

# Reading Guide

## Discussion Questions

1. How does inhabiting people of different ages, races, and genders affect how Samuel Johnson sees the world? How does difference shape or hinder his relationship to each new vessel he travels in? To himself?
2. The narrative voice of Samuel is in some ways old fashioned, or perhaps timeless. Discuss how this choice on the part of the author shapes the story, which is a timeless one, too, at its essence—a search to be with the ones we love.
3. Samuel never makes any sweeping statements explaining his afterlife or other supernatural phenomena past his own experience. How does the intimate experience of Samuel's story, and the way it resists implications of meaning, affect the reader?
4. Despite lacking control, for the most part, over his afterlife, Samuel's feelings toward television are something that he actively reflects on and seems to be in "control" of. Is television a backdrop or an anchor to Samuel's existence? How does his relationship to different eras of television change how he acts toward the bodies he inhabits or his own story, or vice versa?
5. Thwarted reunions, oddball companions, a man on a journey to find himself: a bit Dickensian, *Samuel Johnson's Eternal Return* takes on many tropes. In what ways does this novel upend the classic setups of road trip, ghost story, or metamorphosis? In what ways does it stay true to some of these influences?

## Recommended Reading from Martin Riker

*Life: A User's Manual* by Georges Perec

*Oreo* by Fran Ross

*Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens

*I Am Not Sidney Poitier* by Percival Everett

*Dead Souls* by Nikolai Gogol

*Bogeywoman* by Jaimy Gordon

*The Third Policeman* by Flann O'Brien

*Get in Trouble* by Kelly Link

*Sheppard Lee, Written by Himself* by Robert Montgomery Bird

*Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo