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5. Ghost stories are of course a genre of popular entertainment. Although I have been concentrating here on the laughter response (for reasons perhaps of emotional preference), entertainment produces a variety of sensations, including the thrill of fright.
6. Menand's "educated people" can be connected with the *Gelehrt* in Kant's "What Is Enlightenment?" (see Warner and Spivak).

1

Uncritical Reading

Michael Warner

I

Students who come to my literature classes, I find, read in all the ways they aren't supposed to. They identify with characters. They fall in love with authors. They mime what they take to be authorized sentiment. They stock themselves with material for showing off, or for performing class membership. They shop around among taste-publics, venturing into social worlds of fanhood and geekdom. They warm with pride over the national heritage. They thrill at the exotic and take reassurance in the familiar. They condemn as boring what they don't already recognize. They look for representations that will remediate stigma by giving them "positive self-images." They cultivate reverence and piety. They try to anticipate what the teacher wants, and sometimes to one-up the other students. They grope for the clichés that they are sure the text comes down to. Their attention wanders; they skim; they skip around. They mark pages with pink and yellow highlighters. They get caught up in suspense. They laugh; they cry. They get aroused (and stay quiet about it in class). They lose themselves in books, distracting themselves from everything else, especially homework like the reading I assign.

My work is cut out for me. My job is to teach them critical reading, but all these modes of their actual reading—and one could list countless more—will tend to be classified as uncritical reading. What does it mean to teach critical reading, as opposed to all other kinds of reading? Are there any other kinds that can or should be taught?

Different teachers might have different ideas of how to do critical reading, but the axis of opposition is fundamental to our institutional role. Whether we are propounding new criticism, deconstruction, or cultural studies, our common enterprise is to discipline students out of their

uncritical habits into critical reading—whatever we mean by that. Critical reading is the folk ideology of a learned profession, so close to us that we seldom feel the need to explain it. My own department requires of all entering graduate students a course called "Critical Reading." We don't specify anything about what will be taught in the course; how could we? The assumption is that any of our faculty can be trusted to convey the general idea—and no one should be burdened with expressing it.

The Cornell English department webpage begins with what I take to be a typical mission statement: "The Department of English teaches analytical and critical reading; lucid and effective writing; and studies in the values and problems of human experience and culture." Like most institutional prose, this proclamation is so careful to avoid controversy and *kulturkampf* that it wraps itself in banality. True, it is a consequential banality: because the critical profession has come to understand itself primarily as teaching "analytical and critical reading," some other justifications for the profession—notably the task of transmitting a prestigious heritage or canon—have proven difficult to sustain, once they have come to be seen as uncritical. But for the most part what is striking about this language is the apparent consensus behind it. And although the self-conception of the discipline seems perversely antagonistic to all the ways our students actually read, it has worked quite well—at least throughout the twentieth century—to legitimate the profession. With very different inflections over the past century, the normative program of critical reading has allowed literature departments to sell themselves as providing a basic element of education, despite a widely felt disenchantment with the idea of literature, which students in a technologically changing climate increasingly encounter as archaic.

Clearly, the idea resonates far beyond our own professional class. As we never tire of demonstrating, modern literature is itself full of fables of bad reading. Don't read like Quixote, like Emma Bovary, like Ginny Weasley. The rich overdetermination of such fables in modernity allows us to imagine ourselves as the bearers of a heroic pedagogy, the end of which is not the transmission of a canon or the catechistic incorporation of facts and pieties, but an open future of personal and collective liberation, of full citizenship and historical belonging. To quote another revealingly bland rallying cry: "Critical literacy means making one's self present as part of a moral and political project that links the production of meaning to the possibility for human agency, democratic community, and transformative social action."[1] We are here, we like to tell our students, to save you from habits of uncritical reading that are naive, immature, unexamined—or worse. Don't read like children, like vacation readers on the beach, like escapists, like fundamentalists, like nationalists, like antiquarians, like consumers, like ideologues, like sexists, like tourists, like yourselves.

Critical reading is evidently dense with social meaning; but its significance for modernity seems difficult to pin on any empirically describable practice of reading. Why is it apparently the case that any style of actual reading that we can observe in the world counts as uncritical? And how could it nevertheless seem that professors of literature regard the critical attitude as a necessary implication of reading itself? A suspicion begins to suggest itself: Is critical reading really reading at all? Is it an ideological description applied to people who are properly socialized into a political culture, regardless of how (or whether) they read? Or, granting a little more in charity: Is it not so much a reading practice as a notional derivative from a prior, uncritical reading that it must posit in order to exist? Is it a style of rereading, or discourse about reading, rather than reading per se?[2] Does it name the kind of liberal openness to self-questioning and reflective explicitation that could theoretically take any practice of reading as its occasion? Or is it more like a discipline, seeking to replace the raw and untrained practices of the merely literate with a cultivated and habitual disposition to read by means of another set of practices? If so, can those styles of reading be anatomized, or placed in a history of textual practice? If the latter, is this reading culture one of the formal-historical conditions of what counts as critical reason? A heroic pedagogy can be founded on textual techniques because of an imputed relationship between the practice of reading and critical reason, but what is that relationship?

The enormous shadow of *un*critical reading suggests another set of problems as well. Within the culture of critical reading it can seem that all the forms of uncritical reading—identification, self-forgetfulness, reverie, sentimentality, enthusiasm, literalism, aversion, distraction—are unsystematic and disorganized. Uncritical modes of reading, it would seem, are by definition neither reflective nor analytic. They must therefore prove untenable—i.e., transmute into the material of critical reading—when summoned to the bar of examination. Uncritical reading, it

would seem, is naive; by its nature it cannot attain the coherence of a normative program of reading. It cannot constitute a real rival to what is called critical reading. Hence the ready consensus: If the choice is between critical and uncritical reading, who could be for the latter?

