72.

[540] Natan Zach, "The Poetic Stories of Yehuda Amichai" [סיפוריו השיריים של יהודה עמיחי], *Yochni* 2 (1962): 26; republished in *Poetry Beyond Words*, 331.

[541] This paragraph is another example of Zach's ambivalence towards Amichai's figurative language. After his imperative that a poet must "resist the use of the poetic figure if…it is not 'toned down' by humor, irony, or self-directed humor," Zach adds in parentheses, "as in the poetry of Amichai, who is gifted with an exceptional figurative creativity," thus exempting Amichai by presenting him as an exemplar of "toning town." However, a sentence later Zach uses the exact same terminology to urge poets to "restrain figurative creativity." Once again, then, we witness the degree to which Amichai's metaphors posed a challenge for Zach, and were in any case acceptable for him only in their "restrained" poetry form ("On the Stylistic Climate of the 1950s and 1960s in Our Poetry" [לאקלימן הסגנוני של שנות החמישים והשישים בשירתנו], *Ha'aretz*, July 29, 1966, 12).

[542] Zach, "The Poetic Stories of Yehuda Amichai," 27, 29.

metaphoric expansion "linguistic ornament[s]." Since Zach values "solid and rocklike" materials along with an aesthetic and mental "concentration," he finds Amichai's "fluttering excess" problematic, dimming the story's "lucidity," and the reader's mind at that.

That Zach was invested in editing out Amichai's "fluttering excess" is made evident through the production and reception history – or myth – surrounding the poem, "Rain on a Battlefield" [*geshem bi-sde krav*, גשם בשדה קרב]. And I qualify the term "history" since a heated debate is still ongoing about the poem's creation process. "Rain on a Battlefield" is today one of Amichai's most frequently-quoted poems (at times ad nauseam), read aloud in almost every Israeli Memorial Day ceremony and memorized by the majority of Israeli schoolchildren. Yet in contrast with its current warm (and stifling) embrace by the institution, the poem held a revolutionary and iconoclastic status at the time of its publication. As Menakhem Perry – among the prime movers of maximalist reading among TA School members – puts it, "The poem was seen as a blunt antithesis to the multitude of earlier poems about the casualties of the Independence War… the dead [in Amichai's poem] did not lecture in the ears of the nation, their blood did not call out from the land, they did not return as red roses, or wake up and walk… the poem emphasized what they did *not* do" [emphasis in original].[543] Amichai's poem, in other words, forcefully resisted the national Israeli myth of the heroic death, the notion that "it is good to die for our country," in Joseph Trumpeldor's notoriously fictionalized words.[544] However, Zach and Harshav, and later on Perry as well, found the poem captivating not only because of its subversive politics, but also, and perhaps mainly, because it fit with their ideal of a "rocklike" poem that enhances readerly "concentration." The poem reads:

Rain falls on the faces of my friends;	גשם יורד על פני רעי
on the faces of my living friends who	על פני רעי החיים אשר
cover their heads with a blanket	מכסים ראשיהם בשמיכה
and on the faces of my dead friends who	ועל פני רעי המתים אשר
cover no more.[545]	אינם מכסים עוד.

"Rain on a Battlefield" evades figurative language altogether; presenting instead a strong "rocklike" literal image.[546] According to Harshav and Perry, and the literary critic Dan Miron as well, "Rain on a Battlefield" arrived at its acute succinctness through an editing process conducted by Zach in the 1950s.[547] As Perry puts it, "[Zach] erased" additional lines in the poem that "diverged from the imagistic thingness" in order to create "a unique Amichaian poem in the spirit

[543] Menakhem Perry, "Facing the Dead: The Poetics of the Young Amichai" [נוכח המתים: הפואטיקה החדשה של יהודה עמיחי הצעיר], in *Il Pastor Fido: Papers and Literary Works Dedicated to Uzi Shavit* [הנאמן: מנחת הוקרה וידידות לעוזי שביט], eds. Ziva Shamir and Menakhem Perry (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Me'uchad, 2016), 193.

[544] It is interesting that one of the contributors to the debate over whether or not Trumpeldor uttered the famous words before his death was Shlomo Grodzensky, himself invested in New Criticism, as discussed in the previous chapter. For Grodzensky on Trumpeldor, see *Davar*, March 29, 1960, 3.

[545] Amichai, *The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, 10. I slightly modified the translation in keeping with Amichai's insistence to end his lines with the ostensibly unimportant "who" in order to negate any possible pathos the poem might instigate.

[546] Zach wrote his dissertation on Ezra Pound and Imagism, and later published its précis in the entry "Imagism and Vorticism" in the prestigious *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, Penguin Literary Criticism Series, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 228-43.

[547] On Zach's purported editing of Amichai, see Harshav, "Personal Reflections," 129; and Perry, "Facing the Dead," 196.

of Ezra Pound."[548] Hana Amichai, the poet's second wife, avidly insists that the poem, along with the others included in *Now and in Other Days*, was "refined, polished, and ready for print" before Amichai even joined *Likrat*, adding that Amichai was never edited, neither then, nor later on.[549] What is significant for me in this debate is not whether Zach in fact edited the poem (and book) or not. Instead, the debate gives voice to the degree of cultural privilege that the concise minimalism of this poem received, such that it became worthwhile arguing over who is responsible for its ultimate form. One can clearly notice this preference, for example, in Harshav's reflections on *Now and In Other Days*:

> Natan Zach helped with the selection of the poems, and edited the book. As I learned at the time, Natan shortened some of the long, loquacious [דברניים] poems, and tried instead to emphasize the succinct few-lines-long image (as in the case of "Rain on a Battlefield"). Amichai accepted the editing and this is how his familiar style was established, one that combines the dramatic monologue and the succinct witty images.[550]

