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Problems of Scale in "Close" and "Distant" Reading

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Although the history of close reading as a set of practices has been the focus of many excellent studies, the history of how the phrase "close reading" came to be remains largely untouched.[1] This article examines the beginnings of the term "close reading" in order to identify the rhetorics of scale employed in debates and arguments surrounding the practices behind the term, and how those rhetorics have set up the debates around "close" and "distant" reading today.

The first section of this essay thus sketches a history of "close reading" as a phrase predominantly found in general usage in primary and secondary education handbooks during the 1930s that subsequently takes on more specialized usage in academic books and essays during the following two decades. This section then details the issues of scale that crystallized in arguments about close reading once they came to focus on the "closeness" of "close reading"—which is to say, once "close reading" became an available term for the next half century against which "adjectival reading" (slow, distant, surface, deep, etc.) could push and define itself. Such arguments revolved around the synecdochic logic of part-representing-whole that governs "close reading," revealing its ability to scale from any amount of evidence (a word, a line, a sonnet) to any level of interpretation (the poem, poetry in the nineteenth century, poetic language in general).

The essay's second section looks at contemporary debates of scale that surround "distant reading" and "close reading," which often take the former to be a macroscopic view of corpuses consisting of thousands of texts and the latter to be the microscopic view of a single text, a few passages, or even a couple of lines. I argue, instead, that various rhetorics of scale involved in "distant reading" can be understood metonymically, structured by the logic of part-part relationships. This mapping of a synecdoche/metonymy distinction onto the "close"/"distant" one is a preliminary response to Alan Liu's call "to discover technically and theoretically how to negotiate

between distant and close reading"[2] and to Ted Underwood's important pronouncement "that it is now possible to leave the reading wars behind."[3] A fuller theorization of synecdoche, metonymy, and scale is outside the scope of this essay, but I conclude with a brief discussion of the synecdoche/metonymy distinction and its purchase on how concerns of scientism have inflected skepticisms of both "close reading" during the 1940s and 50s and "distant reading" in the twenty-first century.

Close Reading, "Close Reading," and "Close" Reading

The history of close reading is well documented as part of the history of critics associated with Cambridge—I. A. Richards and William Empson, then F. R. Leavis and the *Scrutiny* group—and the American New Critics—consisting at the core of John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Cleanth Brooks (though also more loosely including R. P. Blackmur, Kenneth Burke, and Yvor Winters). However, although the interpretive practices promoted by these critics are often grouped together, or at least grouped into a linear history of progression whereby the methods of the former are taken up and further developed by the latter,[4] close reading is far from being a homogeneous set of methodologies and practices. Instead, it is what Peter Middleton calls "our preferred contemporary term for a heterogeneous and largely unorganized set of practices and assumptions."[5] Jonathan Culler (who cites Middleton's description) astutely makes the same point while hitting on the difficulty of thinking about "the closeness of close reading":

> Perhaps what contrasts with close reading is not distant reading but something like sloppy reading, or casual reading, an assessment of "life and works," or even thematic interpretation or literary history. The fact that we have difficulty saying what close reading is opposed to suggests that it has served as a slogan more than as a name for a particular definable practice.[6]

At the end of his essay, Culler suggests that "we would be better equipped to value and to promote close reading if we had a more finely differentiated sense of its modes,"[7] emphasizing the importance of studying close reading's "modes" rather than worrying over the "slogan" itself. Indeed, why bother with the history of the term "close reading" at all, when the various practices and methods it designates are not only already the objects of detailed investigations but also still in need of further scholarship?

One reason is that the term itself draws and holds together the very heterogeneity that Middleton and Culler describe. The term is absorbent yet innocuous, able to assimilate new hermeneutics as they develop without needing or wanting to logically reconcile them. At the same time, the term

is cohesive enough to push off against, well-delineated enough to function as a distinction. Thus, Middleton can identify the unorganized heterogeneity of close reading and also coin, in direct contrast to it, the phrase "distant reading": "interpretation that acknowledges that it is only one moment of the text's future, and only one of many 'interpretants.'"[8] In other words, if the very heterogeneity of close reading's modes is what allows Franco Moretti and Middleton to coin two very different kinds of "distant reading," then it is the homogeneity of the phrase "close reading" that allows them to both coin such a phrase as "distant reading" in the first place. Looking at "close reading" enables one to look at this double quality that has helped make the term such a mainstay of the profession.

So while the history of close reading is relatively well known, the history of "close reading" remains murky. We do not yet have a clear view of "close reading's" naming event, though "event" may be too specific here. Mark Seltzer describes it as follows:

> A naming event is more complex than a simple nominalism; it is not that the concept or category is simply "made up," but that the make-up of such concepts has its own internal "torque." It involves the positing of a category or type of person as a sort of point of attraction around which a range of acts, effects, fantasies, and representations then begin to orbit.[9]

However, in the case of "close reading," as Frank Lentricchia and Andrew DuBois indicate, "there is no *single* influential manifesto or statement of purpose that insists on the term itself as the sole name for a particular practice."[10] It is more accurate in this case to see Seltzer's description in reverse—not as a "point of attraction" that then generates an orbit, but instead a constellation of practices, theorizations, "acts, effects, fantasies, and representations" that begin to pattern themselves around an absent center, a form from without, that is later known by a name, by "close reading." It is for this reason—the impossibility of locating a singular naming event—that Lentricchia and DuBois "must insist on actual practice and its influence."[11]

So one will not find one momentous event, but instead overlapping and variegated appearances of a name. It is helpful to begin crossing out the usual suspects. Although Lentricchia and DuBois state, "In *The New Criticism* (1941)…John Crowe Ransom used the term, but not in a very specific sense,"[12] I cannot find the phrase "close reading" anywhere in the book (they do not provide a quotation). Nor can I find it in Ransom's *The World's Body* (1938). It does not seem to occur in Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Poetry* (1938) or *Understanding Fiction* (1943), Tate's *Reactionary Essays* (1936) or *Reason in Madness* (1941), Blackmur's *The Double Agent* (1935) or *The Expense of Greatness* (1940), Brooks's *Modern Poetry and Tradition* (1939) or *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947), or Winters's *Primitivism and Decadence*

(1937). It also does not seem to appear in any of their articles in *The Southern Review* during its publication between 1935 and 1942. Terry Eagleton comments that "Leavis's name is closely associated with . . . 'close reading,'"[13] but likewise does not give a quotation. I have subsequently been unable to find it in Leavis's *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932), *For Continuity* (1933), *Culture and Environment* (1933), *Revaluation* (1936), or *Education and the University* (1943); Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935), or *English Pastoral Poetry* (the American publication of *Some Versions* in 1938); or Richards's *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), *Science and Poetry* (1926), *Coleridge on Imagination* (1934), or *Interpretation in Teaching* (1938). I can find the phrase only three times in the entire run of *Scrutiny*: once by James Smith and twice by D. A. Traversi.[14]