But what if it isn't true, as we suppose, that critical reading is the only way to suture textual practice with reflection, reason, and a normative discipline of subjectivity? If we begin to understand critical reading not simply as the coming-into-reflexivity of reading, but as a very special set of form relationships, then it might be easier to recognize rival modes of reading and reflection on reading as something other than pretheoretically uncritical. The most obvious candidates for such a program of "uncritical" reading are various styles of religious reading, but they are not the only ones. (An interesting point of comparison would be pornographic reading, which becomes a developed and familiar practice in the period of critical reading's ascendancy.)[3]

We tend to assume that critical reading is just a name for any self-conscious practice of reading. This assumption creates several kinds of fallout at once: It turns all reading into the uncritical material for an ever-receding horizon of reflective self-positing; by naturalizing critical reading as mere reflection it obscures from even our own view the rather elaborate forms and disciplines of subjectivity we practice and inculcate; it universalizes the special form of modernity that unites philology with the public sphere; and it blocks from view the existence of other cultures of textualism. In these ways it could be called a mistake or an ideology, but of course it is also the internal viewpoint of a culture with its own productive intensities, its own distinctive paradoxes, enabling even this essay, for better or worse.

Among the critics who have noticed the importance of what is usually left unthought as uncritical reading is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. In a suggestive polemical essay published as the introduction to *Novel-Gazing*, she argues that the dominant modes of academic criticism have drifted into an essentially paranoid suspicion of textual attachment.[4] Sedgwick's polemic targets a specific set of academic movements; but I suspect that most of what she excoriates as paranoid could be described as an extreme case in which norms of the critical have hypertrophied and become conspicuous. For reasons that might be various—such as the competitive positioning of professional discourse, which invites us

to ensure that our own critical reflections will be more critical than those of our anticipated, imaginary critics—the critic adopts a projectively aggressive defensiveness in relation to the object of criticism.

Sedgwick identifies as the basic elements of paranoid reading (1) an anticipatory aversion to surprise, taken as the only security of knowledge; (2) a mimetic reflexivity in which the critic is seen as making explicit a latent or hidden reflexivity in the text; (3) a strong insistence on seeing everything in the terms of its central suspicions; (4) an interest only in negative affects; and (5) an apparently boundless faith in the efficacy of exposure. All of these can be seen as heightened versions of one or another normative project of the critical per se, though the degree of exaggeration is more visible in some, such as (4). The first, an anxiously anticipatory knowingness, is often hard to distinguish in practice from ordinary critical distance—at least when distanciation is taken as the necessary route to knowledge that is threatened by attachment, incorporation, or involvement, and where the object of analysis is credited with some anticipation of the critic's attempt to get distance on it. The second, an eliciting of a latent reflexivity attributed to the object, is a close cousin of a Romantic critical assumption I will return to later in connection with an observation by Walter Benjamin. The last, a faith in criticism as an act of exposure or demystification, is an article of faith in public-sphere forms, related to what I have elsewhere called a principle of supervision. In paranoid criticism it has become an imaginary and unmediated exposure, a power of mere knowingness. This faith in exposure is often implicit in what goes by the name *critique*.

In making her polemic against critical criticism, Sedgwick also seeks to articulate, legitimate, and promote a loose array of alternative commentary forms among queer academics, which she groups under the name "reparative reading." Reparative reading styles in her view have in common a rhetoric of attachment, investment, and fantasy about their textual occasions. For Sedgwick, these represent ways of reading that have been avoided or stigmatized as uncritical. They are certainly not preoccupied with critical distance toward their interpretive objects. But is reparative reading a structured program of reading or explication? For the most part Sedgwick describes it as local, detailed, and unsystematized. Even the patterns she singles out have this partial character, such as a willingness to describe fragments or passages without a

total schematization of the text. For this reason, Sedgwick's reparative reading seems to be defined less by any project of its own than by its recoil from a manically programmatic intensification of the critical. It is not so much a method as (principled?) avoidance of method.

A rather different picture of critical reading and its uncritical other can be glimpsed in the work of anthropologist Saba Mahmood, even though Mahmood is not especially concerned with texts. Where Sedgwick sees an exaggerated criticism being countered by partial projects of attachment and reverie, Mahmood in a very different context draws a contrast between a critical ethic and another, rival system, often deemed uncritical, but equally organized and methodized as an ethical project. In a searching analysis of the women's mosque movement in Egypt, Mahmood shows its practical and ethical matrix is systematically misrecognized by feminists for whom the pursuit of autonomized agency through critical reflection is taken to be the only legitimate form of subjectivity. Mahmood works with women who aspire to be "slaves of God." This apparent abnegation of agency in fact turns out to be pursued by an elaborate program of reflection, ritual practice, mutual correction, commentary, reasoning, habit-formation, and corporeal discipline—in short, a cultivation of piety. Mahmood argues that piety in this context cannot be seen as an uncritical attitude, or a survival of premodern tradition, or passivity, or unreflective conformity; it must rather be seen as an ethical project (where "ethical" is understood in the terms of the later Foucault) that has as its end a particular conception of the human being. This conception is fundamentally incommensurable with that of critical citizenship. And here Mahmood draws a further conclusion. It is not enough to do a critique or critical reading of the piety movement, for this leaves unquestioned precisely what is at stake: namely, the way the enframing of knowledge as critical presupposes a project for being a certain kind of person. The standard of the critical, Mahmood suggests, could and should be parochialized in turn as an ethical discipline of subjectivity rather than as the transparent medium of knowledge.[5]

How could we extend Mahmood's insight about the critical to an understanding of critical reading and its relation to other, putatively uncritical modes of reading? Mahmood does not herself analyze the textual arts. But she does note as germane to her analysis that the

pietists' preference for recitation as a mediation of Quranic text has to do with the cultivation of a dilated temporality to interrupt mundane time and reframe daily routine. Recitation and audition, in other words, are taken in this context to be techniques or arts for the inculcation of virtuous habits—not as a putatively primordial "orality" that would be the residual other of literacy. The important point in Mahmood's analysis, though, is not just a different technique of text-processing, or a different attitude about the text object, but a different kind of subject to which the technique is oriented.