The reliability of Harshav's assertion about the editing process notwithstanding, his word choice expresses the concern that Amichai's poems run the risk of being "loquacious." That is, they hold the potential to encompass textual excess. This property, as we know, can stand in the way of maximalist reading which, as Harshav will later explain, "assumes that all elements of the text, as well as the order of all elements, are *functional* to its meaning" [emphasis in original].[551] By the same token, Harshav's repetition of the term "succinct" [תמציתי] as a quality to be "emphasized" hints at his view of "Rain on a Battlefield" as a counterforce to Amichai's potential "loquacious" thrust, bringing to mind Zach's complaint about Amichai's stories' "fluttering excess." By the end of the paragraph, the ambivalence around the poem's status comes forcefully to the fore: Harshav describes "Rain on a Battlefield" as establishing Amichai's "familiar style" immediately after he had presented the text as a product of a one-time editing process. Though Harshav is well aware of and admires Amichai's tendency towards the "ongoing collision between two expansive fields of meaning," he does not include this property in his account of the poet's "familiar style." There is something in Amichai's "loquacious" metaphor that is simultaneously appealing and appalling.

The same ambivalence about "Rain on a Battlefield" as exemplary on the one hand ("familiar style") and exceptional on the other is present in Perry's much later maximalist analysis of the poem. From a distance in time, Perry makes explicit the reasoning behind his, Zach's, and Harshav's preference for this poem specifically from Amichai's overall oeuvre. At first, Perry depicts "Rain on a Battlefield" as an exception to the rule in Amichai's body of work, where even a four-line poem, Perry notes, "includes a plethora of images, similes, and metaphors."[552] And yet, Perry chooses to open his article, which sets forth to analyze Amichai's overall poetics, with a reading of none other than a "Rain on a Battlefield."[553] In explaining his curious choice, Perry indicates that the poem embodies a "key attribute of Amichai's poetics": the depiction of the living

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[548] Perry, "Facing the Dead," 196.
[549] Naama Lanski, "A Protest Poem" [שיר מחאה], *Israel Ha-Yom*, April 8, 2011, https://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/35847; Hana Amichai, "Three fabrications on *Likrat* and Amichai" [שלוש בדיות על 'לקראת' ועמיחי], *Ha'aretz*, July 9, 2015, https://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/letters-to-editor/.premium-1.2680679.
[550] Harshav, "Personal Reflections on Amichai," 129.
[551] Harshav and Ben-Porat, *Structuralist Poetics in Israel*, 15.
[552] Perry, "Facing the Dead," 195.
[553] Ibid., 193.

as dead as a protest and reaction against the Israeli tradition of portraying the dead as still alive. But this explanation comes across as insufficient. After all, Perry goes on to name many other examples of poems that corroborate his claim. I would like to suggest that Perry focuses on the atypical "Rain on a Battlefield" – in the spirit of Zach and Harshav – because it fits more easily with the minimalist aesthetics and maximalist reading he advanced in the 60s and 70s. Perry writes:

> The traditional understanding of the poem as emphasizing the difference between the living and the dead soldiers… is a product of "flat reading" [literally, "thin" reading], which leaves many elements in the poem neglected and unaccounted for. A maximalist reading, on the other hand, that wishes to raise the bar of the text's exhaustion, will search for a theme that will turn these elements functional and informative.[554]

As Perry's meticulous interpretation shows, "Rain on a Battlefield" is especially amenable to a reading that strives "to raise the bar of the text's exhaustion" precisely because of its atypical "succinctness." Its minimalism, not only in size but in eliciting potential connotations and associations, allows for the functionality of each and every element to be "accounted for," thus integrating all of the elements of the poem under one unified interpretation. In addition, the poem's succinctness leaves much to be discovered by the reader, and thus provokes her to activate the mental capacity of attention as integration. As he states, "in this fashion, attention is shifted from the contradiction between 'life' and 'death,' and a mysterious equivalence is revealed."[555]

Perry powerfully demonstrates his skillful attention as he zeroes in on the smallest of the poem's sparse details to demonstrate that "Rain on a Battlefield" draws a similarity, rather than discrepancy, between the living and the dead. He focuses on the order of the poem's elements (i.e., it opens with what is shared by the dead and the living – the rain on their faces – rather than on their dissimilitude), the location of line-breaks (the adjectives "dead" and "alive" are deemphasized by the position of the relative pronoun "who"), the specific cultural connotations of the "blanket" as an "ostensibly insignificant detail" (alluding to the military-blanket used to cover the dead in the battlefield), and the ambiguity of the Hebrew term "*al-p'nei*" [על פני, "on the faces of"], which could idiomatically mean "*over* my friends" or literally signify their faces. The maximalist reader, then, like Perry, whose attention is trained enough to follow the text's guidelines, is instructed by "Rain on a Battlefield" in integrating its seemingly irrelevant parts – those left "unaccounted for" by "flat-reading" – into a cohesive whole. In other words, this Amichian poem proves to be an ideal textual ground for a maximalist reader to demonstrate and practice her abilities. If Amichai's "atypical" poem is structured to fit perfectly with an attentive integrating reading, then it is clear why his short stories, abundant with heterogeneous metaphorical figures, changing common-denominators, and shifting associations were considered too hefty to be integrated into one solid center. Against this backdrop, it might be easier to understand why the scholars of the TA School – in stark distinction from their ongoing investment in publishing, studying, and translating Amichai's poetry – never discussed his prose fiction, neither in *Ha-Sifrut* nor in *Siman Kri'a*.[556]

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[554] Ibid., 198.
[555] Ibid., 199-200.
[556] In the same spirit, when Harshav recalls his invitation of Amichai to the Hebrew University in 1962 to discuss his *Poems 1962-1948*, he neglects to say a single word about *In This Terrible Wind*, published just a few months earlier, "Personal Reflections on Amichai," 123.