Missing from this list is Richards's *Practical Criticism* (1929), which John Guillory credits as providing "the little spatial trope that . . . was later elevated into a disciplinary term of art."[15] Richards writes in one instance, "All respectable poetry invites close reading."[16] Yet Guillory also notes, "this term is not yet in Richards's work the same as what we mean by close reading in the disciplinary sense,"[17] and thus calls Richards's use of it a "prologue" to disciplinary "close reading." Indeed, "close reading" as Richards articulated it here signified the work's quality as much as it described a reading act, the implication being that poetry of the nonrespectable sort, or popular fiction and media more generally, does not "invite" close reading. The reader's interpretive act (close reading) was a reflection of the poem's quality ("respectable"). So Tate similarly asserted that only "good verse can bear the closest, literal examination of every phrase,"[18] as if bad verse would crumple under the weight, and Leavis praised Henry James's *The Awkward Age* for "the extremely close and alert reading it demands."[19] The "good" text invites, demands, and supports close reading while the "bad" text does not.[20]

To be clear, most of these critics employed the rhetoric of closeness, of paying close attention, and one can point to such turns of phrase as the rhetoric from which the rhetoric of "close reading" eventually comes (though they are not the same). In this sense, Lentricchia and DuBois and Eagleton are correct in identifying critics who articulate criticism in terms of closeness. Ransom in *The New Criticism* talked of the need for critics to "obtain close studies of the structure-texture relations," citing William Empson as "the best endowed critic in the world for this purpose."[21] Yet even Empson, "the closest and most resourceful reader that poetry has yet publicly had," was criticized by Ransom for lagging "behind his readers in his sense of responsibility for logical structure in poetry as a whole."[22] Which is to say, Empson read too closely, focusing too much on the minute poetic detail,

the poetic texture, at the cost of considering the larger structure. There is a closeness to the poetic object that illuminates its texture, and still another closeness which allows one to "realize the *structure* . . . without sacrificing the *texture*"[23]—a conceptual compromise that finds its current incarnation in attempts to reconcile "close" and "distant" reading.

"Close reading" slowly emerged as a term during the early 1940s, often synonymous with phrases like "practical criticism," "intensive reading," and "close criticism," before solidifying during the immediate postwar period and the 1950s. On the one hand, this timeline accords quite nicely with the general narrative of close reading in the United States at the mid-century, which sees "the detachment of 'close reading' from the cultural purposes that had originally inspired it"[24] as a response to the needs of universities rapidly increasing in size. In this narrative, close reading loses its ideological valences and becomes an eminently teachable, repeatable, and applicable skill for students anywhere. Yet as a term, "close reading" actually takes a separate trajectory, detaching from its general use in grade school handbooks and high school textbooks and attaching itself more firmly to the ideological and critical debates surrounding it in English departments after World War II. Indeed, prior to the mid-1940s the phrase "close reading" is most commonly found in discussions of primary, secondary, and early college education, and not of graduate studies, the New Critics, or professional academia in general. So one finds in *The English Journal*: "We should recognize the value of close reading in the training of superior students especially,"[25] and in workbooks like *Intelligent Reading*: "Denotation is recorded in the dictionary; connotation the reader must discover by uniting a close reading of the text with a knowledge of the dictionary's definition."[26] Moreover, "close reading" in these contexts is often just half of a balanced reading habit, the other half being "extensive," "rapid," or "wide" reading.[27] The authors of *Language in General Education* (1940), the results of an eight-year examination of "the fundamental problems of education at the secondary level,"[28] thus made a point of saying that "it is not the intent of this report to set the kind of close reading advocated against a wide reading. In fact, the two go hand in hand."[29] That is not to say that the phrase is entirely absent in more academic-professional contexts. In 1941 Norman Foerster conveyed satisfaction that

> never before, at least in English and American letters, have we had so much close reading, sensitive discrimination, free-ranging alertness expressed in a subtle style suited to the task. I refer, of course, to men like T. S. Eliot, William Empson, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, and R. P. Blackmur, who, though they have had other interests as well, have excelled in practical criticism of the esthetic aspect of poems.[30]

But Foerster's rhetoric displays a phrase still in uncertain formation—"close reading" jostled with "sensitive discrimination" and "free-ranging alertness" as alternative descriptions of and for "practical criticism."

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, "close reading" began to take off with much more confidence, even while the practices to which it referred remained under debate, before coalescing in the latter half of the 1950s. In 1947 Raymond Williams declared, "a course of close reading is inescapably necessary,"[31] referring specifically to adult education, but also claiming for "close reading" its near-comprehensive reach that the discipline still accepts and upholds today:

> In a different interest, a course in reading may be applied to such institutions as newspapers, advertisements, popular fiction, pamphlets, &c., and its methods of analysis adapted to examine films, building, and broadcasting.[32]

Then in 1948, Stanley Edgar Hyman, teaching alongside Kenneth Burke at Bennington College, published *The Armed Vision* and lavished Empson, Leavis, and the New Critics with praise specifically for their "close reading." Thus, Winters contributes "some brilliant close reading," Brooks's *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* "illustrates its nature by detailed close reading," Leavis and his *Scrutiny* group provide "some of the sharpest close reading of our time," and Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* contains "probably the finest close reading of poetry ever put down."[33] When the revised and abridged 1955 edition was published, it included in the index a subentry on "close reading."[34] More interesting is that for Hyman, "traditionally, close reading has been the prerogative of the writer studying craft or of the teacher teaching it. . . . One of the features of modern criticism, however, is precisely this close technical reading, not as an aspect of learning or teaching craft, but as a general method of critical analysis."[35] "Close reading" here is both a descriptive term for a contemporary group of critics and a term that imagines the critical act in its own context—not just something new in the tradition of literary scholarship and criticism, but, as Hyman conceptualized it, something new in the suddenly existent tradition of close reading itself.

The same year *The Armed Vision* was published, Arnold Stein reviewed Austin Warren's *Rage for Order* and referred to his "very considerable skill in the art of close reading."[36] René Wellek and Austin Warren published their *Theory of Literature*, providing in the bibliography a subsection titled "Discussions of 'Close Reading' and Examples of Methods"[37] in which they cited the Cambridge and New critics, in addition to R. S. Crane and Elder Olson of the Chicago school (the phrase is absent from the works listed

with the exception of *Practical Criticism*). That December, Douglas Bush gave a presidential address to the Modern Language Association inveighing against the New Criticism—what Gerald Graff describes as "the last defiant roar of the old historical scholars"[38]—but first opened with a compliment: "The new critics' close reading of poetry has braced the flaccid sinews of this generation of readers."[39] In the following year, Brooks responded: "there is a tendency to identify the new criticism with 'close textual reading' and to assume that it is limited to problems of what used to be called 'diction.' The essays here collected should supply a corrective to such a view."[40] Articulating his own corrective, Brooks conceived of close reading as the smallest "intensive examination" that could "be extended to the largest symbolizations possible,"[41] a methodology that operates on the micro and macro levels of interpretation.

