Disability and its affective affordances: deformity, decay, disruption, distortion

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Conclusion

Pragmatically Inconvenienced: Disability and the Event of Reading

Throughout this study, I have elucidated how we can read for disability in terms of what it may afford us affectively. Reading for affordances as "opportunities for action," as Thomas Stoffregen put it, involves the way in which affect relates to action; how it moves, enacts, or sometimes stifles bodies. What makes reading for disability in relation to affordance complex, as I have argued throughout my case studies, is that disability often problematizes the very notion of bodily capacity for action. In this conclusion, I delineate how this complex entanglement of affordance and disability is relevant for the way in which the activity of reading is theorized in literary and cultural studies. I argue that reading for affordances relates to contemporary approaches to scholarly reading practices and discern how the other two concepts used in the study's title—affect and disability—should become central to scholarly work that concerns contemporary reading practices.

Since the concept of affordance was developed in fields associated with social psychology and design and gained the most purchase there, I start by briefly reiterating how the concept is employed by one of its main conceptual developers after James Gibson, the cognitive scientist and usability engineer Donald Norman. In his book *The Design of Everyday Things* (1988), Norman defined affordance as "the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used" (9). This early definition by Norman conceptualizes affordances as properties of objects rather than as relational-emergent features of a constellation of elements (like an animal being able to walk over a rigid surface). When read with the eyes of a humanities scholar, Norman's definition undoubtedly opens a plethora of questions: how to distinguish between the "perceived" and the "actual?" How do we consider which properties are fundamental? Why are we focusing on how something could be used?

Norman would return to the concept's originator, to redefine and further delineate that affordances "refer to the actionable properties between the world and an actor (a person or animal). To Gibson, affordances are a relationship. They are a part of nature: they do not have to be visible, known, or desirable. Some affordances are yet to be discovered. Some are dangerous. I suspect that none of us know all the affordances of even everyday objects" (2004).[1] Norman's earlier emphasis on use is delineated in

1 For the full text, see: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265618710_Affordances_and_Design

terms of what is "actionable," or, what can the thing whose affordances we consider *do*, and importantly, what is a particular affordance a *relationship* of. As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, and as Norman reiterates here, to think with and read for affordances has a complex relationship to the concept of value, because affordances are not to be preemptively subjugated to the values we place on them. Their very apprehension calls into question why, how, when, and where we perceive them. Yet, reading for affordances *does* orient actors to look for what is actionable in the relationship they are perceiving, and to consider how the actionable itself is constitutional of a perceived relationship of affordance.

In my own study, I have limited myself to look at the concept of affordance in relation to the unlikely concept of disability. Unlikely because, as we have seen, disability is so often associated with the conception of a body that supposedly does *not* work. This was done on purpose, in the sense that I sought to adopt reading for affordances as an approach and attitude in the way Norman delineates it above, without a clear preconception about what is preemptively known, visible, or supposedly desirable. Reading for affordances, by asking for an orientation of analysis toward the actionable, could subsequently be understood as a political and ethical attitude. Since it orients itself to the study of the effects of actionable properties of perceived relationships, reading for affordances demands that precedence is given to questions such as "How does this relationship afford action?" or "What does this relationship of affordance *do*?" over questions of political and/or ethical desirability (such as "How *should* we treat people with disabilities?" or "How could studying cultural texts help us reduce ableism in society?"). Given this focus on the study of the actionable, thinking with affordances is perhaps best understood to be in league with philosophical pragmatism.

In the second paper of his series *Illustrations of the Logic of Science*, Charles Sanders Peirce wrote his pragmatic maxim: "Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (1878).[2] Peirce's maxim suggests how we might gain a conception about a phenomenon, namely through studying the effects that have "practical bearings." It is through our evaluation of these practical effects how we come to understand the phenomenon at hand. To apply this maxim to how we gain an understanding of disability through its effects, let us consider the medical model of disability. The conception of disability in this model is actualized because the effect the phenomenon of disability has on

2 For the full text, see: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Popular_Science_Monthly/Volume_12/January_1878/Illustrations_of_the_Logic_of_Science_II

people is that it makes them want to "correct" it. Thus, the practical bearings that are a consequence of the social effects of disability is that it organizes people to seek to "restore" that disability. But let us also notice Peirce's final phrase, "our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object." When the effect of disability is only that we believe it is something that requires correction or rehabilitation of some kind, this then becomes the whole of our conception of what disability is.