Critical reading and uncritical reading, in this analysis, would need to be distinguished not so much on the basis of different technical methods, nor as reflective and unreflective versions of the mere processing of text artifacts, but as contrasting ways in which various techniques and forms can be embedded in an ethical problematic of subject-formation—in the case of critical reading, one oriented to freedom and autonomous agency against the background of a modern social imaginary. In the contrast between critical liberal secularism and the piety of the mosque movement, the difference can be very deep indeed, in a way made newly salient by the current political climate. But where cultures of textualism and their ethical projects are not thrown into such vivid contrast by the context of englobing struggles, it might be easy to miss the nuances by which reading practices are embedded within and organized by ethical projects for cultivating one kind of person or another. The broad contrast Mahmood draws between secular criticism and a specific tradition of Islamic piety, in other words, might be only the beginning, leading us to recognize that a great variety of text practices and ethical projects have been consolidated as, or assimilated to, the picture of critical reading—with everything else being left unthought as uncritical.

To pose the problem of critical and uncritical reading in this way is to ask new questions about what counts as critical, what it might be shorthand for, what distinct projects might be caught up in the tar of the uncritical, and how different ethical orientations might inflect different arts of commentary or practices of text-objectification and text-realization. This of course is a vast project. It is not my intention to undertake it here in any thorough way. I can neither give a full analysis of the kinds of agency and subjectivity that have at various points been classed as crit-

ical or uncritical, nor show in detail how they have been correlated with different textual arts. But I can try to suggest some ways that these questions can reframe existing scholarship in the history and theory of reading. In the remainder of this essay I revisit some of the main topoi in recent studies of the history of reading in order to pose, rather than answer, this question: how have various arts of commentary and practices of text-rendering come to be linked to the ethical projects organized on the axis of the critical and the uncritical? And what might we see in this history if we did not take critical reading as an invisible norm?

II

Surprisingly, given the volume of recent scholarship on the history of reading, I have found no history of the protocols and norms for a discipline of critical reading as such. Maybe this should not be surprising. Since literary critics tend to think of critical reading as the necessary form of any self-conscious reading, they seldom imagine it as the kind of practice that might have—as I think it does—a history, an intergeneric matrix of forms, a discipline. Histories of reading have been dominated either by inquiries into the material forms of texts or by the sort of simple classifications that can be made by outside observers without reference to the normative orientations of readers (e.g., "extensive" versus "intensive" reading, silent or vocalized, etc.). It is not immediately clear how a history of what counts as critical reading might be imagined, or what alternative reading disciplines might be misrecognized as uncritical.

Thanks to the energies of some very inventive historians of the book, however, there is a large literature that might be related to this topic. These historians have produced a new paradigm in which reading is understood as a highly variable practice, intimately related to the material organization of texts. They have denaturalized many of our assumptions about what it means to read. And this is essential in grasping what critical or uncritical reading could mean, since the mental image of critical reading seems to require at minimum a clear opposition between the text object and the reading subject—indeed, critical reading could be thought of as an ideal for maximizing that polarity, defining the reader's freedom and agency as an expression of distance from a text that must be objectified as a benchmark of distanciation.

This is precisely the sort of assumption about what texts are and how readers approach them (including this idea that texts are objects that readers "approach") that the new historians of reading dispute. They have shown that centuries of innovations in the formalization of easily navigable texts lie behind such a picture. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, in their survey of the new histories of reading, note that there is evidence from as early as the fourth or even fifth centuries BCE of "a reading style capable of reading 'through' a text and permitting attentive consideration, examination and probing of what was being read."[6] The great library of Alexandria, they note, gives evidence of specialized practices of entextualization and the rationalization of access:

> It was universal because it was dedicated to the preservation of books of all ages and from the entire known world; it was rational because the books it contained were to be reduced to order and to a system of classification . . . that enabled them to be arranged according to author, work and content. That universality and rationality, however, were directly dependent on writings that could be evaluated critically, copied, put into a book, categorized and placed with other books. (10)

Our history might evidently be a long one, if we think of critical reading this broadly. But what does "evaluated critically" mean here? This story usefully emphasizes the material conditions for the objectification and segmentation of discourse that are presupposed by the ideal of critical reading; and the contributors to Cavallo and Chartier's book add many more, such as the triumph of the codex format in antiquity to the elimination of *scriptio continua* in the late Middle Ages.

This scholarship has the great advantage of reminding us that what we call critical reading presupposes forms for textual objectification and a web of social relations around text objects. When ancient Greeks appointed readers—in some cases slaves—whose task was to vocalize texts of laws or monuments so that auditors might reflect on them, it would not have seemed obvious that the act of reading itself had a critical orientation.[7] A great many techniques of entextualization have to be laminated together to enable the free movement of critical evaluation in relation to its objects.[8] But did critical evaluation appear as the inevitable meaning of the new procedures of text-objectification? And

could that mean the same thing for the monks of Alexandria and for modern students?

The modern idea of critical reading clearly draws on a very old tradition that has gone under other names for most of its history. Martin Irvine sees the textual culture of Western Europe as having had a remarkable continuity for more than 1,200 years in the *artes grammaticae* of the learned. Most of the forms of entextualization that are now simply taken for granted in the word *text* developed over this long history of *grammatica*, with its fourfold division of the *scientia interpretandi*: *lectio* (rules for construing and reciting); *enarratio* (rules for interpretation, including tropes, topics, syntax and semantics); *emendatio* (rules for authenticating and correcting); and *iudicium* (evaluation).[9] The modern idea of critical reading reorganizes this tradition, enfolding the last three of the four categories. And there are many features of the scholarly textual culture that of course came to be paradigmatic of uncritical reading. For example, the performance of critical reading as a mode of free agency requires that it not be seen as a strict application of rules, in the manner of *grammatica*. But because *grammatica* formalized a fundamental relation between a systematized analytic metalanguage and its codified entextualized objects, critical reading could modify the metapragmatic framework while maintaining most of the older forms of textual objectification. The modern idea also continued the pattern in *grammatica* of imagining the specialized techniques of literacy as the model of a much broader normative program—the first of the liberal arts. "Learning, interpretation, and religious understanding," Irvine writes, "were all defined in the terms of the large field of discourse that spread out from the practice of grammatica in schools, libraries and scriptoria."[10]

