

Special section article

The times we're in: Queer feminist criticism and the reparative 'turn'

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Abstract

This article examines the reparative turn in current queer feminist scholarship by tracking its twin interest in the study of affect and time. By foregrounding Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's influential critique of what she called paranoid reading, I am interested in the ways that various critics – Ann Cvetkovich, Heather Love, and Elizabeth Freeman in particular – take up the call for reparative reading by using the temporal frameworks of the everyday, backward feeling, and queer time to reparative ends. In the process, I consider the reparative work being done to reclaim Sedgwick as a major thinker for queer *feminist* concerns, and speculate on the attraction, in a time of declining economic and cultural support for the interpretative humanities, of a critical practice that seeks to love and nurture its objects of study.

Keywords

Affect, Eve Sedgwick, hermeneutics of suspicion, love, reparation

Affective atmospheres

Last year I turned fifty-four, making me the age my mother was when she was first diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 1985. It was called manic depression then and while the drug treatment was not exactly experimental, it was disturbingly precise. What we hoped would be a cure brought only a compromising reprieve, as her treatment mocked our optimism by rendering her consistently depressive. To be sure, this depressive state was lighter in tone: she was no longer caught in catatonic undertows or overwhelmed by the panicked tears that characterised the lower registers of her undiagnosed years. But bringing my mother into a world that did not threaten her with radical, unseen change meant losing the liveness I had cherished the most. Her mania, I realise now, was always my favourite time zone.

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When the diagnosis came, I was in graduate school, cutting my teeth on ‘French Feminism’, the first theoretical discourse I would come to know. Under the auspices of a course called ‘Woman as Sign’, I was being taught how to travel the long and decidedly incomprehensible distance between the U.S. lesbian feminism of the 1970s that had first gripped me and the transatlantic postmodern theory that I would come to embrace as if the choice were mine alone. While most histories of feminist theory narrate those years according to a set of now-familiar critical contentions, the stories we tell, as Clare Hemmings (2010), Joan Scott (2011), and others have noted, are retrospective incantations, attuned more to the anxious needs of the present than to an exploration of the distinctions that attend academic feminism’s complex political and intellectual inheritances. In my own earlier work on these issues, I focused on the hystericising keynotes of millennial closure, where academic feminist self narration was drawn to what I called ‘apocalyptic’ (Wiegman, 2000: 807) narration as a way to register worries that the future was at risk because the feminist present was abandoning its progressive debt to the past. In that moment – the late 1990s – and that space – U.S. empire – the crisis was about the success of feminism’s institutionalisation in the U.S. university. Ellen Messer-Davidow called it *Disciplining Feminism* (2002) and the picture she painted was a grave one: while academic feminists had won the battle of tenure, the war was lost on the streets as feminism became a dirty word and the generation nurtured in the 1980s was eager to settle for equality and capitalism; sexual autonomy and hyper femininity; and professional life and the hetero-nuclear family.

Today, as the western world that fed for centuries on colonial extraction is hemorrhaging under the pressures of neoliberal globalisation, no one seems especially worried that success is feminism’s failure. On the contrary, with so much in flux and with governments, like people, finding themselves awash in everyday attrition, scholarship that seeks to analyse the condition of the present – both its political comportment and its historical theorisation – has proliferated under a different set of terms: debt, crisis, precarity, bare life, biopolitics, neoliberalism, and empire. In this article, I discuss a distinct body of work within this general orientation, what I call *queer feminist criticism*, which attends to the condition of the present through the converging analytics of affect and time.¹ For readers of *Feminist Theory*, this archive and the wider conversation it draws on will be familiar.² Think, for instance, of Ann Cvetkovich’s delineation of trauma as the everyday experience of capitalism in her book *An Archive of Feelings* (2003); or Lauren Berlant’s use of ‘slow death’ (2011: 95) to describe environments of ordinary time where living is repetitious, not heroic; or Heather Love’s insistence that ‘feeling backward’ (2007) is a necessary counter to the false promises of LGBT progress; or Elizabeth Povinelli’s contemplation of the affective dispensation of subjugation and its vital knowledges (2011); or Sharon Holland’s aggrieved repossession of the quotidian as the primal scene of racism’s affectively dense erotic life (2012). Or in a different beat, consider how Sara Ahmed interrupts *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) by refuting progress not only with rage but with radical hope, or how José Muñoz (2009) and Judith Halberstam (2011) use disorientation and

disidentification to stoke their embrace of the alternative and utopian for a future culled from living in the subordinated zones of now, or the way Elizabeth Freeman tracks queer ‘asynchrony’ (2010: 19) to counter negativity by putting ‘the past into meaningful and transformative relation with the present’ (2010: xvi). In all of this work and that of other scholarship not named, queer feminist criticism partakes in defining and analysing the affective in temporal terms and vice versa, producing as much as contesting the atmospheres that reside in cultural domains and the critical worlds we build from and around them.

By describing queer feminist criticism in this way, I am signalling my interest in following the intimate ecology of this archive, or what Teresa Brennan would call its ‘atmosphere’ (2004: 1), in order to consider *its* affective binds – that is, the way this scholarship makes claims on the political landscape of the present by taking the present as an affectively resonant scene for ongoing debate about politics, agency, temporality, and the value and utility of criticism itself. To be sure, the affective differences in these projects can be astounding, as when Berlant (2011) stalks optimism’s cruelty to expose its ability to tether people to objects that impede their flourishing while Halberstam (2011) recodes negativity – self-destruction, passivity, sacrifice, and masochism – as the political agency of anti-achievement. In the temporal idiom of my childhood years, the affective atmosphere these works collectively cast is decidedly bipolar. While I have been drawn to each strategy as a way to manage the insecurity of the present, both can be exhausting. Halberstam’s practice of converting loss into heroic loserdom requires vigilance and a willingness to forfeit ambiguity in favour of assuring one’s object that being undone is a way of overcoming, even when life still feels bad. It comforts by renarrating abjection as resistance. Berlant rejects redemption in favour of interpretative endurance by conferring meticulous attention on the psychic and social environments in which her objects of study struggle to live. Her critical practice keeps pace with the suffering of her objects by offering them (and us) an interpretative sensorium of the intimate detail. Indicative of the larger critical ecology of queer feminist criticism, these distinctions are important not as competing interpretative strategies or opposite world views, but as evidence and evocation of the collective *affect* of ‘The times we’re in’.

In what follows, I engage the affective atmosphere of contemporary queer feminist criticism by emphasising some of the ways this scholarship orients itself toward the present, what relation it nurtures to politics and social change, and how its critical attentions to affect and temporality respond to recent debates about the hermeneutics of suspicion – or what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick famously called ‘paranoid reading’ (1997: 1). In dialogue with Sedgwick, much of the queer feminist archive I have named above aims to rethink, if not resist, its paranoid inheritances, which means challenging the methodological strategies and critical priorities that have accrued to interpretative practices founded on the symptom. Whether generated through Marxist or psychoanalytic traditions, symptomatic reading is taken to confer epistemological authority on the analytic work of exposure, honing left critical conceptions of power as repressive, mystifying, and occluding. Its primary

rhetorical genre has been referenced as *critique*, which gives the critic sovereignty in knowing, when others do not, the hidden contingencies of what things really mean. In recent years, symptomatic reading has come under assault by literary critics who express a desire for intimacy with objects of study they neither master nor disdain. In the name of ‘reparative reading’, ‘weak theory’, or compassionate redescription, they seek new environments of sensation for the objects they study by displacing critical attachments once forged by correction, rejection, and anger with those crafted by affection, gratitude, solidarity, and love.³ Under these affective terms, the critical act is reconfigured to value, sustain, and privilege the object’s worldly inhabitations and needs.

My article joins these discussions by considering how queer feminist interests in affect and temporality have been shaped by these broader debates. I begin by examining Sedgwick’s discussion of the limits of paranoid reading and her subsequent interest in the reparative impulse as elaborated by Melanie Klein before turning to the work of Cvetkovich, Love, and Freeman, who define their projects as reparative ones in ways that significantly rewrite Sedgwick’s scholarly contribution as central to distinctly queer feminist concerns. The reparative relation thus cultivated with Sedgwick – long critiqued for her failure to centre her critical attentions on lesbians – is one key aspect of the story to be told.⁴ The other is about the reparative turn more generally, which I read in distinctly psychoanalytic terms: not as an alternative to critique but as a means to compensate for its increasingly damaged authority. For in the political calculus of the present, where faith in the equation between knowledge and political transformation has undergone enormous attrition, many left-oriented cultural critics, including queer feminist ones, have grown unsure of the self-authorising thesis that has given political motive to decades of scholarly work: that *knowing* is the means for knowing what *to do*. In this context, in which the political claims of criticism have begun to sound hollow to even the most committed of practitioners, it is difficult *not* to read the turn toward reparative reading as a reparative one. For in the call to eschew the critical sovereignty of critique in favour of a practice of interpretation that privileges what the object of study needs or knows, reparative reading revises the political meaning and affective environment of the critical act. To put this in the language of a governing thesis, my largest claim is that the current attraction to reparative reading is about repairing the value and agency of interpretative practice itself.⁵

This is not, of course, a disinterested claim. As my opening paragraph suggests, my relation to reading and interpretation literally operates under the sign of my mother. Cultivated in an environment that lacked sufficient ways to anchor anyone in an explicable world, interpretation offered a rich affective resource for navigating the at times awful, at times exhilarating, paces of everyday life. When feeling was high and ordinary life magical, my big worry was not that it would not last, but that it would – for too long – seducing us both into the alluring fantasy that life could be lived at such an upbeat pitch. To repel the affective distress of the inevitable descent into depression, I cultivated interpretative habits that allowed me to

get there first. Prediction – the hallmark of paranoid reading – was a bulwark, no matter my mother’s refusal to help counter repetition by planning ahead. Forgetting was the keynote of her optimism, which stoked her belief that *this time* was always *the last time*. As you might guess, the language my mother used – and uses still – has never been my own. She wants ‘to be happy’. Stasis, the slow hum of something she calls ‘normal’, is her goal. My attempts at counter narration mean nothing, in part because what she seeks is not interpretation. This article is motivated by my wish to stop blaming her for this.

Reparative instincts

In her 1990 introduction to *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Sedgwick reflects on the anger that her work often caused for queer feminist readers who wanted to understand how she could forge her strongest critical investments in deciphering the phobic constraints affecting the world of gay men when she was both a woman and a self-declared feminist (1990: 15–16). Why not write about lesbians? Sedgwick first answered this question in her 1985 book *Between Men* by claiming that the relationship between antihomophobic inquiry and feminism was under-theorised and in need of elaboration.⁶ But by 1990, she says, she was wary of ‘abstractive formulations’ because they overlooked and underplayed ‘the way political commitments and identifications actually work’ (Sedgwick, 1990: 59). Hence, she situates her field-setting book by specifying, ‘what brings me to this work can hardly be that I am *a woman*, or *a feminist*, but that I am *this particular one*’ (Sedgwick, 1990: 59, emphasis mine). In marking the scene of the particular, Sedgwick was not denouncing larger critical claims in favour of personal itineraries, but she was refusing to assume that such claims were adequate to the understanding of the political charge of critical attachments. As we now know, Sedgwick’s writing after *Epistemology* sought to give an account of herself in ways that deflated the sovereign agency of criticism and its power to mask while conferring forms of self-inflation through the abstractive formulations of critical speech. Turning toward affect, she emphasised the importance of remaking the ways that critics approached their objects of study, urging a practice of reparative reading to challenge the hypervigilance of the hermeneutics of suspicion – or what she called, following Melanie Klein, the paranoid position – which had become ‘nearly synonymous with criticism itself’ (Sedgwick, 1997: 4). In her view, a reparative reading position was ‘[n]o less acute than a paranoid position, no less realistic, no less attached to a project of survival, and neither less nor more delusional or fantasmatic’ (Sedgwick, 1997: 35). Its value lay in the ‘different range of affects, ambitions, and risks’ it afforded the critic (Sedgwick, 1997: 35). ‘What we can best learn from such practices’, she wrote, are ‘the many ways in which 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’ (Sedgwick, 1997: 35).

As many people do not actually recall, Sedgwick’s essay on reparative reading began as a four page introduction to the 1996 special issue of *Studies in the Novel* under the title ‘Queerer than Fiction’. It opened by foregrounding the now

discredited link in Freudian thought between paranoia and the repression of same-sex desire to consider how the 'paranoid stance' had become by the end of the century 'a uniquely privileged one for understanding not – as in the Freudian tradition – homosexuality itself, but rather precisely the mechanisms of homophobic and heterosexist enforcement against it' (Sedgwick, 1996: 277). In the various genres of queer theory's most important critical inventions – '[s]ubversive and demystifying parody', 'suspicious archaeologies of the present', and 'hidden patterns of violence' – Sedgwick finds the paranoid imperative professionally installed as a 'prescriptive article of faith', one that discounts, even humiliates, alternatives that might seek a different relation to its object of study (1996: 277). When the special issue appeared in expanded book form the following year as *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, Sedgwick's (1997) introduction was thirty-seven pages long and dressed in the provocative title, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction Is about You'. It too was later revised, though only slightly, and included in her 2003 collection *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. It is this version that scholars have largely used to date Sedgwick's call for reparative reading, which aligns it with a post 9-11 rethinking of paranoid sensibilities in ways that have skewed our understanding of her work's own present, which was profoundly influenced by her disgust with the national fantasy of gay extermination propelled by the health emergency of AIDS and by her personal battle with breast cancer.⁷

But as early as 1995, in a *Critical Inquiry* essay co-authored with Adam Frank, Sedgwick begins to make clear her intention to develop a critical practice un beholden to the theoretical assumptions and discursive rhetorics that had been institutionalised in the literary humanities in the 1980s under the influence of the hermeneutics of suspicion.⁸ Through the figures of affect, embodiment, and temporality, 'Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins' takes aim at the reigning critical consensus by challenging what the authors call: 1 – its 'hypervigilant antiessentialism', which equates every act of de-naturalisation with 'doing justice'; 2 – its use of human language as the only viable model for conceptualising representation; and 3 – 'its impoverishing reliance on a bipolar analytic framework' that sanctions 'unresting critique' by reiterating the very binary relations of subject-object, self-other, and subversive-hegemonic that it is supposedly out to dismantle (Sedgwick and Frank, 1995: 515, 496, 500, 497). The essay begins mockingly: 'Here are a few things theory knows today', and ends by meditating on its own critical desire by posing and then answering the question: 'What does it mean to fall in love with a writer?' (Sedgwick and Frank, 1995: 496, 521). The writer, of course, is Tomkins, whose work is acknowledged at the outset as an easy target for contemporary theorists. 'You don't have to be long out of theory kindergarten to make mincemeat of... a psychology', they write, that conceptualises 'eight... distinct affects hardwired into the human biological system' (p. 497). But in the name of an 'ordinary literary-critical lover's discourse', the authors refuse to commit their analysis to assessing whether Tomkins's hypotheses are 'true' (p. 521). In their terms, 'there was so much to learn first' and so much to enjoy from '[t]his

rich claustal writing [that] nurtures, pacifies, replenishes, then sets the idea in motion again' (p. 521; 498). In making their case for a textual encounter predicated on love, the authors contrast the lavish sensorium of his writing with the way 'affect fares under today's routines of theory' (p. 512). Their negative scholarly example is Ann Cvetkovich's first book, *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (1992), which is read as too distant from its object of study and too committed to social construction to find intimacy with its objects of study. For a "'theory of affect'", they write, 'this one has no feelings in it' (Sedgwick and Frank, 1995: 514).⁹ Cvetkovich's new book, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (2012) responds in its own reparative way to this critique by siding with Sedgwick's reparative agenda.¹⁰ The significance of this point for my purposes will emerge as this article proceeds.