By thinking of the relationship between the concepts of affordance and disability, I have sought to ask what some of the practical bearings are of a phenomenon that is so commonly understood to be tantamount to defect and deficiency. To think with and through the affective work that is being done by the body that supposedly does not work thereby means to expand "the whole of our conception of the object" at hand. In this study, I have delineated how, in considering the actionable affordances of disability, the actionable is itself a matter of becoming affectively oriented. *Dis*ability, as the medical model shows, orients us toward a privation of presupposed bodily ability, of what we feel is lacking, not there, or not working. This is the prefix of *de* and *dis*; of what we sense and understand as being *against*. Another way disability affectively orients us, as shown in my reading of the novels *A Little Life* and *Still Life with Monkey*, is that it drives (other) bodies to want to *re*store, *re*habilitate, and *re*pair; this is the prefix of *again*.

These two ways of being affectively oriented through disability are also the terms in which attitudes in literary studies are cast in framing its contemporary paradigms of reading practices. In my conclusion of the previous chapter, I briefly engaged with the scholarship of Irmtraud Huber, who argued for an understanding of the fantastic as being *re*constructive. Such a gesture, which necessarily entails a tone of affirmation ("to construct once again"), is contrasted with the negative gesture of being against, of refusal. A gesture Rita Felski, in her influential book *The Limits of Critique* (2015), associates with that title's last term, critique. The "again vs. against" paradigm in literary studies is delineated by Felski as follows:

> Both aesthetic and social worth, it seems, can only be cashed out in terms of a rhetoric of againstness. And yet there are other salient desires, motives, agendas that drive acts of reading and that receive short shrift from critics scouring works of literature for every last crumb of real or imagined resistance. *We shortchange the significance of art by focusing on the "de" prefix (its power to demystify, destabilize, denaturalize) at the expense of the "re" prefix: its ability to recontextualize, reconfigure, or recharge perception.* Works of art do not only subvert but also con-

> vert; they do not only inform but also transform—a transformation that is not just a matter of intellectual readjustment but one of affective realignment as well (a shift of mood, a sharpened sensation, an unexpected surge of affinity or disorientation). (17, emphasis in text)

In Felski's conception, critique is aligned with gestures we associate with privation, such as *de*mystifying or *de*naturalizing a text. Felski employs the term "hermeneutics of suspicion" to delineate these attitudes toward reading, drawing from Ricoeur's study *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (1970). The *re-* prefix, meanwhile, offers gestures of affirmation. To place texts in different contexts, or to read them again from a different approach, hint at the added value of (re-)reading once more. This latter collection of gestures, as was the case with Huber's argument for reconstruction, enjoys a positive connotation by virtue of its affirmative character.

As the last line of the above quote shows, Felski is much interested in the way in which the different attitudes and gestures also offer different affective "realignments." Further elaborating on restorative ways of reading, Felski notes that "To interpret in this way is to feel oneself addressed by the text as if by a message or a proclamation, to defer to a presence rather than diagnose an absence. The words on the page do not disguise truth but disclose it. Such a "hermeneutics of restoration" is infused with moments of wonder, reverence, exaltation, hope, epiphany, or joy" (32). Although it is important to note that Felski does not condemn critique and in fact states to be much indebted to it, she does set up an opposition between the two different hermeneutical attitudes. For whereas such a hermeneutics of restoration is associated with the positive affective forces and aesthetic sensations mentioned here, Felski states that critique is "Purged of obvious signs of affect and attachment," and that "the temperature of critique is cool rather than hot" (74). Regardless of the salience such an opposition may have in considering readerly attitudes in contemporary literary studies, Felski's binary framing creates a double bind in that any commentary one might have on this opposition seemingly automatically puts oneself on the side of critique, which is here conjoined with the "negativity" of refusal. A reply to this frame is similar to offering a reply to the imperative "Stop being so defensive!" in which any rebuttal affirms that one is, in fact, being defensive. Felski's motivation, however, is not to silence the voice of critique. Rather, as the title of her book suggests, she asserts that it is not the only readerly attitude available and that readerly attitudes carry consequences.