What we mean by critical reading obviously has deep roots, some phases of which (such as humanist philology) have been studied with more attention than others.[11] The phrase *critical reading* itself, though commonly taken by us to indicate a natural kind of reading—right, reasonable, free, and good, but often not much more specific than that—is, however, a relatively recent coinage, its current sense being difficult to find before the eighteenth century. It can be clearly seen in Romantic aesthetic philosophy, where already it is fused with the concept of the

work of art. This was demonstrated in a brilliant work by the young Walter Benjamin:

> The immanent tendency of the work and, accordingly, the standard for its immanent criticism are the reflection that lies at its basis and is imprinted in its form. Yet this is, in truth, not so much a standard of judgment as, first and foremost, the foundation of a completely different kind of criticism—one which is not concerned with judging, and whose center of gravity lies not in the evaluation of the single work but in demonstrating its relations to all other works and, ultimately, to the idea of art. . . . Criticism of a work is, rather, its reflection, which can only, as is self-evident, unfold the germ of the reflection that is immanent to the work. . . . For the value of a work depends solely on whether it makes its immanent critique possible or not.[12]

With this conception of art, Romanticism deepened the ideal of critical reading, as opposed to any other kind of reading, making it seem like the unfolding of the necessity of art itself. From this point the adjective *critical* acquires a new salience.

This conception rests, however, on earlier developments, such as the apparent universalization of the critical role in the public sphere.[13] Its importance to our pedagogy almost certainly has to do with even later developments, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, since it explicates and makes possible the kind of discourse that constitutes the profession itself. The critical reading we teach, in other words, might be largely projected from our own circulatory practices. I suspect it is indeed an essential element of critical reading that the reader be imagined as a *producer* of discourse. Critical *reading*, in this context, means a discipline of *commentary*, projected as immanent to reading. But a real explanation must go farther; the self-interest of professionalized critics is insufficient to explain how a profession oriented to the teaching of critical reading could justify itself as a necessity to nonprofessionals.

Obviously, more is at stake than mere text-processing, at one extreme, or the virtuosic textualism of professional critics, at the other extreme. Because the techniques of distanciating knowledge are tied to a subjectivity-forming ascesis toward freedom and have come to define

agency in modern culture, a discipline of critical reading can draw on the widest cultural-historical meanings of critical reason. We can see this in Immanuel Kant's "What is Enlightenment?," which derives so much from the idea of critical reading. "It is so easy to be immature!" he exclaims in the second paragraph. "If I have a book to have understanding in place of me . . . I need not make any efforts at all." Kant contrasts this immature, replicative reading with the public use of reason, of which his supreme example is "a man of learning addressing the entire reading public." His assumption, evidently, is that the readers of that public must read differently from the immature person.

The effort that Kant thought readers should make in order to read for themselves takes on, for him, the coloration of the rest of his project; critical reading is an image of a certain kind of critical reason. And that association has left its imprint. Kant's English translators used the French word *critique* to translate the German word *kritik*, thus creating within English a difference between *criticism* and *critique*. This may have been done to capture the special sense of *kritik* in Kant as (in Walter Benjamin's phrase) "an esoteric term for the incomparable and completed philosophical standpoint"; but its subsequent usage is much broader.[14] Ever since, critical reading has been identified with an ideal of critique as a negative movement of distanciation, whether of disengagement or repudiation. (Ironically this might be most true within cultural studies, which often prides itself in anti-Kantianism.)

There is a great deal of continuity between Kant's picture of critical reading and dominant ideologies of reading in twentieth-century public culture, as can be seen in such manuals as *How to Read a Book*, the 1940 classic by Mortimer Adler and Charles Van Doren, or more recently *How to Read and Why*, by Harold Bloom. Adler and Van Doren call their model "active reading," and they make it clear that they intend a whole style of personality and culture to flow from the practices that they recommend. It is, quite clearly, a *discipline*. Just as Kant exclaims that, "If I have a book to have understanding in place of me . . . I need not make any efforts at all," so Adler and Van Doren write that "to pass from understanding less to understanding more by your own intellectual effort in reading is something like pulling yourself up by your bootstraps."[15] For Bloom as well, the problem of reading is essentially one of individual self-positing. His book opens with this declaration: "It matters, if

individuals are to retain any capacity to form their own judgments and opinions, that they continue to read for themselves."[16]

Kant suggests that the difference between his two models of reading is that between a reliance on external authority and the maturity-bestowing exercise of independent thought—a difference, in other words, within the individual. But if we were to inquire into the history of this normative program, surely we would want to cast our net a little wider than the individual reader. The new histories of reading suggest that a vast cultural matrix is condensed into, and taken for granted as, critical reading: complex practices of entextualization and explicit metadiscourse (archives, annotation, indices, debate genres, commentary, summary and paraphrase, critical essays, professional scholarship, research). These allow reading to be understood as realizing a set of normative stances (especially critical distance, reflexivity, and explicitness, but generally others as well, such as independence, irony, or subversiveness) that in turn produce kinds of subjectivity (autonomy, individuality, freedom, citizenship, enlightenment) structured by a hierarchy of faculties.[17]

One might be forgiven, given the derivation of the word *critic*, for thinking that critical reading is oriented to judgments of value, to sorting worth. Critical reading, one might think, would be reading that reflects on its own aesthetic judgments. But one would evidently be wrong. Professionalized literary criticism has for the most part given up the business of taste-making; that has been turned over to unprofessionalized book reviewers. Critical reading is very different, it seems, from what the critic (in the usual sense) does. Indeed, someone who reads just to decide whether she *likes* something is more likely to be counted by us as an uncritical reader. The critical posture seems not to be the thumbs-up-thumbs-down decision of aesthetic judgment. (Benjamin notes this in the passage quoted above.) Aesthetic judgment is practiced in countless domains; but when was the last time you heard solemn injunctions to practice critical gardening, or critical hairstyling?