Brooks's response to assertions of close reading's narrow scope was to keep the scale of the textual object more or less the same—the word, the line, the passage, the short lyric poem—while broadening the symbolic interpretations available to it. So in 1951 Leslie A. Fiedler leveled a critique precisely against close reading's "excluded middle":

> the study of formal and metaphysical structures like plot, point of view and character. . . . Without that middle and that insight, criticism falls apart into two equally shallow irrelevancies: on the one hand, the schoolmaster's niggling concern with words . . . and on the other hand, a Colonel Blimpish sort of moral indignation."[42]

Fiedler's objection also raised generic concerns, as the excluded middle was most readily visible in prose fiction and not in the lyric poems taken up by most of the New Critics.[43] For this same reason Crane saw promise in "the strong emphasis placed by academic representatives of the school on the 'close reading' of texts,"[44] but as of 1952 this was still only promise. The closeness of "close reading" retained its original rhetorical meanings of closeness to the text (nose to the grindstone) and closeness of attention, but it picked up an implicit synonym along the way: the smallness of the text being read, and by implication the "smallness" of the abstracted claim.

In the end, Fiedler's critique combined the same two scales that Brooks's defense did. There is the scale of the text and the scale of the interpretation; the relation between the micro (closeness) and the macro ("largest symbolizations possible") is the synecdochic relation between the object of investigation (the word, the plot, etc.) and the "larger" moral, social, or historical claim. Ransom, invested in the autonomy of the work of art, thus argued that "synecdoche is a way of indicating the irreducibility of the object as a whole by citing some perfectly intractable part."[45] Burke likewise suggested that "the well-formed work of art is internally synecdochic."[46]

Lurking behind these statements, however, was another synecdoche, which was no longer the part of the poem in relation to the whole, but now the part of world (the poem) in relation to the whole—for Ransom, the lyric alone stood as the poet's perfect "microcosm."[47] Consequently, the double substitution enabled a direct relation between poetic "texture" (the details of the literary text) and world-sized structures ("the world's body"[48]) to replace sociohistorical context.

Perhaps this is why "close reading" retains such rhetorical and conceptual force in current discussions about computational quantitative analysis in the humanities. At the term's beginnings its "closeness" already marked a synecdochic relation that removed the need for scale altogether. When Brooks claimed for close reading the "largest symbolizations possible," he posited a hermeneutic that could function without differentiation on any scale of interpretation, rendering considerations of the scale of analysis irrelevant. Jacques Barzun raised the issue clearly and explicitly about "close reading" in 1956: "Practice shows that there is no limit to the number of subtle, profound, and startling ideas and connections that can be squeezed out of any ten lines of verse or prose."[49] Lawrence Janofsky complained in the same year of "those interminable 'close readings.'"[50] It is a question of sampling, and when the smallest text, the smallest part of the text, can always be representative of, or in some cases a substitution for, some "larger" claim, one does not need the "immense accumulation of facts"[51] that characterized prior literary scholarship, and characterizes current quantitative literary scholarship. Blackmur's denunciation of "a tendency [in literary studies] to urge the scientific principle and the statistical method"[52] would find some resonance today.

"Close reading" appears to be a phrase that won out over alternatives because of its innocuousness. "Reading" was harmless enough relative to the literary baggage carried by "criticism" and "scholarship." Similarly, "close" was more commonplace and commonsensical compared to adjectives like "practical" and "intensive." Who could possibly object to reading closely? The early years of the term's ascent, however, demonstrate that it was the very "closeness" of "close reading" that spurred on and brought into focus many of the debates over the practices behind the phrase. "Close reading" could be criticized as a method that encouraged mere quibbling over minute details (too close), and at the same time be criticized for producing "extravagant results," "extended to the largest symbolizations possible" (deceptively close). What "close reading" brings into focus now is the particular logic of scale at its base: I have called it synecdochic, whose "literal" and "realistic" application Burke identifies as representation.[53] The

result is an amazingly flexible and adaptable methodology, one that scales to any interpretive claim, but also eliminates the question of scale in the very process of doing so.

Ian Watt raised this very point in his classic explication of the first paragraph of Henry James's *The Ambassadors*. Watt remarked, "it [practical criticism] contains an inherent critical bias in the assumption that the part is a complete enough reflection of the literary whole,"[54] and he consequently made the case for his own particular close reading by asserting that "by selecting thoughts and events which are representative of the book as a whole, and narrating them with an abstractness which suggests their larger import, James introduces the most general themes of the novel."[55] Nor do all authors exhibit this comprehensive representativeness in their prose:

> One could, I suppose, find this sort of symbolic prefiguring in the work of earlier novelists; but never, I imagine, in association with all the other levels of introductory function that James manages to combine in a single paragraph. Jane Austen has her famous thematic irony in the opening of *Pride and Prejudice* . . . but pride and prejudice must come later. Dickens can hurl us overpoweringly into *Bleak House* . . . into its time and place and general theme; but characters and opening action have to wait.[56]

In Watt's view, Joseph Conrad comes close, "for openings that suggest something of James's ambitious attempt to achieve a prologue that is a synchronic introduction of all the main aspects of the narrative,"[57] but ultimately falls short in comparison. Writing in 1960, Watt's defense of his explication still involved making that crucial first step, which was to argue for the synecdochic representativeness, or "synchronic introduction," of the passage before "doing" a close reading of that passage.

What's "Distant" about "Distant Reading"?

Mid-twentieth-century debates over "close reading" at the term's inception focused on the relationship, and sometimes disjunction, between two kinds of scale: the scale of evidence (a line of poetry, a poem, a passage) and the scale of the resulting interpretive claim. Skepticisms were thus often directed toward close reading's ability to shift between micro and macro levels of these claims, with respect to the same small scale of evidence, by presupposing synecdochic relations. Tracing the history of the term "close reading" consequently reorients contemporary debates over "close" and "distant" reading away from questions of analysis along a single scale—one cannot begin with the word, then zoom out to the sentence, the paragraph, the book, five thousand books, literary history—and instead towards questions raised by the different kinds of scales involved in reading and research.

The promise of combining "distant reading" and "close reading" is therefore not the promise of reconciling different scales of analysis, but of reconceptualizing and theorizing the role scale has in our interpretive, descriptive, and explanatory work.

Advocates and critics of quantitative analysis in literary study have turned alike to rhetorics of scale, which can be sorted into three related positions. In the first position, the close/distant binary is reaffirmed as a binary, often via its rearticulation as a micro/macro distinction that takes the "distant" or macro view as something analogous to a bird's-eye view. With this analogy, one necessarily loses the detail or "texture" of the individual text, author, or passage that lies "below." So Matthew Jockers describes "macroanalysis" (his alternative to "distant reading") as the view "from thirty thousand feet,"[58] while Wai Chee Dimock more skeptically asks, "is the loss of the text a price worth paying in order to project literature onto a large canvas? If fractal geometry has anything to tell us, it is that the loss of detail is almost always unwarranted."[59] Along the same lines as Dimock, Spivak remarks, "the world systems theorists upon whom Moretti relies are now . . . equally useless for literary study—that must depend on texture,"[60] and Heather Love: "Distant reading refuses the richness of the singular literary text in favor of the production of knowledge on an enlarged scale."[61] These statements conceptualize scale as a visual perspective, and extrapolate from the experiential facts that follow. With the naked eye, an "aerial survey"[62] might provide a perspective from which to view a whole city at the loss of seeing its people. Mapped onto "distant reading," then of course loss of individual detail seems to be the logical consequence of such an approach.