While I agree with Felski that different ways of approaching texts afford different affective relationalities, her framing does risk aligning certain readerly attitudes with

specific affective values: "hope, epiphany, or joy" are sided with the hermeneutics of restoration, and paranoia, speculation, and refusal are on the side of the hermeneutics of suspicion. A reader trained in critique would be quick to point out that the first hermeneutic stance is imbued with positivity and naivety, while critique is here cast as distant, arguably "negative," and/or seemingly without affect as Felski claims. Although Felski does briefly engage with the concept of affordance,[3] reading for affective affordances with regard to disability, I argue, is disjunctive to the "against vs. again" paradigm as proposed by Felski.

The against vs. again paradigm as it is commonly framed for disability is different from that same paradigm as outlined for literary studies. Whereas in literary studies "against" is aligned with the suspicious attitude of critique, the "against" connoted with disability is that of what does not work, as a physical deficit that is a given. Though suspicious attitudes and interpretations have certainly manifested around disability historically and culturally,[4] both its conceptualization and sensibility as defect in contemporary Western culture are connected to presuppositions concerning bodily normativity. The restorative approaches to both literary text and disability arguably have more in common, in that they are imbued with seemingly positive affective forces, albeit different ones. The medical model seeks to "restore" the disabled body, whereas the restorative hermeneutics of Felski seeks to draw our attention to the affective states of wonder, hope, and joy.

Since disability is connoted with what does not work, by asking what its affordances are, I am asking what the affective effects are of the preemptively defective and disqualified. The bifurcation of the positive and negative affective connotations to different styles and attitudes of reading of both the disabled body and the literary text is displaced by the primacy of the question what kind of work the analysis of the relationship between practices of representation and the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility itself does; hence my interest in the way literature itself represents and works with aesthetic judgements concerning disabled bodies. Such an approach to reading is no less affirmative than restorative practices of reading claim to be, but, in contradistinction, opens up the possibility of exploring different styles and positions of affirmation. Whereas Felski posits that "moments of wonder, reverence, exaltation,

3 See pp. 164–165, where Felski briefly mentions this concept in the context of Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory and her notion of so called post-critical reading, with which the approach of reading for affordance, as I delineate it here, holds some affinity.

4 See, for example, Martha L. Rose's *The Staff of Oedipus: Transforming Disability In Ancient Greece* (2003), and Henri-Jacques Stiker's *A History of Disability* (2019).

hope, epiphany, or joy" are valuable in practicing a hermeneutics of restoration, to examine the workings of such affective forces and aesthetic experiences does not automatically make them come undone. Rather, it affirms that they themselves manifest further affective effects that are worth studying.

Affirmation, of course, implies a strengthening of one's assertion and position. The kind of affirmation that follows from reading for affordances is different from the kind of affirmation that follows from restorative or reparative attitudes of reading, since to be oriented by affordances is to be oriented toward the actionable. Whatever we conceive of what the actionable is, it is the opposite of what is stuck, unmoving, or unchangeable—terms that are commonly connoted with disability. This is why in the previous chapter the figure of the paradox played such a central role, since disability is at once both cast as actionable and simultaneously stuck—characters in wheelchairs, like Smoker, despite it being a novel of the fantastic, are not suddenly able to walk.[5] To ask what relationships of the actionable disability affords, with all its supposed and connoted deficits, involves asking what the requirements for contemporary gestures of affirmation are, rather than accepting affirmation as a given the way the hermeneutics of restoration presents it here. Such a slide is not nitpicking, but rather a way of thinking with disability in terms of it being an inconvenience in the way Lauren Berlant delineated that concept:

> At whatever scale and duration, "inconvenience" describes a feeling state that registers one's implication in the pressures of coexistence. In that state the body is paying attention, affirming that what's in front of you is not all that's acting on or in you. Whatever tone it takes, whatever magnetic field it generates, this latter kind of contact with inconvenience disturbs the vision of yourself you carry around that supports your sovereign fantasy, your fantasy of being in control. (2022: 3)