To some degree the separation of criticism from taste can be seen already in the Aristotelian conception of the *kritikos*. Aristotle methodically distinguishes his critical judgment from the taste judgments of audiences or the publics of popular contests. Criticism is the practice of the few, not of the many. The critic's work, as Andrew Ford summarizes

it, "is not to evaluate the moral or ethical value of particular poems, but to derive from an examination of all forms of poetry the principles governing each kind and determining its proper pleasure."[18] The critic thus comes into being as the counterpart not only of the work, but of the audience. Nevertheless Aristotle uses the term *kritikos* to describe a man of judgment in general, and it is skill in judgment that makes literary criticism a mode of ethical life and citizenship. The modern ideal of critical reading means something quite different. Like Aristotle's, it also entails—more explicitly in some cases than in others—an ethical personality and a model of citizenship. But it has to do less with habits and skills of judgment than with openness to criticism. Indeed, one of its hallmarks is the reservation of judgment.

Despite the differences between the ancient and modern understandings of the critical role, much can be learned about the nature of critical reading from Ford's historical account, *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece*. Ford's insight is that the main constituents of literary criticism—the idea of genre, the conception of poesis as artifact-making, formal criteria of value—reorganized the archaic song and performance practices that criticism purported merely to describe. Thus the earliest recorded judgments of worth about song have to do with appropriateness to context, where song is primarily understood as ritual performance in an ethical environment of context-specific obligations. Gradually such performances came to be reclassified as belonging not just to their immediate occasions but also to formally defined classes of comparable performances: genres. The new mode of judgment entailed both gain and loss, since the ethical context of judgment—in which assessing song was a matter of determining the nature of the social occasion and one's proper comportment in it—could now be provisionally set aside.

For those who were willing, in certain contexts, to dispense altogether with moral and ethical considerations in assessing artistic merit, the loss of these criteria was compensated for by making linguistic form expressive in itself. "Song" had become "poetry," and poetry was a special art of using language, the paradigmatic example of what we have called since the eighteenth century "literature."[19]

The process by which performances were objectified, classified, entextualized, systematized as genre, and circulated (as, for example, in contests) was long and conflicted. By the time of the schools it resulted in a special mode of evaluation, systematically distinguished from ordinary judgments of ethical appropriateness or taste, practiced by sophists and philosophers. The increasing use of writing for song texts obviously played some role in the process, but it would be extremely reductive to think that the transformation could be explained by such simple categories as "oral" and "written." The emergence of the critic required new conceptions of what a text was, what class of things it resembled (skilled artifacts), how it was related to a producer (poet), how it might be classified apart from its performance context. In each case, earlier conceptions had to be displaced in order to make room for new, critic-friendly categories such as genre. "It is Romantic to think of some fall from pure unstructuredness into genres," Ford writes; "what the fourth-century literary theorists did was transform traditional religious and social structures that had had implications for form into literary and formal structures that had implications for society and religion."[20] What Ford's analysis helps us to understand in concrete detail is that the role of the critic is not merely reading—that is, a relation between a knower and a text. It presupposes a complex history of entextualization and a reordering of social occasions.

Adler and Van Doren demonstrate this unwittingly throughout *How to Read a Book*. At one point, for example, they offer a summary of four "rules" of analytical reading:

1. Classify the book according to kind and subject matter.
2. State what the whole book is about with the utmost brevity.
3. Enumerate its major parts in their order and relation, and outline these parts as you have outlined the whole.
4. Define the problem or problems the author is trying to solve.[21]

Anyone who attempts to gain critical distance on a text by means of such rules must be equipped with well-codified notions such as "book" and "author"; an assumed realm of discourse in which things are classified "according to kind and subject matter"; genres of propositional summary ("state what the whole book is about with the utmost brevity") and a language ideology in which such derivative genres can be seen not as wholly separate texts but restatements of the same meaning, thus

abstracting meaning from textual form; a vigorously delineated sense of totality ("outline these parts as you have outlined the whole"); an assumption that the text-object was created by the same canons of organization; and so on. Each of these steps posits a prior stage of reading, as the source of the comprehension that equips us to do all these things. (You must read the book before you can classify it by subject matter, for example.) The rules themselves are not about reading per se, but about the manipulation of a whole battery of entextualizing frames and form relationships. All of this apparatus must exist at least notionally as means to establish precisely a gap between critical knowledge and the prior, uncritical reading it posits, while also asserting that what is achieved is just "reading"—albeit of an especially rewarding and useful kind.

The more we learn about the history of reading, the more we learn how peculiar this formation is. For example, the culture of reading that rests on the idea of grasping the totality of a text might turn out to be a relatively minor episode in the overall history of reading. In a remarkable recent essay, Peter Stallybrass describes the importance of various styles of discontinuous reading. Like the idea of the text as totality, these fragmenting practices were enabled by the codex format, which allows readers to jump around in texts fairly freely, with indices and bookmarks and fingers wedged between pages. One very prestigious example would be the reading of scripture. John Locke once complained (in *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul*) that the custom of printing scripture in verse/chapter divisions prevented common readers from grasping the sacred text as a whole.[22] But Stallybrass shows that Locke's idea was something of an innovation, and one that ran counter to the institutional practice of bible reading in church services. During the heyday of the genre of the novel, he suggests, the continuous paging through of a single text came to be taken as the normal way of reading, but this was not the case in earlier periods, and in the current development of screen literacies it may no longer be true. "When cultural critics nostalgically recall an imagined past in which readers unscrolled their books continuously from beginning to end, they are *reversing* the long history of the codex and the printed book as indexical forms. The novel has only been a brilliantly perverse interlude in the long history of discontinuous reading."[23]

In imagining that one might try to grasp the Bible as a textual whole, the better to position oneself as its understanding reader, Locke was

extending some recent innovations in scriptural commentary—the beginnings of what would eventually come to be called the Higher Criticism. (See Amy Hollywood's essay in this volume for an account of how classical scholarship and scriptural exegesis converged in that history.) He was probably influenced in some measure by Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise,* published in 1670.[24] Spinoza was well aware of the novelty of the method he there proposed for reading the Bible:

> Now to put it briefly, I hold that the method of interpreting Scripture is no different from the method of interpreting Nature, and is in fact in complete accord with it. For the method of interpreting Nature consists essentially in composing a detailed study of Nature from which, as being the source of our assured data, we can deduce the definitions of the things of Nature. Now in exactly the same way the task of Scriptural interpretation requires us to make a straightforward study of Scripture, and from this, as the source of our fixed data and principles, to deduce by logical inference the meaning of the authors of Scripture.[25]