The affinity between figural minimalism and maximalist interpretation is made explicit in Boaz Arpali's 1971 *Siman Kri'a* article devoted to Amichai's poetry, which would later develop into his book *The Flowers and the Urn* (a title that leaves no doubt as to Arpali's dialogue with New Criticism).[557] The article, based on the dissertation Arpali was writing under the guidance of two prominent members of the TA School (Itamar Even-Zohar and Yosef ha-Ephrati), relies heavily on Harshav's Integrational Semantics and the School's practice of maximalist reading. Arpali's main claim is that the "basic composition" behind the various formal phenomena in Amichai's poetry is that of the "'catalogue,' 'list' or 'series.'"[558] As a consequence, the "central method for grasping [Amichai's] poem as a whole is a search for a common denominator… the various elements in the catalogue… first appear disconnected or unrelated to the poem's explicit theme… but the key meaning of the poem is created via the link between these various elements through a common theme."[559] According to Arpali, it is the tension between the various elements in Amichai's poems that "encourages the reader to understand the link between them as metaphorical."[560] That is to say, Amichai's catalogue is conducive to integration. Later on, in his book, Arpali would argue that in Amichai's oeuvre, even poems whose "surface" appears "chaotic" are in fact catalogue-like in their "deep" structure.[561] Yet, for Arapli, Amichai's compositional method is also risky; the catalogue is always on the verge of "running wild," and Amichai labors to "solve" this "problem" via formal means:

> [Amichai] curbs the "wildness" of the poem by using restricting forms such as quatrains or sonnets…another way is constructing the poem around familiar structures… that are imposed on the composition and organize it. This is why, for example, an overarching metaphor is frequently created … the difficulty in articulating a common denominator… is what guides the reader's attention to the various concrete elements of the catalogue themselves.[562]

Though Arpali attributes to Amichai the view of his figural "catalogue" as potentially "wild" (Amichai "curbs the 'wildness' of the poem"), this is obviously Arapli's notion, as his vocabulary evinces. The catalogue, he argues, must be "restricted" by minimalist forms such as the quatrains or sonnets in order for the metaphorical link it instigates to remain under control. And once this "wildness" is "constrained," Amichai's aesthetics fits with the process of "difficult integration": by forcing the reader to face the "difficultly of articulating a common denominator," Amichai's poems "guide the reader's attention" to the minutia of the text, and in that manner aid her in maximizing their meaning and arriving at integration, i.e., "a common denominator." Arpali reiterates his claim borrowing from Amichai's own metaphor in the poem "The U.N. Headquarters in the High Commissioner's House in Jerusalem" ("And the thoughts pass overhead, restless, like reconnaissance planes"):[563]

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[557] Boaz Arpali, "The Elegy on the Lost Child: An Introduction to Yehuda Amichai's Poetry" [האלגיה על הילד שאבד: מבוא לשירת יהודה עמיחי], *Siman Kri'a* 2 (1973): 63-95; *The Flowers and the Urn: Amichai's Poetry 1948-1968 (Structure, Meaning, Poetics)* [*הפרחים והאגרטל: שירת עמיחי (מבנה, משמעות, פואטיקה)*] (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Me'uchad, 1986). On the figure of the urn in New Criticism, see Chapters One and Two.
[558] Arpali, "The Elegy on the Lost Child," 66.
[559] Ibid.
[560] Ibid., 67.
[561] Arpali, *The Flowers and the Urn*, 67-85.
[562] Arpali, "The Elegy on the Lost Child," 68-9.
[563] Amichai, *Selected Poetry*, 1.

> [Amichai's] reader's thoughts are like an airplane hovering above a surface marked by various points, ruins of buildings perhaps; this viewer's eye can perceive lines that connect these disparate points, imagining walls, buildings, fences, or even an ancient city or military encampment… the poem utilizes a series of devices to encourage the reader to connect the various elements.[564]

In its constricted form, Amichai's catalogue "encourage[s]" integration. It creates a perfect perspective, here described in physical terms, for the perception of links and connections between apparently discrete elements, which in fact belong to one structure (they are like ruins of one building or city). It follows that Amichai's "wildness" might prevent precisely this process.[565] The question remains, however, how Amichai's "wild" metaphors work to hinder the reader's work of "connect[ing] the various elements." That is, what is Amichai's mechanism for dis-concentrating the reader from "the crux of the matter," to quote Zach?

- **CREATIVE UNINTEGRATING READING: "DISTRACT THE MINDS OF PEOPLE"**

The effort to integrate appears at first to stand at the very center of Amichai's short story "Class Reunion," which opens the collection, *In This Terrible Wind*.[566] The story follows the narrator, an Israeli man in his thirties, as he attempts to gather his old high-school friends for a reunion, fifteen years after their graduation around 1938.[567] Simultaneously, a link proposes itself between this personal project of unification and the national endeavor to establish Israeli cohesion. The narrator wanders the politically volatile city of Jerusalem in order to assemble his friends who are "scattered" like "different stations all over the world," bringing to mind both the Jewish exile and the Zionist project of "the ingathering of the exiles" [*kibbutz galuyot*, קיבוץ גלויות].[568] During the time of narration, mid-1950s, Jerusalem was of course divided (1948-1967) between East (under Israeli rule) and West (under Jordanian rule), with a no-man's land [*shetach hefker*, שטח הפקר] in between. Thus, the question of "integration" had a palpable geo-political presence, which the narrator consistently points to: the plot frequently takes the narrator close to the border, and the story is populated by "soldiers," the symbolic "eucalyptus trees," and people who "caress the walls of Jerusalem," while also mentioning historical landmarks like the "Generali Building" and "Salameh Square" (today named Wingate Square), both tightly linked to the 1948 War of

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[564] Arpali, "The Elegy on the Lost Child," 78-9.

[565] A similar idea of Amichai as dangerously playing around with metaphors that might run wild is communicated in Shimon Sandbank's article published in *Ha-Sifrut* in 1971. There, Sandbank compares Amichai's poetry with that of Rilke and Auden. Yet in contrast with them, Sandbank writes, "Amichai… does not take seriously either the interiorization of the world or the physical exteriorization of the internal world. The transformation of the human in the inanimate is an expression of an overflowing spirit that plays in a game of analogy with the world" ("Rilke, Auden, Amichai," *Ha-Sifrut* 2, no. 4 [1971]: 714).

[566] Yehuda Amichai, "Class Reunion" [*p'gishat ha-kita*, פגישת הכיתה], in *In This Terrible Wind* [*Ba-ru'ach ha-nora'a ha-zot*, ברוח הנוראה הזאת] (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1961), 7-48.

[567] The narrator recalls that upon graduation, during the Second World War, he volunteered to serve in the British army: "When they built the central [bus] station in Tel Aviv, about ten or twenty years ago, I was in the British army, guarding the [Israeli] shores from submarine warfare" ("Class Reunion," 24). The central station was built in 1938, which means that the narration takes place during the mid-1950s.

[568] Amichai, "Class Reunion," 8.

Independence in the aftermath of which the city was divided.[569] Finally, the narrative itself recalls a journey of territorial conquest, depicting in short vignettes the narrator's fleeting meetings with his old acquaintances all over Jerusalem, moving between the bank, the Hebrew University, the auto-repair shop, the post office, and a children's playground, to name just a few locations. And still, these spatial markers notwithstanding, the reader is quickly made to realize that "Class Reunion" records at best a tepid desire to integrate, if at all, both on a personal and on a national level. Not only are the schoolmates uninterested in their reunion ("Why would you need all this?"), the narrator himself confesses to be using this proposed event as nothing but a pastime: "this plan of mine, to gather all my school friends from fifteen years ago, is just a branch I climb and swing on to occupy myself. Soon, God will throw my way another stone, and I will run to fetch it, forgetting all about the old one."[570] In that spirit, the story ends not surprisingly with the cancellation of the reunion by the indifferent narrator: "I'll admit to the truth, I have completely forgotten about the reunion already. The meeting did not occur. I wrote and tried but could not ingather the scattered [לכנס את הפזורים]. And they did not even sense that they were scattered."[571] The very state of disintegration – the classmates as "scattered" like "different stations all over the world" – which premised and motivated the narrator's attempt to bring the class together as a collective is ultimately put into question, "they did not even sense that they were scattered." Moreover, the heated political debate over the exact demarcation of the city's division-line, and the national desire to unify (or integrate) Jerusalem, is presented as futile: "Barbed wire fences separated one deserted zone from another. Tractors moved soil from one place to another… They always cover up the marks of the past, not only those of the blood, with soil and sand."[572] Moving soil from one side of the no-man's land ("deserted zone") to the other is meaningless; the battle over territory is presented as nothing but a "cover up" for pointless bloodshed. And so, if it's not disintegration that defines the "scatter" and the plans for "reunion" that are at the heart of the story, what then is it?

Not coincidentally, Amichai's story leaves the reader with this question in mind. "Class Reunion" lends itself to be read as a sophisticated investigation into the essence of the dichotomy between integration and disintegration. The story presents itself as a narrative of integration only to then erode that image and in this way challenge its own initial presentation of "scatter" as a problem to be solved. Through this plot conceit, the story announces its deep preoccupation with, and doubts about, the meaning and merit of unification – be it mental, geo-political, national, or social. Yet the ambiguity around, and interest in, integration/disintegration is presented in "Class Reunion" not only through the plotline, but also – and most emphatically – through form: the story's metaphoric structure thematizes a middle-ground between these two binary poles.[573]

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[569] Ibid., 40-5 (plotline at the border); 9, 37, 39 (soldiers and the War of Independence); 13 (eucalyptus trees); 11, 12 (Generali Building and Salameh Square).
[570] Ibid., 8, 18.
[571] Ibid., 46.
[572] Ibid., 27. As Chana Kronfeld notes, Amichai frequently utilizes the third person plural "they" (as in "*they* always cover up") in order to refer to "institutional powers" such as the state and organized religion (*The Full Severity of Compassion*, 30).
[573] Eyal Bassan's insightful recent study similarly explores the political valence of Amichai's prose fiction metaphors. Bassan puts into conversation Amichai's *In This Terrible Wind* and *Not of This Time, Not of This Place* with Louis Althusser's concept of interpellation to claim that Amichai's metaphors dramatize and complicate "the material functionality of ideology (the workings of its apparatuses, practices, and rituals) and the processes of interpellation in which, in the nascent Israeli society of the 1950s, individuals are constituted as subjects," "Interpellation, Metaphorization, and the Time of the Subject: The Politics of Yehuda Amichai's Fiction" (unpublished article).