To be inconvenienced is to be drawn to a state of affirmation by what the body perceives, because "what's in front of you is not all that's acting on you." Affordances are always a matter of perception and sensibility. They are perceived because the perceiving body is itself in some way affected; acted upon. Whatever we perceive to be affordances, we do so because our body holds the capacity to be affected by that

5 In her study *On Paradox* (2022), Elisabeth Anker argues that paradox has actually been the dominant rhetorical figure at work in contemporary critical theory, and offers a reading of some of its limitations.

relationality sensed. In positing affordance as constituting a relationship as I have done, this implies that, whereas affordances are sometimes understood as concerning the perceived properties of an object, the fact that an affordance is a *relationship* rather than such perceived properties necessarily puts in question how the body perceives what it perceives because it is acted upon. The actionable is then not understood as pertaining solely to the perceived actionable properties of the external object, but rather allows for a mode of investigation that involves questioning how the body was affected by itself holding capacities to be or become actionable to external objects and forces. Such a questioning is a matter of becoming inconvenienced in one's fantasy of personal sovereignty, a loss of the idea of control that one held of oneself concerning the relationships of affordance that one would choose to be a part of rather than having them be pressed on oneself. This is why being an inconvenience to, or to be inconvenienced by, another person, event, or object is often accompanied by the affective forces of irritation and anxiety.

Disability cast as inconvenience is subsequently often the producer of much social friction as shown in the case studies in this book. Because disability's inconvenience is so closely connected to the friction concerning the actionable, this inconvenience is carried over into gestures of affirmation. Since the nature of affirmative gestures implies a strengthening of assertions, disability inconveniences such gestures, pointing to what one might call the affirmation of contingency, but which is equally the contingency of affirmation. The friction this relationship between disability and affirmation affords points to the metonymic nature the concept of disability has concerning the inherent contingent nature of the actionable body. Whatever one senses and perceives as being actionable about the body is never simply a given. In the chapter on deformity, I argued that Merrick's deformity affords a heightened sensibility to aliveness precisely because his disability limited how his body could fall asleep, making his life contingent on it. In the chapter on disruption, I proposed how disability foregrounds the affective work of effort and conjoins that with the event of the attempt. The event of the attempt contrasts with gestures of affirmation precisely because it draws one's attention to the bodily capacities required to make an affirmative gesture in the first place.

How does such a conception of the relationship between affect, disability, and affordance relate to the ways in which reparative and restorative reading have been posed in literary studies, and why is this important? In Felski's framing of the against vs. again paradigm, aesthetic experiences are strongly connected to the hermeneutics of restoration rather than with critique. This casts the domain of the aesthetic in literary study as a valuable experience that literature can afford, as Felski also argues

in her book *Uses of Literature* (2008). I do not disagree with this claim, but aesthetics through such a frame becomes divorced from the way in which aesthetic sensibility plays a crucial role in the way we constitute the domain of the actionable. By this I mean that, similar to Rancière's argument that the distribution of the sensible discloses what is in common, what is perceived as actionable is a matter of how our senses become engaged. In this conception, the dynamic between the sensible and the actionable is oscillating because actions determine how we come to sense what is common, but our senses in turn influence how we may conceive of the actionable.

Such an understanding of the relationship between the aesthetic and the actionable is disjunctive with, and an inconvenience to, Felski's positing of "moments of wonder, reverence, joy," and so on. That framework casts aesthetic experience *as* "an experience" which relates to pleasure and the episodic genre of the moment. I deliberately use *disjunctive* and *inconvenience* rather than "against" or "critical of," since Felski herself discusses the possible critiques her framing of the aesthetic will inevitably invite. My point, however, is not simply to critically argue how aesthetic experiences can themselves be framed and constructed, but that a framing like Felski's poses an overview of readerly approaches that does not account for the relationship between the actionable and the aesthetic as I am proposing it here. Because it is unaccounted for, to pose and argue for the relevance of this relationship is asymmetrical to the against vs. again paradigm as presented by Felski, and allows me to delineate my position in contrast to restorative reading practices.