The second position sees quantitative analysis operating on both micro/macro scales with close reading functioning on some middle mesoscale. This is the position taken by Moretti's dictum that "distant reading . . . allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text"[63] (or as he phrases it elsewhere, "devices and genres; not texts"[64]) and by Stephen Ramsay's comment that "distant reading" and "text analysis" of the data mining sort are both "antonyms to close reading."[65] In the second position, however, scale does not stand in for some physical perspective. Quantitative analysis is neither "further from" nor "closer to" the text in the way "distant reading," as articulated in position one, can be metaphorically "far away" from the work. Instead, position two combines the scalar logic of size with the logic of what one might call numerical scale. Thus, quantitative analysis operates on the numerical macro level because a corpus can contain thousands of books compared to the dozens one might close read (it lets us consider more books, not bigger books), and it operates on

the micro level because phrases and tropes on a page are "smaller" than the book itself.

Whereas positions one and two rhetorically fix the scales of "close" and "distant," position three emphasizes the metaphor of zooming, conceptualizing methods of analysis such that they do not operate on any particular scale of analysis but rather allow for a flexibility in scaling. So the strength of "macroanalysis," according to Jockers, is that "it allows for both zooming in and zooming out."[66] Martin Mueller prefers "scalable reading" as a term because it captures the power to "change your perspective from a bird's eye view to close-up analysis,"[67] and Ryan Cordell proposes a process of "zoomable reading."[68] Michael Witmore signals this position as well when he writes of "backing out" from a single book "into a larger population."[69] This third position combines the visual-spatial metaphors of positions one and two into the metaphor of zooming, which locates a visual perspective—like the bird in the sky, or the camera in outer space—and depends upon the iconography of relative size. Laura Kurgan eloquently lays bare the logics beneath the visual illusion of effortlessly zooming in and out popularized by Google Earth, but exemplified decades earlier by Charles and Ray Eames's 1977 *Powers of Ten*—a short film that begins with a shot of a couple in a park, slowly zooms out until it reaches the scale of the observable universe, and zooms back in, ending with an image of quark particles within a proton. "The film," Kurgan avers, "intends to demonstrate that the universe is constructed as a set of transparent pictures, homogeneous and continuous, telling more and more about its relational scale. In fact, however, the film tells us about the techniques of taking pictures of the Earth, its features and its context, at different scales."[70] The visual metaphor of the zoom thus irons over important scalar distinctions, or, as Liu observes, "the interpretive or analytical methods at the two ends of the scale, macro and micro, are anything *but* seamless in their relationship."[71]

The point of this schematic is not to bindingly identify the scholars mentioned with any particular "position" (which would be impossible), but rather to demonstrate that much confusion stems from the mixing and matching of the three positions, sometimes by the same scholar in the same work. Mueller's "scalable reading" and Jockers's zoomable "macroanalysis" are more straightforwardly substitute phrases for "distant reading," while Cordell's "zoomable reading" describes analytical movement between the two ends of "distant" and "close" reading. Nor is it that these three positions are necessarily incompatible. The issue is that the concept of scale does a lot of similar rhetorical work in different logical and metaphorical frameworks. Indeed, proponents of "distant reading" and quantitative analysis

who agree on the possibility of and need for reconciling the close/distant binary generally do so in scalar terms. Ted Underwood suggests that "quantitative methods will play a small role, limited mainly to macroscopic questions,"[72] while Liu, looking at the other side of the distinction, wants to develop "*close reading 2.0*, or a method of micro-analysis in the era of big humanities."[73] Even when Moretti supposedly jettisoned "close reading" in favor of "distant reading," it was not an either-or proposition for the entire discipline so much as a statement about two modes of analysis that cannot occur simultaneously any more than one can occupy two different physical locations at the same time. A common way, therefore, of conceptualizing "close" and "distant" is to consider them sequentially in time, such that one begins close reading only after having concluded quantitative analysis. Moretti stresses that "quantitative research . . . provides *data*, not interpretation,"[74] and Lev Manovich similarly remarks, "we can use computers to quickly explore massive visual data sets and then select the objects for closer manual analysis."[75]

Instead of complementarity or linear sequence, one can conceptualize a recursive relationship between "close" and "distant," a continual back-and-forth such that

> Close reading does not serve as a vehicle of confirmation, the repetition of computation at a different scale. Nor does it function as a tool of opposition, the illustration of what computation cannot see. Rather, it is understood as a means of model construction itself, embedded within a larger process of circular discovery whose goal is to undo the scale of conjecture that comes after computation (what do these large-scale results tell us about specific texts?) and before close reading (the seamless ability of a textual example to stand in for an imagined, yet never specified whole).[76]

In Andrew Piper's formulation here, scale is not so much a way of contrasting "close" and "distant" reading (i.e., they are not distinguished by operating at different scales) as it is a condition for and object of analyses that combine them. "What I seek to identify," Piper writes, "is the iterative process that underlies modeling and meaning-making, as close and distant forms of reading interact in a spiral-like fashion."[77] Or as he puts it a few pages later, "I want us to see how impossible it is *not* to move between these poles [of close and distant] when trying to construct literary arguments that operate at a certain level of scale."[78] Thus, while Piper maps the small-scale/large-scale (or micro/macro) distinction respectively onto "close" and "distant" reading,[79] he presents an alternative distinction as well. If close reading is "the seamless ability of a textual example to stand in for an imagined . . . whole" (synecdoche), then one might begin to coordinate the scalar logics of "distant reading" via the rubric of metonymy.

In his work on literary topology as a way of "thinking in terms of scalar reading,"[80] Piper remarks that "as a 'model,' the topological diagram is always both metonym and metaphor."[81] Although the distinction here is between metonymy and metaphor, it can be easily redrawn between metonymy and synecdoche, given Piper's own description of topology's "metaphoricity" as its "claims to represent a whole."[82] The corresponding metonymic logic of a topology, then, is its "reticulation of numerousness,"[83] its emphasis on the plurality of relations among parts as parts that Piper calls "a form of *ratio*."[84] Nor is this sense of metonymy, "an unceasing chain of figural parts,"[85] limited to Piper's topologies. Investigating the rhetoric of "high cultural criticism,"[86] Liu argues that "the science of lists depends on . . . a syntagmatics or metonymics whose illusion is that wholes are polymers of parts."[87] However, whereas cultural criticism ultimately turns to synecdoche to rescue itself "from the wasteland of endless syntagm,"[88] computational methods like "distant reading" are rather at home with the metonymical. Ramsay thus notes that the outcome of "virtually any text-analytical procedure . . . even if recapitulated in the form of an elaborate interactive visualization, remains essentially a list."[89]