Text can be assimilated to natural objects, and thus become data for the detached analysis that is here explicitly modeled on scientific method. As Spinoza continues, it becomes clear that the codex format is necessary to his method. His second rule (following the necessity of philological understanding of ancient languages) is as follows:

> The pronouncements made in each book should be assembled and listed under headings, so that we can thus have to hand all the texts that treat of the same subject. Next, we should note all those that are ambiguous or obscure, or that appear to contradict one another. Now here I term a pronouncement obscure or clear according to the degree of difficulty with which the meaning can be elicited from the context, and not according to the degree of difficulty with which its truth can be perceived by reason. For the point at issue is merely the meaning of the texts, not their truth. (88)

The ensuing analysis demonstrates vividly the sort of athletic collation necessary to analyze the contradictions, discrepancies, figurational patterns, shifts of address and pronomial usage, narrative redundancies

and digressions, and other textual features that become the "data" of understanding. He does dwell on particular passages—worrying over what could be meant by the expression "God is fire," for example—but the agency of interpretation is everywhere manifested by movement between passages, like the movement necessary to realize that "God is fire" contradicts other claims and must be understood in a special sense. Spinoza's method thus foregrounds his own (critical) agility of movement, including a physical movement back and forth among numbered and indexed pages in a fixed sequence, at the same time that it backgrounds an ideal of (uncritical) continuous reading.

In his reading of Jeremiah, that backgrounded ideal is the standard against which the text can be shown to fail, since Jeremiah begins narratives, drops them, gives multiple versions of the same story, loops back in apparent self-forgetfulness, "continuing to pile up prophecies with no regard of chronological order, until in chapter 38 he resumes what he began to relate in chapter 21, as if the intervening fifteen chapters were a parenthesis," and so on. This is the sort of thing you can say about a text given the ease of discontinuous textual checking needed to discover the text's apparent corruption. A great deal of page-turning and note-taking must have been involved in this project of evaluating the sacred text as a whole. It is the method of a scholar provided with ample learning, time, industry, paper, and finding aids.

Compare Spinoza's reading of Jeremiah to that of his close contemporary, Mary Rowlandson. She, too, manipulated the codex format of the Bible in a way that she understood as enjoined upon her in the sincere effort at understanding. While held captive by an Amerindian war party in the woods of New England in the winter of 1676, she took up the Bible that had been given her by one of the Indians, opened its pages at random, and read what she understood to be the passages presented to her eye by Providence:

> I opened my Bible to read, and the Lord brought that precious scripture to me, Jeremiah 31.16. Thus saith the Lord, refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. This was a sweet cordial to me, when I was ready to faint, many and many a time have I sat down, and wept sweetly over this scripture.[26]

Rowlandson is just the sort of reader about whom Locke complained; the sense of the whole is not an aim of her reading. Sincere understanding, for her, does not require analytic collation, linguistic comparison, contextual framing, or any other effort at detachment from the rhetoric of address. The relevant unit is the verse. This might have something to do with the practice of memorization, since the verse divisions of scripture were convenient gobbets for internalization. But there is a richer normative program behind this apparently arbitrary selection as well. Her way of reading is enframed by the assumption that the text is everywhere uniformly addressed by God, in the vernacular, to the believer. Rowlandson performs the same ritual repeatedly throughout her captivity, and makes it clear that opening the Bible and lighting on a passage is, for her, the way to allow God to direct her reading. The apparently random movements offered by the codex format are the medium not of critical agency but of providential direction. The chance opening of the pages helps to ensure that her reading will *not* be an expression of her agency.

Of course, that does not mean that it is passive, either. Quite the contrary: it requires repetition, incorporation, and affective regulation. She sits down and weeps, and within the framework of her reading protocol this way of taking the text to heart is a necessary activity of understanding. Nor was Rowlandson's method entirely naive. It was supported by an extensive and self-conscious literature of devotional manuals on the reading of scripture. As one scholar of that literature notes, "Going over the same biblical passages, putting oneself through the stages of the redemptive order, rereading favorite manuals again and again, produced a cumulative effect that our twentieth-century desire for novelty fails to comprehend."[27] An elaborate edifice of theology, of type and antitype, lies behind the (to us) unfathomable idea that second-person address in the verses of Jeremiah could be taken as directed immediately to a weeping hostage in the woods of an Anglo-American colony.

Rowlandson's reading of Jeremiah foregrounds the elemental dyad of God and the soul as the situation of address. It is a situation rich with activity. Recognition of the text by the reader is among other things the medium of God's agency in comforting and reviving her, and of her agency in obeying, placing trust, suppressing self, etc. She construes the text as immediate demand upon her, and upon her emotions. (It is

sometimes argued that this kind of ethicalization of address is typical of manuscript culture, but quite apart from the fact that Rowlandson was reading a printed Bible it would be hard to sustain the causal claims implied in that analysis.)

Spinoza, too, sees existential demands being placed on the reader by divine truth. But for him the situation of address in which divinity discloses itself to the soul requires that he objectify the text's situation of address, its orientation to context, its historical occasion, the limited capacities of its original addressees, and so on. The critical reader must be prepared to extract the text from a context deemed to be its primary situation; in extreme versions texts can be judged in what is taken to be a context of no context. At any rate, the critic's judgment is not in the first instance about context-appropriateness. Interpretation has been in this limited sense de-ethicalized; though in Spinoza's case only by introducing a new ethical agency of interpretive objectification. Paradoxically, Spinoza's reader becomes more responsible by considering himself less directly addressed.

To readers in the discipline of modernity, one of these ways of reading Jeremiah will count as critical, the other as uncritical. What is the difference? The answer to that question must have to do not just with the material object—though the physical Bibles in question already objectify a great many assumptions about text, held in common by both readers—but with the enframing, metapragmatic construal of the situation of reading, including the agency and affective subjectivity of the reader, the ends and means of reading, and the encompassing relationships of reading practice, the way the text is organized indexically around its reading. All of this is immanent to reading, an imaginary and therefore partially unconscious grasping of the situation of reading itself.