In her seminal essay "Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading," included in her book *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, as the essay's title implies, laid some of the groundwork from which work like Felski's draws. While the essay gives more space to a critique and evaluation of so-called paranoid reading than it does to offering an exposition of reparative reading, Sedgwick concludes her essay that reparative reading is "no less acute than a paranoid position," and that "What we can best learn from such practices are, perhaps, the many ways selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture—even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them" (150–151).

Sedgwick's language treads carefully in how it envisions the attitude of reparative readers (no less acute, realistic attached and so on), but connects this attitude with "extracting sustenance" of objects like cinematic and literary texts. While different from Felski's framing in her envisioning of how the reader should assert herself, to be able to draw sustenance from cultural artifacts is arguably a proposition with which Felski would largely agree. What the conceptualization of the *re-* prefix in the work of scholars like Huber, Felski, and Sedgwick and other strands of reparative

reading and the hermeneutics of restoration share, involves a realignment between a conception of the reader's attitude and the orientation and tone of her literary and aesthetic appraisal. Attitude, in that, as Sedgwick suggests, reparative readers may still be understood to be acute as well as astute. Orientation and tone, meanwhile, should not be focused on suspicion and critique which these theorists consider the dominant orientation and tone in literary studies, but rather should focus on Felski's aesthetic moments, or Sedgwick's drawing of sustenance. In her valuation of Sedgwick's essay, Heather Love conclusively summarizes that "reparation in the essay is on the side of multiplicity, surprise, rich divergence, consolation, creativity, and love. If reparative reading is better at the level of ethics and affect—and there is really no doubt that it is—it also looks better at the level of epistemology and knowledge" (237).

Of course, reparative reading, like any other approach in literary studies, does not escape becoming the subject of its own critique. In her study *The Ruse of Repair* (2021), Americanist Patricia Stuelke argues that reparative reading practices are more concerned "with the problem of how to live and survive in a world that remains terrible even after one has learned to critique it from whatever positions of power or disenfranchisement one occupies, even after one has gained the knowledge and skill to name the thing that is wrong, and then learned that that capacity hasn't done as much to change the world as one might have hoped it would" (29). For Stuelke, reparative reading is itself a method of coping with the juncture of the supposed inefficacy of critique to bring about change, noting that "This is the dead end against which the turn to the repair feels good, feels like relief, freedom, and creative possibility" (29).

Stuelke connects the "positive" affective forces of relief, freedom, and the openness associated with reparative attitudes with the reactionary position of "how to live and survive in a world that remains terrible even after one has learned to critique it." This formulation is not too far removed from the conceptions of the reparative stance shown by Sedgwick and Love, who argue for its consolatory potential. Stuelke connects this stance to an apparent impassivity that accentuates an implicit shift from critique's desire to somehow alter its object (or the relationship we have to that object), to one that is predominantly focused on developing techniques of coping and consolation within a given context, which to Stuelke implicates and emphasizes the passive acceptance of such a givenness of the object in question.

Stuelke notes that a turn to repair and away from critique involves investment "in a fantasy of an apolitical aesthetic education that can at best teach a morally relativistic appreciation of beauty" (29). According to Stuelke, the suggestion that aesthetics could become divorced from politics may generate a morally relativistic attitude toward aesthetic concerns. Such relativism is founded on the idea that what-

ever aesthetic experiences allow one to draw sustenance from, or whatever moments of wonder, reverence, and hope present themselves, they posit a relationship to the aesthetic that is fundamentally transitional and ephemeral precisely because it is of a reactionary nature that seeks to offer refuge from the state of the world. Critique rears its head against a notion of aesthetics that becomes divorced from the actionable, refusing this relativism it associates with the reparative position.

So how does reading for affordances relate to this ongoing discussion between different conceptualizations of reparative reading and critique? To be sure, it draws from both reading practices and does so in a way that preemptively sees these different approaches as fundamentally intertwined in actual scholarly practice. To read for affordances means reading for the way in which previously unconceived relationships between materials, people, words, and worlds allow for the study of their equally novel operation and effects. It is not necessarily antagonistic to either reparative reading's gesture of offering sustenance or critique's gestures of refusal, since it cannot recognize the binary again vs. against paradigm the theorists above have posited and furthermore recasts affirmation in a radically different way.