More generally, metonymy can be described as "the modality of part-part relationships, on the basis of which one can effect a *reduction* of one of the parts to the status of an aspect or function of the other."[90] Hayden White's broader notion of metonymy, influenced heavily by Burke, is helpful here for unraveling the tangle of scale discourse and "distant reading" that has been otherwise knotted together. The bird's-eye or macro view of "distant reading" is the perspective that observes relations between works that comprise a corpus as if they make up its topography (the metonymic mode White also calls "the simple *contiguity* of things"[91]). The micro view sees words, parts of speech, and phrases not as microcosms of some "greater" whole, but in relation to other words, parts of speech, and phrases. Accordingly for White, "statistical representations are little more than projections of data construed in the mode of metonymy."[92] A basic line graph of an object's velocity, for instance, charts relations between points of data—no single data point is synecdochically representative of the whole graph—to display one axis (displacement) as a function of the other (time). Such a graph's legibility further depends upon its indications of scale via labeling axes, choosing units, determining interval marks, etc. Which is to say, the metonymic logic of "distant reading," of statistical representation, necessitates that decisions of choosing different scales and different kinds of scale be made consciously. Just as important, it foregrounds the possibility that other choices could have been and can still be made (recursively, experi-

mentally, playfully). This is why Mark McGurl praises "distant reading" for "allow[ing] the question of scale to have some analytical force in our practice rather than becoming an intellectual resting point, a given,"[93] and why part of literary topology's "critical force" for continual refashioning is, as Piper writes, "its metonymic contingency—that there are always an infinite number of possible topologies at different scales."[94]

So for the moment, we have synecdochic "close reading" on one side and metonymic "distant reading" on the other, or as Ramsay puts it in different terms:

> To say that the gypsy interlude in book 12 of *Tom Jones* metaphorically encapsulates a vast network of political tensions in eighteenth-century England strikes us as a responsible use of literature; a spreadsheet full of numerical information on the appearance of 'gypsies' in English novels provokes fear of a criticism ungrounded in the particularities of language and textuality.[95]

Ramsay raises the open question of what counts as evidence in literary scholarship—texts to be sure, but in what form? Transforming elements of a passage into elements on a spreadsheet may be thought of as distortion, but as Jerome McGann and Lisa Samuel's concept of "deformance" and David Hoover's procedures of "text-alteration" make clear,[96] close reading is also an act of distortion (distortion in both cases being critically productive). Framing "close" and "distant" by way of synecdoche and metonymy does not lock either side behind a new set of bars, but considers how these interpretive practices rhetorically deform and reshape texts to be understood as pieces of evidence, parts in an argument.[97] The synecdoche/metonymy distinction foregrounds relations between "close" and "distant" reading that distinctions of scale, of micro/macro and zoom/stasis, otherwise miss. The remainder of this article touches on one such relation, which is the way accusations of scientism that marked debates around "close reading" in the mid-twentieth century were posed in similar terms as the accusations leveled at "distant reading" today.

In his essay "Four Master Tropes," Burke suggests that metonymy and synecdoche shade into one another by how they relate quality and quantity. Synecdoche allows for a substitution in either direction, a "*connectedness* between two sides of an equation,"[98] while metonymy allows only for the "reduction" of quality to quantity. Burke's argument operates at a characteristically high level of abstraction here, but mid-twentieth-century criticisms of "close reading" often turned on seeing its synecdochic qualities as metonymic ones in Burke's sense, a kind of synecdoche that only moved from quality to quantity. Ransom saw the need to defend the poetic knowledge produced by New Criticism by distinguishing between two kinds of synec-

doche. Responding directly to Burke's essay, Ransom wrote that while the poet, and by extension the critic, utilizes synecdoche "to see that his object is unique," scientific synecdoche establishes a flattening likeness, "taking those facts which are *reduced* to the scheme . . . and rejecting the others. The synecdochic facts will hardly do, being out of scale."[99] However, it was precisely this latter type of synecdoche, one that treated poems as "exemplars" of broader poetic principles, for which Crane and his colleagues at Chicago censured the New Criticism. By beginning with fundamental definitions and qualities of ("good") poetry—tension, ambiguity, irony, etc.—that were encompassing enough, it was trivial, Crane argued, for the New Critics to demonstrate how any number of poems, passages, or lines instantiated those qualities.[100] Underwood echoes this debate when he discerns how the increased efficacy of text-search algorithms have "made it impossible to lose"[101] the research game—which is to say, in a database of millions of sentences, one will always find "enough" evidence to show the importance of a given theme, even if one starts from the position that the theme is important. The "database" and the "poetic principle" serve a similar rhetorical function here as the seemingly infinite horizon, Liu's "endless syntagm" of metonymic parts, in which initial hunches and assumptions can always find their confirmation.

Pointed critiques of scientism in the digital humanities tend to focus on either how logics of accumulative neoliberalism and technocapitalism encroach on the "traditional" humanities, or the way invocations of scientific realism often depend on naive conceptions of it.[102] Lindsay Waters strongly condemns Moretti's work for heralding a future where English professors "outsource reading of books to lower-level workers."[103] In their polemical essay in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, Daniel Allington, Sarah Brouillette, and David Golumbia write that the digital humanities are about the "promotion of project-based learning and lab-based research over reading and writing . . . and the redefinition of technical expertise as a form (indeed, the superior form) of humanist knowledge."[104] Yet, Fiedler in 1950 compared "those 'close analyses'" to "tabulations of imagery," both being "machines for the mindless to manipulate,"[105] and Erich Heller in 1958 spoke of "the close reader's laboratory," full of "key-words and key-phrases, rhythmic idiosyncrasies and purposefully arranged clusters of vowels."[106] In 1956, Ihab H. Hassan reflected, "ironically enough, the Formalist approach, once motivated by a desire to remain close to the literary work, seems to be degenerating into an irrelevant and intricate pastime, one that an IBM could probably simulate with equal interest."[107] Hassan treated the "closeness" of close reading as the ironic origin of a method that a 1950s IBM computer could

seemingly replicate—ironic because the very scientism that close reading was intended to combat had coopted it, and ironic because the metaphor of "closeness" betrayed just how "distant" from the text, how "wide" or "large," the resulting interpretive claim could be (choose your spatial trope).

Regardless of the complex and at-times contradictory ways the New Critics viewed modern scientific knowledge—Wellek argues fervently that they were in fact "enemies of science"[108]—earlier pronouncements, such as Ransom's that "criticism must become more scientific, or precise and systematic,"[109] nourished the idea that the development of close reading was intimately entwined with attempts to scientize literary study. This was the view Olson took when he mocked the New Critics for attempting to bring "literary study to a condition rivaling that of the sciences."[110] Similarly, John Holloway declared in 1953 that "the heredity of close reading is a heredity of hybridism."[111] The argument is worth quoting more fully:

> the lineage of "close reading" as a critical method is impure; deriving in part from a keener sense of the distinctiveness of poetry, which was an asset; and in part from excessive though perhaps half-conscious respect for science, which was a liability. And the particular form that this hindrance seems to have taken, is a notion that the unravelling of complexity is the one and essential and characteristic form of close reading, and therefore you cannot have too much of it.[112]

According to Holloway, scientism led close reading as a method "away from the poem" and toward the production of "extravagant results," obscuring any sort of principle that would "equip one to collect just what it is proper to collect, and to leave exactly all the rest"[113]—a corrupted close reading is too "distant" from the poem, one might paraphrase, making conclusions too "large" and casting nets too "wide." The result is a "*cult* of complexity"[114] where scale no longer matters. Holloway's choice of words here, "complexity," is fortuitous; it sketches a convenient homology with the complexity that would come to be associated with chaos theory and fractal geometry in the latter half of the twentieth century. So McGurl points out that when Wai Chee Dimock invokes fractal geometry in her defense of close reading, she is doing so because of the "the appeal of . . . its 'scale-free' nature."[115] Of course, the difference is that what Dimock defends, Holloway attacks.