Scholars of literature are however seldom prepared to recognize in their own materials anything that they would have to describe as uncritical reading. So the ritual gesture, when confronted with a Rowlandson, is to show that this apparently uncritical reading really was critical in some sense or another. Thus Rowlandson can be said to read the way she does as a strategy for subverting ministerial authority, or as a means of self-positing.[28] When critical reading is established as a global language of value, such maneuvers become necessary to rescue texts for any canon, even the anticanonical canon. We are very good at

assimilating texts and authors to the normative ideals of our own critical activity. But those normative dimensions of her reading practice that cultivate piety—precisely in the suppression of what we would call critical distance or agency—must be ignored or explained away.

So one of the deepest challenges posed by rival, uncritical frameworks of reading is recognizing that they are just that, rival frameworks. The very specific culture of critical reading is not the only normatively or reflexively organized method of reading, to which all others should be assimilated. Because the historiography is still emerging, and because the tendency to project critical reading as the necessary implication of reason or agency is so great, we do not even know as much as we would like about what the alternative frameworks have been, are, or might become in a future of screen literacies. Uncritical reading is the unconscious of the profession; whatever worlds are organized around frameworks of reading other than critical protocols remain, for the most part, terra incognita.[29]

Any attempt to trace the history, extent, and limits of the culture of critical reading will face methodological issues that will force us to go beyond the current state of the history of the book. The new history of reading usefully defamiliarizes the picture of reading as the mere processing of preconstituted text, and leads us to consider the practices of entextualization. The "materiality of the text" has become something of a slogan for this project. But what needs to be defamiliarized is not just the materiality of the text. The history of reading encompasses the normative construal of the reading situation—including the agency of the reader—as an element of that reading situation. A history of "critical reading" in particular, therefore, would have to include rather more than the protocols of text-processing, cross-referencing, and citation that Spinoza so beautifully exemplifies; it would have to describe the way in which reading subjects can be imagined to assert their own agency and freedom in relation to maximally objectified texts.

In Spinoza's case a significant part of that situation is right on the surface; he himself makes it clear that the basic interpretive posture behind his analysis is one that he expects not just of the erudite philosopher, and not just of the reader of scripture, but of the subject in a society of mutual benefit. He imagines a social order that is constituted out of individual acts of judgment, from the bottom up. Texts

considered as quasi-natural objects serve as the foil for readers who can extract themselves from the immediate situation of address, exerting their own agency. Those readers are in relation to each other by means of derivative discourses of argument and analysis, so their reading can be at once the medium of internal differentiation and the common reference points in a world of difference. The *Theological-Political Treatise* is indeed remarkable for the clarity with which its exegetical method is explicitly linked to a picture of a market-based republican social order. That, of course, should not prevent us from seeing that in other ways the picture of agentialized subjectivity in critical reading is a structuring element in the social imaginary behind the treatise.[30]

Indeed, treatise form itself—as exemplified in the *Theological-Political Treatise*—presupposes a certain reading culture, in which book-length texts are taken as systematized arguments to be attributed *in toto* to their authors as intellectual property, such that we can say, "In Spinoza we find *x*,"; or, "Spinoza holds that *x*," and so on.[31] As Pierre Hadot has recently pointed out, this conception of treatise form represents a watershed in the metaconception of philosophizing. As philosophy came to be more and more identified with this specialized textual form following Descartes, philosophy came to stand less and less for a counternormative way of living and became more and more an architecture of propositional property.[32] The texts of philosophy came less and less to be artifacts of dialogue or scripts of spiritual exercise, and came instead to be models of objectifiable systematicity. In this role they began to serve as the ideal self-image of philosophizing—though of course philosophical writing could only play this role once texts had been conceived as intellectual property and as navigable totalities offered to readers for the performance of their own critical agency. In countless such ways, the entextualizing activity of the critical reader always lies beyond the grasp of critical reading.

A systematic inquiry into the form-relationships of critical reading, in addition to opening up inquiry into the alternatives currently glossed as uncritical, might also help to break through a number of impasses in contemporary thinking. The discipline of subjectivity enjoined upon the critical reader, for example, is one thing that is often missed in contemporary critiques of the Kantian tradition, or of the critical reason that he is thought to exemplify. Perhaps the mistake here

is to identify a Kantian metalanguage with the culture he sought to codify, crediting him with too much. There is certainly a tendency in the liberal tradition to identify critical reason with something that cannot be given content, that is not a cultural form in itself, but that is conceived as mere negative potential, a kind of perpetual openness to further criticism. By the same token, critical reading can be imagined in negative terms as well, as reading that is open to reflection on its own presuppositions, for example. The importance of this receding horizon of critique to the culture of critical reading might help to explain why it seems so difficult for anyone to define or codify critical reading; to do so would be to expose oneself to further criticism, and thus fail to exhaust its meaning. This normative language is consequential and not to be waved away as trivial. But it distracts attention from the equally important reality that critical reading is a historically and formally mediated practice, with an elaborate discipline of subjectivity, and one that now confronts rivals as it has done in the past. That practice—as the example of Spinoza suggests—is by no means coextensive with the Kantian or neoKantian glossings of it. And the rich intensities it affords are obscured both by its own normative self-conception and by the most common criticisms of it.

For example, Bernard Williams faults the Kantian conception of critical reason for what he sees as its essentially characterless disengagement. His comments would apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to some of the most powerful self-conceptions of critical reading:

> This ideal involves an idea of ultimate freedom, according to which I am not entirely free so long as there is any ethically significant aspect of myself that belongs to me simply as a result of the process by which I was contingently formed. If my values are mine simply in virtue of social and psychological processes to which I have been exposed, then (the argument goes) it is as though I had been brainwashed: I cannot be a fully free, rational, and responsible agent. Of course, no one can control their upbringing as they receive it, except perhaps marginally and in its later stages. What the ideal demands, rather, is that my whole outlook should in principle be exposed to a critique, as a result of which every value that I hold can become a consideration for me, critically accepted, and should not remain merely something that happens to be

part of me. It presupposes a Platonic idea of the moral self as characterless. . . . If the aspiration makes sense, then the criticising self can be separated from everything that a person contingently is—in itself, the criticising self is simply the perspective of reason or morality.[33]

Whether this is an accurate objection to liberal philosophy I leave to others. What interests me here is that the endlessly receding ideal of critical reason described by Williams arises from a historically rich culture of reading in which the critical activity is anything but empty, characterless, or unmediated. The rigorous extraction of oneself from the ethical demands of direct textual address, for example, requires a manipulation of intergeneric relationships that can only seem characterless once they have become second nature—as to most of us they have. Critical reading is the pious labor of a historically unusual sort of person. If we are going to inculcate its pieties and techniques, we might begin by recognizing that that is what they are.