Amichai's metaphor, as Harshav aptly described it, continually brings about an "ongoing collision between two expansive fields of meaning," which, Kronfeld convincingly demonstrates, works politically to resist the erasure of difference: "in both building and drawing attention to the bridges they construct over semantic, perceptual, and historical distances, Amichai's metaphors set up an array of tentative, novel exchange between previously alien domains, all the while maintaining, and communicating to the reader, a keen awareness of their distinctness."[574] In "Class Reunion" specifically, and in his prose fiction more generally (as we've seen in "The Times My Father Died"), Amichai takes his poetics of difference to the extreme, inflating his poems' several "bridges" into a plethora of links between "previously alien domains." In addition, the shift between these common grounds is rooted in difference as well, such that the tenor in the first metaphor systemically changes into the vehicle in the following one, creating a horizontal associative movement, which I term "metaphorical concatenation." In this way, Amichai crafts a form that destabilizes the clear distinction between unification and scatter. His story speaks through metaphors, which are in essence a form that unites, but these metaphors are simultaneity made to engender a sense of scatter, to deter the reader's attempts to integrate all elements into one thematic center. In other words, Amichai creates what can be thought of as a "linked scatter," already visible in the story's first paragraph:

> One day my feet were busy walking under the sun that burned thorns and thoughts. My bag was heavy with things and words [*dvarim,* דברים], only some of which was I about to use. I carried all those things and notes and books that I was not about to use as one carries a baby in a stroller. My whole body was busy walking and listening to my own steps. My thoughts alone moved in a time of their own, slow and private, like that of lovers walking in the noisy bustle of the world. Lovers act as a shield one for the other, an insulating wall and an anchor and a decelerating substance. In chemistry, they use an accelerating substance named catalyst. Lovers slow down the process of the world and postpone the end.

The first three sentences and their figurative language set the tone and pace for the story: it is the pace of a man wandering the streets under a sun so hot that it consumes the process of thinking ("burned thoughts"). These thoughts' proximity to the "things and words, only some of which was I about to use," which he carries with him, suggests that the narrator's musings are also partly futile. And they are enjoyable as well, perhaps even nurturing, carried around like "a baby in a stroller." Amichai's reader is invited to join this lethargically pleasant progress via a concatenated structure that constantly pushes her mind away from the matter at hand – the narrator walking around on a hot Israeli day with his bag on his back – into distant and unexpected terrains, like those of "burned" thoughts, and "listening" bodies. This sideways movement gains further force in the following four sentences. First, "thoughts" are compared to "lovers," both moving in a "slow and private" time. The conjunction of "slow" and "private" is itself baffling since the two are qualitatively different: the first refers to a physical dimension of time while the latter to its subjective experience. The vehicle ("lovers") is then elaborated on, pushing it to the center of the reader's attention through concretization: the specific movement of the lovers (which in the realm of the tenor is the movement of the narrator's thoughts) is depicted as traveling through the "noisy bustle of the world." A significant transition occurs in the following sentence where "the lovers," the former vehicle, turn fully into the tenor of another metaphor, leaving the original tenor

[574] Kronfeld, *The Full Severity of Compassion*, 225.

("thoughts") to evaporate from the scene altogether: "Lovers act as a shield one for the other, an insulating wall and an anchor and a decelerating substance." The lovers thus receive a quadripartite vehicle, or, in more impressionistic terms, excessive elaboration: "lovers" are "a shield," "an insulating wall," "an anchor," and "a decelerating substance." Not only is the reader required to shift from imagining the temporal movement of thoughts ("slow and private") to the essence of love relations (how lovers function for each other); she is also asked to move through four vehicles depicting the latter, each carrying a wholly different set of contradictory meanings and associations, all this for a tenor that just a sentence earlier was itself the vehicle of a simile. The "shield," for example, can point to both protection and war; the "insulating wall" might echo either isolation or home; and the "anchor" simultaneity denotes stability and stagnation. By the end of this sentence, when the last "decelerating substance" appears, some of the reader's thoughts will indeed be "burned." The text has worked to cognitively push her mind away from the "lovers" around whom the metaphor was built, now moving in multiple directions and activating a medley of associations.

The same rhizomatic mental movement is precipitated by the sentence that follows, with a leap via antinomies (deceleration-acceleration) from the "lovers" to an "accelerating substance": "In chemistry," we are told, "they [chemists] use an accelerating substance named catalyst." Neither "thought" nor "lovers" are mentioned here, and the entire context shifts from the depiction of a thinking man walking the streets and the intersubjective relations of lovers, to the realm of science and the space of the lab. The lovers return only in the final sentence, this time as the tenor of a simile whose vehicle is implicit: in contrast to the "catalyst" that "accelerates" processes, lovers (like an anti-catalyst) "slow down the process of the world." That is, at the end of a paragraph that formally thematized and worked to activate in the reader a slow, associative thought process, the readers are brought back to the question of rhythm; the lovers, and the wandering narrator – the people of the everyday whom Amichai persistently presents as the locus of social and political change – affect the overall "process of the world" through their ostensibly "personal" pace. This first paragraph concludes, then, with Amichai's reader guided to imagine the world as a chemical substance to which the lovers are added to slow it down, an image far removed from the narrator's thoughts which served as the "crux of the matter" only four sentences earlier.

No wonder that critics such as Zach, Harshav, Perry, and Arpali were worried about Amichai's "loquacious" and "wild" figurative tendency; if we accept this first paragraph as paradigmatic, then "Class Reunion" both describes and provokes an intentionally unproductive thought process, declaring its disinterest in putting into use *all* the elements in the text ("I carried all those things… that I was *not about to use*"), in blunt contradiction with Amichai's own *Likrat* group and the TA School's maximalist imperative. In other words, the story asks its reader to imitate the narrator's purposeless and lethargic thought process. As a rejoinder, one could claim that Amichai's metaphors are designed to decelerate the reading process, i.e., to mimic the lovers who "slow down the process of the world," thereby facilitating the concentration maximalist reading entails. But the rhythm set by Amichai's metaphors is better described as idle than attentive; his orchestrated shift between vehicle and tenor, with thoughts constantly maintaining a relationality between the various elements in the text, is disorienting in nature; it encourages the reader not to investigate the logic behind the connection she is presented with, but to let herself go within this associative flow. In that sense, the reading I am performing here goes against the grain of the text, since it is my goal to expose its internal mechanism, rather than participate in it.