On an institutional level, Andrew Kopec recently argues that in contrast to the close reading of new formalism, which highly values "the critical inquiry of a solitary scholar sharing research through a single-author publication," digital scholarship prefers "the quintessential form of postindustrial work: the team."[116] However, even this observation echoes Fiedler's sentiment that the "closeness" of New Critical methods engendered a type of specialization that was "atomizing": "the act of total criticism becomes merely

a sum of all these ventures, the end-product of a bureaucratized 'team.'"[117] He wondered, too, whether statistics and the close reading "Method" were simply "strategic move[s] to make evaluation seem possible at the hands of the mediocre."[118] Indeed, Kopec's wider argument, that the revived interest in formalism and the rise of the digital humanities are dialectically related solutions to "the perceived erosion of the academic humanities,"[119] reprises in altered form William Barrett's observation in 1949 that the New Criticism—a "brand-name" that had "outlived its usefulness"[120]—achieved institutional dominance during a time when academic criticism appeared to reach peak irrelevance:

> there has never been a period in the past in which the main body of contemporary literature was so definitely removed from its contemporary criticism . . . imagine what would happen if the present tendency ran its course: if the literary criticism we could intellectually admire became confined to the academy while the army of books that rolled off the presses of the publishing houses went its way untouched by the existence of this criticism.[121]

As history goes, while the anxieties voiced by Barrett reliably persist in various forms, concerns about "close reading" as an easily reproducible and therefore skilless method, as conveyed by Fiedler, have faded entirely out of view, replaced by the idea eloquently voiced by Jane Gallop that

> the most valuable thing English ever had to offer was the very thing that made us a discipline . . . Not because close reading is necessarily the best way to read literature but because close reading . . . is a widely applicable skill, of real value to students as well as to scholars in other disciplines.[122]

This sketch of parallelism across the decades is thus not to suggest that nothing has changed, but to highlight how a similar set of rhetorical strategies could be staged against methodologies that seem as disparate as "close" and "distant" reading. It is to suggest, too, that moving forward, reconciliations between "close reading" and "distant reading" must occur not only on methodological terms, but rhetorical ones as well.

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NOTES

1 Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton U. Press, 2005), parenthetically notes that Reuben Brower coins the phrase "close reading" in 1951 (99). However, the phrase Brower uses in *The Fields of Light: An Experiment in Critical Reading* (Oxford U. Press, 1951) is actually "slow reading": "There is therapeutic value in occasional experiments in slow reading. For in reading, as in other arts, there is a mental

form and awareness to be fostered and improved by direct practice" (xii). (That is not to correct Jackson, who has also pointed out, in conversation, the absence of "close reading" in Brower's book.) In fact, Brower had already used the term "slow reading" much earlier, evidenced while he was teaching at Amherst College. Brower's 1942 Amherst course catalog description of "Reading Poetry and Prose" already reads: "This course is devoted to slow reading and detailed analysis of poetry and prose," and he maintained his commitment to "slowness" throughout his Harvard years. More recently, Michael Hancher has independently conducted a similar tracing of the phrase in his essay "Re: Search and Close Reading," *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*, ed. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (U. of Minnesota Press, 2016): 118–38. However, Hancher draws a lineage of the trope of "closeness" across centuries, while my focus spans three decades.

2 Alan Liu, "The State of the Digital Humanities: A Report and a Critique," *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 11 (2012): 27.

3 Ted Underwood, "Shifting Scales: Between Literature and Social Science," *MLQ* 77 (2016): 292.

4 Joseph North, "What's 'New Critical' about 'Close Reading'?" *New Literary History* 44 (2013): 141-57, illuminates the foundational differences between the close reading practices developed by Richards and Empson and those developed by the New Critics: "The real story, in its broad outlines, runs as follows. Richards and Empson put together what might fairly be called an incipiently materialist practice of close reading, based in an instrumental or (loosely speaking) pragmatist aesthetics, directed towards an advanced utilitarian model of aesthetic and practical education. This was taken up and co-opted by the New Critics, who remade and institutionalized it as a thoroughly idealist practice, based in a neo-Kantian aesthetics of disinterest and transcendent value, directed towards religious cultural conservatism" (142). Chris Baldick's *The Social Mission of English Criticism: 1848–1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) presents a more detailed history of the British group. Regarding the American side, there are many excellent studies, including John Fekete's *The Critical Twilight: Explorations in the Ideology of Anglo-American Literary Theory from Eliot to McLuhan* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977); Mark Jancovich's *The Cultural Politics of the New Criticism* (Cambridge U. Press, 1993); chap. 9–12 in Gerald Graff's *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (U. of Chicago Press, 1987); and chap. 3 in John Guillory's *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (U. of Chicago Press, 1993).

5 Peter Middleton, *Distant Reading: Perfomance, Readership, and Consumption in Contemporary Poetry* (U. of Alabama Press, 2005), 5.

6 Jonathan Culler, "The Closeness of Close Reading," *ADE Bulletin* 149 (2010): 20.

7 Ibid., 24.

8 Middleton, *Distant Reading*, 8–9.

9 Mark Seltzer, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 108.

10 Frank Lentricchia and Andrew DuBois, introduction to *Close Reading: The Reader*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Andrew DuBois (Duke U. Press, 2003), 3. Italics theirs.

11 Ibid., 3.

12 Ibid., 3.

13 Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (U. of Minnesota Press, 1996), 37.

14 See James Smith, review of *Form in Modern Poetry* by Herbert Read, *Scrutiny* 1 (1933): 395–96; D. A. Traversi, "Henry IV—Part II," *Scrutiny* 13 (1945): 117; Derek Traversi, "Academic Criticism To-Day," *Scrutiny* 17 (1950): 182.

15 John Guillory, "Close Reading: Prologue and Epilogue," *ADFL Bulletin* 41 (2011): 23.

16 I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1929), 203. Although this is also the only instance of "close reading" in the book, Richards often describes reading (or lack of reading) in terms of closeness.

17 Guillory, "Close Reading," 23–24.

18 Allen Tate, "Tension in Poetry," *The Southern Review* 4 (1938): 104.

19 F. R. Leavis, "Henry James," *Scrutiny* 5 (1937): 413.

20 Hancher, "Re: Search and Close Reading," draws the same conclusion: "When Richards referred to 'close reading' in *Practical Criticism*, he was not coining a phrase but endorsing a standard practice. . . . Good readers were close readers; and some texts, including some poems, were good enough to warrant close reading" (122).

21 John Crowe Ransom, *The New Criticism* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1941), 275.

22 Ibid., 102, 129.

23 Ibid., 184. Italics his.

24 Graff, *Professing Literature*, 145.

25 Tom Burns Haber, "Sharpening a Tool in the 'Tool-Course," *The English Journal* (College Edition) 23 (1934): 476. Helen H. Young, "Reading a Sentence: An Exercise in the Study of Meaning," *The English Journal* 30 (1941), writes of the need for "teaching close reading to older pupils in the secondary school" (457).