Notes

1. Henry Giroux, "Introduction" to Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Gervey, 1987), 15.
2. Barbara Johnson speculates on this possibility in *The Critical Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 3–4 and *passim*.
3. See Jean Marie Goulemot, *Ces livres qu'on ne lit que d'une main* (Paris: Editions Alinea, 1991), trans. by James Simpson for some reason as *Forbidden Texts: Erotic Literature and Its Readers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).
4. "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*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 1–37.
5. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). The idea that the disciplines of piety should be not simply understood to be criticized but understood in a way that will parochialize the knower's assumptions is one that for Mahmood represents a higher and better understanding of critique: "Critique, I believe, is most powerful when it leaves open the possibility that we might also be remade in the process of engaging another's worldview, that we might come to learn things that we did not already know before we undertook the engagement" (36–37).
6. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, eds., *A History of Reading in the West* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999): introduction, 9.

7. Jesper Svenbro, "Archaic and Classical Greece: The Invention of Silent Reading," in Cavallo and Chartier, *History of Reading*, 37–63.
8. Here I owe much to Michael Silverstein and others. See *Natural Histories of Discourse*, ed. Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
9. Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350–1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
10. Irvine, *Making of Textual Culture*, p. 461.
11. See Anthony Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).
12. Walter Benjamin, "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism," *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 116–200, quotation at p. 159.
13. On the changing social meaning of the critic's role, see Joan Dejean, *Ancients against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 31–77.
14. Benjamin, "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism," p. 117.
15. Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book* (1940), rev. ed. 1972 (New York: Simon and Schuster), 8.
16. Harold Bloom, *How to Read and Why* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 21.
17. In *Publics and Counterpublics* I have argued that one of the most important frameworks for allowing reading to count as the use of reason in Kant's sense is in fact an intergeneric field of circulation ideologized as a public. "The attribution of agency to publics works in most cases because of the direct transposition from private reading acts to the sovereignty of opinion. All of the verbs for public agency are verbs for private reading, transposed upward to the aggregate of readers. Readers may scrutinize, ask, reject, opine, decide, judge, etc. Publics can do exactly these things. And nothing else. Publics, unlike mobs or crowds, remain incapable of any activity that cannot be expressed through such a verb. Activities of reading that do not fit the ideology of reading as silent, private, replicable decoding, curling up, mumbling, fantasizing, gesticulating, ventriloquizing, writing marginalia, etc. also find no counterparts in public agency." Thus where the modern imaginary of the public sphere is the background of literate practice, this hierarchy of faculties will acquire a certain inevitable force.
18. Andrew Ford, *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Authority in Classical Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 266.
19. Ford, *Origins*, p. 22. Ford makes similar points throughout his study, as for example p. 155: "what might be called an increasing 'textualization' of song through the fifth century abetted the formal study of its 'inner' properties."
20. Ford, *Origins*, p. 251.
21. Adler and Van Doren, *How to Read a Book*, p. 95.
22. See Patrick Collinson, "The Coherence of the Text: How it Hangeth Together: The Bible in Reformation England," in *The Bible, the*

Reformation and the Church, ed. W. P. Stephens (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 84–108.

23. Peter Stallybrass, "Books and Scrolls: Navigating the Bible," in Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer, eds., *Books and Readers in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 42–79, quotation at p. 47.
24. On the transmission and impact of this early work of Spinoza's, see Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
25. Baruch Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 87.
26. Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682), in Myra Jehlen and Michael Warner, eds., *The English Literatures of America, 1500–1800* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 357.
27. Charles Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 159. Further information on the hermeneutic context can be found in Lisa M. Gordis, *Opening Scripture: Bible Reading and Interpretive Authority in Puritan New England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), though unfortunately Gordis does not mention Rowlandson and does not raise the larger questions posed here. A very instructive piece of scholarship is the chapter by David D. Hall titled "Readers and Writers in Early New England," in *A History of the Book in America, Volume One: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 117–51, as well as pp. 377–410 in the same work.
28. The most ingenious such reading is Mitchell Breitweiser, *American Puritanism and the Defense of Mourning: Religion, Grief, and Ethnology in Mary White Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).
29. For the most part; see such notable exceptions as Paul Griffiths, *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), a useful book though marred by its polemicizing dismissal of critical reading as "consumerist."
30. The relation between critical reading and modern social imaginaries is an enormous problem to which I can only gesture here; for an explanation of how the partly unconscious grasp of the social is linked to ideas of an order of mutual benefit, see Charles Taylor's *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, forthcoming).
31. This is arguably true in Spinoza's case even though the text was published anonymously; it immediately sparked an attempt to identify its author.
32. This argument is advanced partly in his *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), and also in *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. ed. Pierre Hadot and Arnold I. Davidson. trans. Michael Chase (NY: Blackwell, 1995).
33. Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 158–59.

2

Reading as Self-Annihilation

Amy Hollywood

Beloved, what will beguines
and religious people say
When they hear the excellence
of your divine song?
Beguines, priests, clerks, and preachers,
Augustinians, and Carmelites,
And the Friars Minor will say that I err,
Because I write of the being
Of purified Love/the one purified by Love.
I do not work to save their Reason,
Who makes them say this to me. (*Mirouer*, Ch. 122, p. 344)

For Germany, the *criticism of religion* has been largely completed; and the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism.

—Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction"

Critical Reading

When I first read Michael Warner's proposal that scholars begin to consider the nature and importance of "uncritical reading," I immediately began to wonder what "critical reading" was and the extent to which it differed across contemporary disciplines (however fraught these boundaries, first established by Kant in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, have become). My presumption is that our conceptions of what