That Amichai pushes away from attention towards a sideways thought movement, namely "distraction" in its most basic sense is evinced one last time via his intertextual engagement with

the Jewish sources, an intertextuality that doubly communicates its message so as to make it easier for the reader to grasp it during her wanderings, if at all. By slowing down "the process of the world," we are told, the lovers are able to "postpone the end" (*dochim et ha-ketz*). As Kronfeld demonstrates, Amichai's dialogue with the Jewish sources is not based in religious belief, but works through "iconoclasm"; salvation for him is not divine but based in human relations, which are thematized through his dedication to metaphor as a formal device.[575] This is the case here as well. *Ha-ketz* (literally, the end, and phonetically close to the Hebrew "summer" through a shared root [ק.י.צ], thus emphasizing the diegetic lethargic atmosphere), refers in Jewish tradition to the arrival of the messiah, that is, to the moment of final redemption. To "postpone the end," then, is a negative movement away from potentiality. However, the attempt to accelerate the arrival of the messiah is strictly forbidden in rabbinic sources. In fact, Amichai's sophisticated game sends the Israeli reader's associations to tractate *Sanhedrin*, where it is stated that one must "divert the mind" from thinking about "the end," since by explicitly thinking of the messiah, the believer is postponing his coming.[576] By injecting this rabbinic intertext into his story via the sexually charged image of the lovers of all things, Amichai is able to make a political, inter-relational, rather than metaphysical argument. Within a given interaction (between the believer and the messiah, between the lovers, between the reader and the text), a possible redemption is embedded not in a directed effort ("calculating the end") or in focused thought (like the broiling focus of the sunrays that might "burn" thoughts), but in the capacity to think *around* the "crux of the matter." That Amichai identifies a positive potentiality in the slow, distracted, sideways thought process which he manipulates his metaphors to engender is evinced by the second meaning of "postponing the end," which arises from modern rather than biblical and rabbinic Hebrew. There, "the end" does not connote the arrival of the messiah, but the arrival of death, the termination of life. That is, "distracting" oneself from the Messiah precipitates redemption, just as thinking sideways precipitates life.

It seems I've reached a point of saturation in my analysis, where I suggest that we think of the relationship Amichai engenders in his prose fiction between reader and text through the relationship between believer and savior, between lovers, between the story's narrator and his classmates, and between that narrator and the world. But this is not to say that these various analogies fit perfectly with each other, nor that they are utterly unrelated. In fact, my point is precisely that this proliferation performs what *In This Terrible Wind* strives to instigate in its reader: the ability to linger with loosely connected scatter. By fomenting an excess of figurations that are radically different and yet connected via a chain of association, Amichai provokes in the reader neither the effort of integration nor the anxiety of disintegration, but a third intermediate state, that of unintegration. I borrow the term "unintegration" from the psychoanalytic terminology of Donald Winnicott, which might seem out of place here, given that the term "integration" in its circulation within the TA School and its discussion of Amichai takes on a mental, formalist, and political valence, but not a psychodynamic one. Yet, in alliance with Amichai, Winnicott's investigation of "unintegration" opens a space for rethinking the binary integration/disintegration in contexts other than that of the human psyche.

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[575] Kronfeld, *The Full Severity of Compassion*, 117-75.

[576] "Even as R. Zera, who, whenever he chanced upon scholars engaged thereon [i.e., in calculating the time of the Messiah's coming], would say to them: I beg of you, do not postpone it, for it has been taught: Three come unawares [literally, the messiah comes when the mind is diverted]: Messiah, a found article and a scorpion" (Isidore Epstein, trans. *The Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin* [London: Sonico Press, 1935], 97a).

For Winnicott, as he writes in an article published just a year after *In This Terrible Wind*, "integration" is a constructive process: "The achievement of integration is the unit."[577] In the psychoanalytic context, this "unit" is the self, but Winnicott's take on this process speaks more generally to the intense work of collecting and building that "integration" entails. By contrast, Winnicott views "disintegration" as a destructive process, "an active production of chaos." This definition sheds light on the anxiety that the prospect of such a state could elicit, as in the case of the TA School and the Israeli society of the long 1970s, discussed in the previous chapter.[578] But to differentiate from these two extremes, Winnicott characterizes "unintegration" via relaxation rather than effort: "The opposite of integration would seem to be disintegration. This is only partly true. The opposite, initially, requires a word like unintegration. Relaxation for the infant means not feeling a need to integrate, the mother's ego-supportive function being taken for granted."[579] Unintegration, then, is a state in which the subject feels externally safeguarded from complete "chaos" and can therefore allow herself to let go of the constant struggle to hold together the ostensibly fragmented, and instead engage in a "desultory play" with the "formless":

> Creativity [is]… a coming together after relaxation, which is the opposite of integration… It is only here, in the unintegrated state of the personality, that that which we describe as creative can appear… we experience life… in the area that is intermediate between the inner reality of the individual and the shared reality of the world that is external to individuals."[580]

In my view, Amichai's "Class Reunion" specifically, and his prose fiction more generally, calls for precisely such a "creative" encounter between text ("shared reality") and reader ("inner reality"). Amichai chooses metaphor as the basic building block of his stories – a formal device that functions through relationality – in order to provide the reader with a sense of interconnectivity, *a* and *b* are always in dialogue. However, simultaneously, he maneuvers his metaphors to transition so frequently between comparisons (*a* and *b* are compared to numerous other corresponding objects) that the work of integration, of achieving a "unit," presents itself as futile. The production of a sense of external order, which the reader cannot fully follow or grasp, opens before her the possibility of unintegration, offering the reader a safe space to play with difference and scatter rather than trying to control it. When Tzemach, then, reproaches Amichai for playing with metaphors ("[Amichai's] collisions… [are] nothing but a prank, a trick of the tongue"), he is absolutely right. Amichai not only handles his metaphors playfully, he also urges the reader to creatively engage with the linked-scatter play she is presented with.