26 Edward A. Tenney, *Intelligent Reading: A Guide to Understanding the Printed Page* (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1939), 3.

27 See Pearle E. Knight and Arthur E. Traxler, *Develop Your Reading* (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1941), which is split into two equal parts, "Rapid Reading" and "Close Reading" (Brower's "slow reading" is the more appropriate rhetorical opposite). An earlier book of theirs, *Read and Comprehend* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937), is also split into the two parts of "Extensive Reading: Can You Wear Seven-League Boots?" and "Intensive Reading: Can You Plow Deeply?" By contrast Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Fiction* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1943), privilege "intensive reading": "The editors of this book believe that before extensive reading can be profitable, the student must have some practice in intensive reading" (vii).

28 V. T. Thayer, Caroline B. Zachry, Ruth Kotinsky, Willard W. Beatty, Helen M. Lynd, Margaret Mead, and W. Carson Ryan, *Language in General Education: A Report of the Committee on the Function of English in General Education for the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1940), v.

29 Ibid., 192. Their publication is also noteworthy for referring to "the technique of close reading" (196). This may have been one of the influences of I. A. Richards himself, to whom the authors express a "debt . . . far more general than it has been possible to acknowledge through scattered specific references to his works" (viii).

30 Norman Foerster, "The Esthetic Judgment and the Ethical Judgment," *The Intent of the Critic*, ed. Donald A. Stauffer (Princeton U. Press, 1941), 71.

31 Raymond Williams, "Some Experiments in Literature Teaching," *Rewley House Papers* 2 (1947): 15.

32 Ibid., 15. In *Reading and Criticism* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1950), Williams writes, "Not all great novels have a similar verbal pattern, but all have an essential structure which only close reading, or the more explicit process of literary analysis, will reveal" (86).

33 Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Armed Vision: A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 71, 94, 302, 277. That same year, Ransom favorably reviewed the book in *The Kenyon Review* 10 (1948): 682–88.

34 Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Armed Vision*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), viii.

35 Hyman, *The Armed Vision* (1948), 301.

36 Arnold Stein, "Criticism and the Search for the Total View," Review of *Rage for Order* by Austin Warren, *The Sewanee Review* 56 (1948): 702.

37 René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948), 365.

38 Graff, *Professing Literature*, 185.

39 Douglas Bush, "The New Criticism: Some Old-Fashioned Queries," *PMLA* 64 (1949): 13.

40 Cleanth Brooks, foreword to *Critiques and Essays in Criticism, 1920–1948: Representing the Achievement of Modern British and American Critics*, ed. Robert Wooster Stallman (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1949), xix. By contrast, Malcolm Cowley, "The New Criticism," *The American Scholar* 20 (1950–1951), suggests that "'close reading' would be a better phrase than New Criticism" (98).

41 Brooks, foreword to *Critiques and Essays in Criticism*, xix.

42 Leslie A. Fiedler, "The Critic's Excluded Middle," review of *The Novel in France* by Martin Turnell, *The Kenyon Review* 13 (1951): 702. In this review, Fiedler uses the phrase "close analysis," but his emphasis is on the "'close' discussions of verbal patterns" (702). In "Archetype and Signature: A Study of the Relationship between Biography and Poetry," *The Sewanee Review* 60 (1952), he calls "'close-reading' . . . a cant phrase of the antibiographist" (259).

43 Jackson writes in *Dickinson's Misery*: "Lyric became a *metaphor* for the New Criticism, in the sense that both the genre and the critical perspective on that genre came to stand for one another" (93).

44 R. S. Crane, introduction to *Critics and Criticism: Ancient and Modern*, ed. R. S. Crane (U. of Chicago Press, 1952), 15. On the same page: "most of the 'new critics' . . . continue . . . treating lyrics and novels, tragedies and essays, by means of the same distinctions."

45 John Crowe Ransom, "The Irish, the Gaelic, the Byzantine," *The Southern Review* 7 (1942): 528.

46 Kenneth Burke, "Four Master Tropes," *The Kenyon Review* 3 (1941): 427.

47 John Crowe Ransom, "Shakespeare at Sonnets," *The Southern Review* 3 (1938): 532.

48 See John Crowe Ransom, *The World's Body* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938).

49 Jacques Barzun, *The Energies of Art: Studies of Authors Classic and Modern* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 14.

50 Lawrence Janofsky, review of *An End to Innocence* by Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Kenyon Review* 18 (1956): 137–38.

51 "Our greatest need is for the reinterpretation of literature in the light of our immense accumulation of facts." Edwin Greenlaw cited in Norman Foerster, "The Study of Letters," *Literary Scholarship: Its Aims and Methods* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 30.

52 R. P. Blackmur, *The Double Agent: Essays in Craft and Elucidation* (New York: Arrow Editions, 1935), 287.

53 Burke, "Four Master Tropes," 421. "For this purpose we consider synecdoche in the usual range of dictionary sense, with such meanings as: part for the whole, whole for the part, container for the contained. . . . All such conversions imply an integral relationship, a relationship of convertibility, between the two terms" (426–27). I am not alone in identifying "close reading" with synecdoche. Julie Orlemanski, "Scales of Reading," *Exemplaria: Medieval, Early Modern, Theory* 26 (2014), writes that "dissatisfaction with close reading's synecdochic logic is part of what motivates Moretti to adopt 'quantitative formalism'" (223). Sharon Marcus, "Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* and the Value of Scale," *MLQ* 77 (2016), writes of Auerbach's "synecdochic bent": "Auerbach's work seems to hold its place of distinction in the critical canon by virtue of its ability to work on disparate scales" (300).

54 Ian Watt, "The First Paragraph of *The Ambassadors*: An Explication," *Essays in Criticism* 10 (1960): 251.

55 Ibid., 268.

56 Ibid., 270.

57 Ibid., 270.

58 Matthew L. Jockers, *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods & Literary History* (U. of Illinois Press, 2013), 9.

59 Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton U. Press, 2006), 79.

60 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (Columbia U. Press, 2003), 108. In another essay Spivak explicitly identifies the "resonance" between her position on "distant reading" and Dimock's own; see Spivak "World Systems & the Creole," *Narrative* 14 (2006): 102.

61 Heather Love, "Close But Not Deep," *New Literary History* 41 (2010): 374.

62 Wai Chee Dimock, "The Egyptian Pronoun: Lyric, Novel, the Book of the Dead," *New Literary History* 39 (2008): 619.

63 Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," in *Distant Reading* (London: Verso, 2013), 48–49.

64 Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, and Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary Theory* (London: Verso, 2007), 76.

65 Stephen Ramsay, *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism* (U. of Illinois Press, 2011), 77.

66 Jockers, *Macroanalysis*, 23.

67 Martin Mueller, "Shakespeare His Contemporaries: Collaborative Curation and Exploration of Early Modern Drama in a Digital Environment," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 8 (2014): 31.

68 "Zoomable reading is particularly suited for uncovering and making sense of . . . both the nodes of the individual texts (close) and the edges of intertextual conversations (distant)"; see Ryan Cordell, "'Taken Possession Of': The Reprinting and Reauthorship of Hawthorne's 'Celestial Railroad' in the Antebellum Religious Press," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 7 (2013): 7.