As mentioned, affirmation here involves being oriented toward the affirmative that something "works," in the sense of it becoming actionable, and the inquiry as to *how* something becomes actionable as affordance. While I have stated that such a gesture of affirmation is itself political in prioritizing these questions in favor of others, its politics subsequently conceives of the negotiation between the sensible and the actionable as a central concern. Since to perceive an affordance necessarily implies that one has been affected in some way, what is at stake is not only to recognize and study the affordance itself but also to question why it was that this affordance was the one perceived. In my reading of *The Gray House*, this was the fundamental difference in the manifestation of attitudes concerning one's relation to one's receptivity to the world: either to try and interpret that world through different heuristic devices as a mode of relationality that seeks to protect one's sovereignty and explain, or attempt to subjugate the world to that explanation; and a relationality that preconceives the body as being in a constant negotiation of attunement with the world. In my reading of the novel, these attitudes offer us a different conceptualization of the aesthetic because I argue that the negotiation between the sensible and the actionable takes primacy, and that such attitudes themselves offer a different entry into how we conceive and relate to the domains of the political and the ethical, since here the hermeneutic act of wanting to interpret one's world is cast as a specific relationality that cannot be taken for granted, and that one's reading is informed by what the conditions for reading that world are.

It is here that disability plays a crucial role in allowing the scholar to pose a question that both reparative reading and critique omit altogether: what does it take to be able to read? From Treves' stunned look in seeing John Merrick for the first time in *The Elephant Man*, to Willem being uncertain how to read Jude's disability in *A Little Life*, to read for the affective affordances of disability means to become oriented toward examining the conditions under which reading practices themselves involve balancing on the tightrope spanned between legibility and being affectively overwhelmed. Any gesture that implies affirmation of reading therefore must arise out of the notion that affect is indefinite and legibility a variable. It is a variable, in that this approach dispenses with the notion of a supposed baseline in epistemological and intertextual baggage that the reader must carry with them in favor of an attitude that politicizes this very issue. In other words, disability is an inconvenience to the presupposition that the ability of individuals to engage in any hermeneutical activity is a given.

Disability thus discommodes sites of reading precisely through politicizing the conditions of the activity of reading itself. By rejecting the notion of a baseline for reading, this also implies the rejection of a chronological order under which reading should commence. With this, I mean that one is very often simply determined to read by the environment one is in, and that any discussion concerning what is needed to read is part of the negotiation between the sensible and the actionable.

Such an understanding of reading as aesthetic conduct has been expounded by Marielle Macé, in her essay *Ways of Reading, Modes of Being* (2013). She considers reading as what affects the reader by opening a dynamic of attraction and response. Macé writes that "We must consider not simply conduct, but kinds of conduct, and not simply readings, but styles of reading. Indeed, the manner of practices in aesthetic situations is also their content: the style of reading, the "how" determines the experience that it constitutes, which then acquires its singular character" (220). For Macé, stylization and manner are not separated from reading as an event that happens to readers, but rather she argues that through such an event stylization occurs. In this conceptualization of reading, the dynamic between the sensible and the actionable is therefore not one in which the reader herself solely intends how to read, but rather that the event of reading equally determines how the reader becomes individuated:

> The fact that reading happens to individuals (individuals who, though determined, defy definition of their identity by any simple property) is not a methodological impasse, preventing us from grasping the shared aspect and social implications of reading. What we encounter here is a

> call to recognize the modicum of individuation at work in our every gesture, spurring us to use thought itself as individuation, as it elects its proper scale and position in the multiple singularities of literature. (218)

Macé's conceptualization of reading does not posit the relationship of the readerly attitude to the text as one wherein the reader is cast as an autonomous figure that freely approaches the text; rather, reading *happens*. What is novel about this theory is that reading is posited as an event of stylization, and that through such stylization, the reader may consequently become individuated. The notion of "multiple singularities" Macé alludes to is then different from the idea that a text offers entry to, or offers us, different and multiple perspectives. Instead, it implies that each event of reading, regardless of the number of readings one engages with, is concurrently an event through which stylized individuation occurs. This also explains why Macé sees the definition of identity through "simple properties" as what the event of reading as well as the reader defies, since this process would be based on the recognition of one's idea of one's identity in the event of reading rather than the stylization-as-event in the way that Macé describes.