In fact, Amichai metafictionally admits in "Class Reunion" to designing a distracting scatter. As the story's narrator confesses:

> At times I act as that tourist who arrives at a poor neighborhood in a poor town, and peddlers pounce on him from every door and every alley. He takes a handful of small change and throws it among them, so they may leap at the coins and free him to continue

[577] Winnicott, "Ego Integration," 61.
[578] In psychodynamic terms, though "disintegration" is destructive, it can also be thought of as a defense mechanism: "disintegration… is an active production of chaos in defense against unintegration in the absence of maternal ego-support… the chaos of disintegration may be as 'bad' as the unreliability of the environment, but it has the advantage of being produced by the baby and therefore of being non-environmental" (Ibid).
[579] Ibid.
[580] Donald Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 1991), 64.

his way unbothered. Thus are all my deeds and words [*dvarai* ,דברי]. I give away only small change deeds and words and all I do is distract the minds of people away from me.[581]

The realms of "coins" and "words" are linked in Hebrew via an idiomatic expression: lexical-coinage is *matbe'a lashon* (מטבע לשון), literally "a coin of the tongue," which stands for a word-assembly that has become ossified (a cliché), rather than the act of coining a new phrase, as in English. Yet Amichai concretizes the "coin" to the extent of defamiliarizing the link between the two realms of the lexicalized metaphor: in his version, the currency coins are spread on the floor of the town just like the story's "words and deeds." In contrast with Arpali's depiction of Amichai's "restricted" metaphors as encouraging the reader's "eye" to "perceive lines that connect these disparate points," the spreading of the linguistic coins in "Class Reunion" is explicitly oriented towards "distract[ing] the minds of people away" from the narrator, who is the alleged center of the plot.[582] And yet, in Winnicott's terms, Amichai's scattered coins are *not* disintegrating, that is, actively producing chaos. Rather than floating around like autonomous particles, his figures are always put in dialogue via metaphor (such as the "coins" and the "deeds and words" in this example). This is a loose interconnectedness, one that is constantly shifting. And in order for the reader to grasp it, she must let go of the attempt to integrate in Winnicott's sense of unceasingly laboring to construct a whole. In that regard, the function of Amichai's concatenated metaphors is twofold, activating a unique reciprocity between textual form and readerly perception: first, his vehicle-tenor chains instigate in the reader a state of unintegration, which replaces the constant effort to hold everything together with creative play. Then, this state of mind allows the reader to perceive the alternative form of relationality proposed by these metaphors: an interconnectivity contingent on the constant flux of common-grounds. Imagined graphically, Amichai invites his reader to think of relationality not in circular terms, in which all the elements in a given group are connected via one shared center or common attribute. Instead, each of his elements shares a common-denominator only with the next one, creating a horizontally interlinked series. For example, when Amichai writes that thoughts are like lovers, and that lovers are like a shield, and an insulating wall, and an anchor, and a decelerating substance, and that chemical deceleration is like postponing death, he does not expect his reader to find one common feature – a stable center – that links these various elements together. They are connected through their participation in the same chain: if *a* is similar to *b*, and *b* has an affinity with *c*, then *a* and *c* are linked, even though they might have nothing in common.

The translation of this readerly position into political terms is not straightforward. If we were to think of Amichai's metaphorical logic in terms of the national preoccupation with cohesion, seeping from the 1960s into the 1970s, then the possibility arises that Israeli society is viewed by Amichai as rooted in acute difference and yet deeply, and horizontally, interlinked. Put differently, Amichai's form suggests that a collective can be formed without as much as a single denominator common to all its participants, and without their differences being erased. Provisional connections between particular members suffice to put in touch the various members of the group. But in order to identify such tentative linkages the perceiver must engage in a creative, unintegrational, and horizontal thought-process. She must face what seems like social scatter not from a position of anxiety or directed effort, but from a stance of relaxation and play that enables both an associative, concatenated movement from one element to the next, and a right to refuse, to say "no" to the class reunion. To return to Harshav's quote in the epigraph above, indeed,

[581] Amichai, "Class Reunion," 36.
[582] Arpali, "The Elegy on the Lost Child," 79.

"politically speaking, Amichai was much more radical than his delightful decorations, witty jokes, and sarcastic puns might lead us to believe. Unconstrained cynicism and nihilism, even under the semblance of docility, are never far from the surface."[583] Amichai's "nihilism," however, is not oriented towards destructive negation, it is one that, somewhat melancholically, suggests that we let go of the illusion of both a full-blown "class reunion," and an absolute disintegration (after all, the classmates did not even know they were scattered), and instead attune our minds via unintegration to small-scale dialogues where the potentiality to form a chain resides.