69 Michael Witmore, "Text: A Massively Addressable Object," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (U. of Minnesota Press, 2012), 325.

70 Laura Kurgan, *Close Up at a Distance: Mapping, Technology, & Politics* (New York: Zone Books, 2013), 19.

71 Liu, "The State of the Digital Humanities," 26–27. Italics his.

72 Ted Underwood, *Why Literary Periods Mattered*, 174. In "Shifting Scales," Underwood reiterates this stance in broader terms: "Quantitative methods stand to contribute most to literary studies when they complement these older practices, filling in scales of description or kinds of interpretive insight that a selection of case studies can miss" (287).

73 Liu, "The State of the Digital Humanities," 26. Italics his.

74 Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 9. Italics his.

75 Lev Manovich, "Trending: The Promises and Challenges of Big Social Data," in Gold, *Debates in the Digital Humanities* (2012), 468.

76 Andrew Piper, "Novel Devotions: Conversional Reading, Computational Modeling, and the Modern Novel," *New Literary History* 46 (2015): 68–69.

77 Ibid., 67. Along the same lines, Hoyt Long and Richard Jean So, "Turbulent Flow: A Computational Model of World Literature," *MLQ* 77 (2016), describe their recent research on the global transmission of stream-of-consciousness techniques as "oscillating between statistical models and moments of close reading" (345). Ryan Cordell, "Scale as Deformance," http://ryancordell.org/research/scale-as-deformance, similarly stresses the "recursive and iterative process" between corpus scale and close reading scale analyses. Rhetoric of recursivity, iteration, and oscillation aside, Piper, Long and So, and Cordell are invested in Willard McCarty's sense of modelling as described in *Humanities Computing* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): "an attempt to capture the dynamic, experiential aspects of a phenomenon rather than to freeze it into an ahistorical abstraction" (23).

78 Piper, "Novel Devotions," 69. Italics his.

79 Later in the essay, Piper argues that computational methods allow for "examining linguistic shifts . . . that exceed the scale of our traditional methods of close reading" (92).

80 Andrew Piper, "Reading's Refrain: From Bibliography to Topology," *ELH* 80 (2013): 382.

81 Ibid., 389.

82 Ibid., 388. The metonymy/metaphor distinction is influentially presented in Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1956). For the purposes of this paper, however, Piper's use of "metaphoricity" lines up neatly with the general understanding of "synecdoche" in terms of part substituting for whole (and vice versa).

83 Ibid., 378.

84 Ibid., 382. Italics his.

85 Ibid., 389.

86 Alan Liu, *Local Transcendence: Essays on Postmodern Historicism and the Database* (U. of Chicago Press, 2008), points out how "the basis of high cultural criticism is its belief that criticism can, and must, engage with context in a manner so close . . . that the critic appears no farther from the cultural object than a cybernetic or biological virus from its host at the moment of code exchange" (112).

87 Ibid., 122.

88 Ibid., 122.

89 Ramsay, *Reading Machines*, 80.

90 Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1973), 35. Italics his.

91 Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1978), 128. Italics his.

92 Ibid., 21.

93 Mark McGurl, "Critical Response II: 'Neither Indeed Could I Forebear Smiling at My Self': A Reply to Wai Chee Dimock," *Critical Inquiry* 39 (2013): 635.

94 Piper, "Reading's Refrain," 389.

95 Ramsay, *Reading Machines*, 77.

96 See Jerome McGann, *Radiant Textuality: Literature after the World Wide Web* (New York: Palgrave, 2001): 105–35; David L. Hoover, "Text-Alteration as an Interpretive Teaching Strategy: The Case of 'The Snow Man,'" *Style* 42 (2008): 470–85.

97 In this way, the synecdoche/metonymy distinction runs perpendicular to the chiastic distinction Ramsay draws between "computationally intractable" and "critically tractable." For Ramsay, *Reading Machines*, the development of an "algorithmic criticism" depends on making the latter relevant to computational methods (81).

98 Burke, "Four Master Tropes," 428. Italics his.

99 Ransom, "The Irish, the Gaelic, the Byzantine," 528–29. Italics mine. Ransom and Burke exchanged a series of letters between 1939 and 1942 about Burke's essay, summarized in David Tell, "Burke's Encounter with Ransom: Rhetoric and Epistemology in 'Four Master Tropes,'" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 34 (2004): 33–54.

100 R. S. Crane, "Prefatory Note," *The University Review* 8 (1942): 199–202.

101 Ted Underwood, "Theorizing Research Practices We Forgot to Theorize Twenty Years Ago," *Representations* 127 (2014): 66.

102 See respectively, Brian Connolly, "Against Accumulation," *J19* 2 (2014): 172–79; Tom Eyers, "The Perils of the 'Digital Humanities': New Positivisms and the Fate of Literary Theory," *Postmodern Culture* 23 (2013), http://muse.jhu.edu/article/537059.

103 Lindsay Waters, "Time for Reading," *The Chronicle Review* 53 (Feb. 9, 2007), http://chronicle.com/article/Time-for-Reading/10505/.

104 Daniel Allington, Sarah Brouillette, and David Golumbia, "Neoliberal Tools (and Archives): A Political History of Digital Humanities," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, May 1, 2016, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/neoliberal-tools-archives-political-history-digital-humanities/.

105 Leslie A. Fiedler, "Toward an Amateur Criticism," *The Kenyon Review* 12 (1950): 565.

106 Erich Heller, *The Ironic German: A Study of Thomas Mann* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1958), 101.

107 Ihab H. Hassan, "Criticism as Mimesis," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 55 (1956): 475.

108 René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950*, vol. 6, *American Criticism, 1900–1950* (Yale U. Press, 1986), 151.

109 John Crowe Ransom, "Criticism, Inc.," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 13 (1937): 587.

110 Elder Olson, "William Empson, Contemporary Criticism and Poetic Diction," in Crane, *Critics and Criticism*, 45.

111 John Holloway, "The Critical Intimidation," *The Hudson Review* 5 (1953): 488.

112 Ibid., 480.

113 Ibid., 481, 488, 483–84.

114 Ibid., 483. Italics his.

115 Mark McGurl, "The Posthuman Comedy," *Critical Inquiry* 38 (2012): 535. As James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (New York: Viking, 1987), puts it: "It is hard to break the habit of thinking of things in terms of how big they are and how long they last. But the claim of fractal geometry is that, for some elements of nature, looking for a characteristic scale becomes a distraction" (107–8).

116 Andrew Kopec, "The Digital Humanities, Inc.: Literary Criticism and the Fate of a Profession," *PMLA* 131 (2016): 332.

117 Fiedler, "Toward an Amateur Criticism," 565.

118 Ibid., 568–69.

119 Kopec, "The Digital Humanities, Inc.," 325.

120 William Barrett, "A Present Tendency in American Criticism," *The Kenyon Review* 11 (1949): 4.

121 Ibid., 6–7.

122 Jane Gallop, "Close Reading in 2009," *ADE Bulletin* 149 (2010): 15.