In her deliberations concerning reading as a predominantly determined aesthetic conduct, Macé is confronted with what the implications of such an understanding of reading are. If one posits reading as something that can *happen*, rather than it being a solely intentional activity, then what is at stake is the way in which the determined *how* of the reading follows into it gaining a "singular character," or the "multiple singularities" which according to her literary reading has to offer. Consequently, Macé ends up, albeit briefly, in the language of capacity and ability. She writes: "Reading comes to represent a kind of cognitive stylization; it calls first upon a very intimate capacity to deal with signs, losing one's bearings in impromptu representations. It also calls for the ability to continue a literary style in one's own life (making a path with it, against it, or in spite of it, in the terrain of the discernible world, to which reading inevitably leads one back)" (223). But how is it that Macé comes to the language of capacity and ability? Much like some of the theorists I've engaged with that either evoked or directly employed these terms—Elaine Scarry, Jonathan Culler, Barbara Johnson, Paul Ricoeur—Macé uses these terms only in passing. However, the major concern is that Macé links capacity in being confronted with signs as where one can lose one's bearings, echoing Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology of hesitation, and ability on the side of intentional actions (making a path, resisting it, and so on).

As I have argued in this study, reading, whether posited as either predominantly an event or an intentional action, necessarily brings the theorist back to the question I offered earlier: what does it take to be able to read? It is unsurprising that Macé still captures the consideration of this question in "cognitive stylization," since to her stylization is understood as an event that happens, as what the reader must undergo when they become engaged in reading. Consequently, stylization becomes connected to losing one's bearings in one's encounter with a text, precisely because the activity of reading is not a given but, as I have maintained, a matter of negotiation. This negotiation involves the way in which a text appeals to an individual's capacity and how capacity subsequently becomes translated into ability under a set of circumstances that call for it. This negotiation is, I argue, a crucial consideration for a theory of the event of reading. Additionally, the conditions under which capacities are translated into abilities are to be understood as a matter of affordances, which are always a question of relationality. Since ability has its etymological roots in *habilitas*, which connotes aptitude, or the perceived and sensed tendency concerning the fit between the reader and whatever text she engages with, (dis)abilities are consequently to be understood as an issue of relationality. Such an understanding of relationality in relation to the event of reading allows for an evasion of the either/or construction of reading (i.e., one can or cannot read this text), instead orienting our attention to the conditions under which a body comes to read, making legibility, as noted above, a variable and matter of degree. In this way, disability inconveniences those theories of reading that simply bypass this question by considering legibility to be a given rather than a question of the relation between capacity and ability as produced through engagement with a text.

This approach to reading for affordances is inconceivable without thinking about the capacity-ability question of reading, with which theorists tend to be confronted but only skirt around. The consideration of the capacity-ability question, and the way it has been largely absent in literary theory, should equally take its cue from reparative modes of reading as well as critique. From the reparative mode, it may draw how such a consideration can create new strands of scholarly research into how and where reading occurs, under what conditions, and how, where, and why we consider reading to take place, whom it concerns, and what we consider the criteria of its successes and failures. From critique, one may borrow its critical attitude by asking why the capacity-ability question has only received marginal attention so far in the history of literary theory, from the presupposition that many theorists of literature treat reading ability as a simple given in relation to the study of literary form rather than something that complicates a theory of close reading. When understood as a given, to

think of instances of disabled reading inconveniences theories that did not want to, or could not, consider this question at all.

Consequently, disability-as-inconvenience also becomes disability-as-imposition, as what imposes itself in asking to be considered in theories of reading. But this is what the pragmatic inconveniences of disability afford us in relation to legibility. Rather than foreclosing events of reading when reading ability gets called into question or even closed off, reading for the affordances of disability means that we can call into question how and why events and theories of reading can become politicized in this way.

In future research, I intend to further expound on the relationship concerning how bodily capacities become further translated into abilities and what this means for cultural sites of reading. For now, I hope that this study may contribute to all the scholarly work that seeks to expound reading for affordances as an approach, in the belief that reading with literary affordances holds much potential for the development of the multiple ways we consider the event of reading to simultaneously be an event of affirmation and change.