- **TUMOR-LIKE METAPHORS**

To conclude, I would like to revisit the Israeli reception of *In This Terrible Wind*, in the hope that it makes more sense in light of the current discussion of Amichai's short stories poetics, its political implications, and the readerly reaction it works to invoke. One of the most important and influential responses to Amichai's 1960s prose fiction, one of very few, is Gershon Shaked's chapter on Amichai in his seminal *A New Wave in Hebrew Literature* (1971). An exception to the rule, Shaked treats Amichai as an important prose fiction writer, analyzing his *In This Terrible Wind* and *Not of This Time*, *Not of This Place* alongside the work of A.B. Yehoshua, Amos Oz, Aharon Appelfeld, and Amalia Kahana-Carmon.[584] Yet, in the spirit of the TA School (which, on the personal level, he was extremely critical of), Shaked differentiates between Amichai's poetry and prose fiction in the measure of control these genres enforce on Amichai's potentially "wild" metaphors. And he points to Amichai's abovementioned "coin" paragraph as proof of this disorderly "tendency," repeating in his critique (most probably unawares) Zach's depiction of Amichai as "not concentrating on the crux of the matter." Shaked writes:

> His [Amichai's] stories, like his poetry, are replete with metaphorical pairings, which are drawn from highly distinct realms and then, at times mechanically, linked together. Yet, if structure and length limit the possibilities of play in his poetry, the story leaves open all structural avenues, and he [Amichai] gleefully fools around with composing metaphors with no sense of measure or restraint – a liberty that is not always to the benefit of the work. In his poetry as well Amichai is inclined towards the epigrammatic metaphor… and thanks to the brevity imposed by the [lyric] structure (quartets, sonnets), he frequently crafts solid and brilliant epigrammatic metaphors. But this restriction is absent from his prose fiction; the epigrammatic metaphor… simply grows as a wild-tumor that is unlinked to the overall structure and hence breaks it apart… This [the coin] statement… is true for Amichai's form and content: a tendency to scatter phrase-coins that fragment the structure and distract the reader from the crux of the matter; even though each such coin carries its own beauty.[585]

Shaked's comments encapsulate the various responses to Amichai's prose fiction that we've seen so far, from those of the *Likrat* group poets, Harshav included, to those developed in the context of the TA School, such as that of Arpali. Amichai's success, it is assumed, is predicated on proportion: his "brilliancy" lies in the ability to link together "highly distinct realms" of meaning,

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[583] "Benjmain Harshav, "Personal Reflections on Amichai," 124.

[584] Gershon Shaked contends that Amichai "not only expanded the traditional thematic borders" of Israeli prose fiction, but also "produced a novel style, compatible with that which characterizes his poetry" ("Now After the Conquests, Where Should They Return To?: Yehuda Amichai" [ועכשיו אחרי הכיבושים לאן יחזרו?: יהודה עמיחי], in *The New Wave in Hebrew Fiction* [*גל חדש בסיפורת העברית*] [Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1971], 89-125).

[585] Shaked, *New Wave*, 93, 100.

but when these pairings are not "limited" by form, they grow out of proportion and become a "wild-tumor" that threatens to "break [the work] apart." Though unspecified, it seems that metaphorical "wildness" signifies either an excessive amount of metaphors, or an excessive distance between the "distinct realms" it binds together. And since Amichai is inclined to "play" and "gleefully fool around," he is always on the verge of losing a "sense of measure or restraint." For that reason, Shaked describes Amichai's prose fiction "form of writing" as a "constant threat": "if the writer does not govern it [this writing style], it takes charge of the writer."[586]

What remains unspecified in Shaked's phrasing, and in the overall discourse around Amichai's prose fiction, is the measure scale used to decide where "brilliant epigrammatic metaphors" end and "wild-tumor[s]" begin. That is, at what point do Amichai's metaphors become too many or too digressive to be integrated into the "overall structure"? In fact, the implied agent or measure scale is the reader and her perception. As Shaked goes on to write: "At times, the narrator binds two situations in an artificial manner… his eagerness to assimilate two distinct realms and formulate new and unexpected 'grounds for comparison' creates a tension so intense between these fields of meaning to the point of *imperceptibility* and improbability."[587] The two elements combined by Amichai's pairings are therefore not objectively overly "distinct," after all, the text proves that they are in fact related; these metaphors are challenging only for a reader whose "perception" is oriented towards a full integration and "use" of the various textual elements. Otherwise, Amichai's stories bring about an inviting and peaceful reading experience. It is under this assumption that Shaked differentiates between "distracting" metaphors in Amichai's prose fiction and those that encourage readerly integration. In Amichai's "integrating" metaphors, "the poetic image does not grow into a wild-tumor that breaks down the structure, but becomes an integral part of it, coheres it."[588] On the other hand, Amichai's "distracting" constructions, for Shaked, "can with a certain effort be perceived as probable; but they do not form an integral part of the whole… Instead, they break down this structure by charging a single bead in the chain with an autonomous value, such that it is detached from the chain as a whole. These are 'small-change coins' aimed at distracting the mind from the matter at hand."[589]

Shaked is right on the mark; indeed, Amichai structures his linguistic "coins" to "distract" the reader's mind, to instigate "play" instead of focused "thought-burning" concentration, and to confer partial autonomy on every "bead" while keeping it as part of a "chain." But, for Amichai, this mode of reading is generative and beneficial. It both questions that efficacy of integration of the kind Shaked hints at and suggests an alternative: to allow the mind to move like, and perceive the potentiality embedded in, asymmetrical and tumor-like structures. For Amichai, of course, this scatter is imagined through the image of coins on the floor rather than through pathological terms. And whereas Shaked claims that when Amichai's metaphorical constructions lose proportion it is a sign that their creator did not "govern" them (they "took charge of the writer"), Amichai strongly implies that he intentionally "fools around with composing metaphors"; he concatenates his metaphors into a long and intricate chain precisely in order to leave unlimited the readerly "possibilities of play" that open up by the creative drift of unintegration.

[586] Ibid., 98.
[587] Ibid., 99; emphasis added.
[588] Ibid. 102.
[589] Ibid.

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