When Sedgwick turns a year later to a fuller explication of what 'theory knows', she supplements Tomkins's work on affect with language offered by Melanie Klein, establishing 'paranoid reading' and 'reparative reading' as the twin figures of critical practice. As with Klein, the paranoid and reparative – or more specifically the paranoid/schizoid and reparative/depressive – are positions, not personalities, and Sedgwick makes clear that in critical practice they represent impulses not just toward an object of study but toward the kind of authority the critic seeks to wield.¹¹ In developing her critique of the hegemony of paranoid reading, Sedgwick delineates five ways to recognise it when you see it: 1 – It is anticipatory, which means that it is dedicated to seeing what others do not see. Its mantra is "'There must be no bad surprises'" (Sedgwick, 1997: 9, emphasis in original; 2003: 130).¹² 2 – It is reflexive and mimetic, which means that it requires being 'imitated' to be understood, and 'in turn, seems to understand only by imitation' (Sedgwick, 1997: 10; 2003: 131). Rita Felski (2012) has recently glossed this characteristic by suggesting that the suspicious reader thinks that reflexivity means demonstrating when criticism is not critical *enough*. 3 – It is a strong theory, which means that it runs towards tautology; dead set against surprises, it has an affinity for proving 'the very same assumptions' with which it began (Sedgwick, 1997: 14; 2003: 135). 4 – It is a theory of negative affects, which is why it pits pleasure against true knowledge by aligning the critical act with scenes and scenarios of pain, violence, melancholia, and loss (Sedgwick, 1997: 16; 2003: 137). 5 – It places its faith in exposure, which inflates the efficacy of knowledge by giving political agency to critical explications of the way that power works (Sedgwick, 1997: 17; 2003: 138).

For Sedgwick, an exemplary paranoid text is Judith Butler's 1990 *Gender Trouble*, which is stoked by the anticipation of error and emits what Sedgwick calls an 'unresting vigilance' in tracking the essentialist and naturalising assumptions of prevailing gender theories (1997: 10; 2003: 130). In Sedgwick's terms, *Gender Trouble* teaches us that 'you can never be paranoid enough', in part because in its mode of detection, complicity is everywhere, including within the very theories about gender and sexuality that left critics have used to try to transform hegemonic orders (1997: 7; 2003: 127). By dedicating itself to exposing complicity, *Gender Trouble* reinforces the three key assumptions that Sedgwick finds at the

heart of paranoid practice: 1 – that by revealing hidden meanings we are well on our way to solving the problem at hand; 2 – that by making something visible, we detoxify its power, as if social violences do not attend visibility itself; and 3 – that ‘the audience for these unveilings’ harbours ‘an infinite reservoir of naivete’, requiring the critic to expose what they cannot possibly know on their own (1997: 19; 2003: 141). ‘How television-starved would someone have to be’, Sedgwick muses, ‘to find it shocking that ideologies contradict themselves, that simulacra don’t have originals, or that gender representations are artificial?’ (1997: 19; 2003: 141). In Elizabeth Freeman’s words, paranoid reading allows one to feel ‘more evolved than one’s context’ (2007: 498). In the idiom of my childhood years, it was more a habit aimed at controlling what might come next, making prediction a compensatory tactic for living under the threat of the next undertow.

Reparation, on the other hand, is for Sedgwick about learning how to build small worlds of sustenance that cultivate a different present and future for the losses that one has suffered. You could say that it is about loving what hurts but instead of using that knowledge to prepare for a vigilant stand against repetition, it responds to the future with affirmative richness. In every version of the essay now published, Sedgwick writes that ‘read[ing] from a reparative position is to surrender the knowing, anxious paranoid determination that no horror . . . shall ever take the reader by surprise: to a reparative reader, it can seem realistic and necessary to experience surprise’ (1996: 279; slightly revised 1997: 24; 2003: 145). This is a remarkable statement from a woman living with breast cancer, as it approaches the anti-epistemological proposition of her generation – that *we cannot know* – with resolute disinterest in its prophylactic deployment. Instead she calls on hope, ‘often a fracturing . . . thing to experience’, as a crucial reparative energy, one that gives the reader ‘room to realize that [because] the future may be different from the present, it is also possible . . . to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently’ too (Sedgwick, 1996: 279; 1997: 24–25; 2003: 143). In Sedgwick’s language, reparative reading ‘wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self’ (1996: 279; 1997: 28; 2003: 149). Its ‘impulse is additive and accretive’, born from the ‘fear . . . that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture’ (Sedgwick, 1996: 279; 1997: 27–28; 2003: 149). As Ellis Hanson explains, reparative reading is ‘grounded in disillusion rather than infatuation’ and arises from ‘the obvious fact that our world is damaged and dangerous’, but instead of ‘repeat[ing] the bad news’, it, seeks to ‘build or rebuild some more sustaining relation to the objects in our world’ (2012: 547). Against the vigilant demand of critical omnipotence, Sedgwick follows Melanie Klein and names the reparative impulse ‘love’ (1996: 278; 1997: 8; 2003: 128). As she puts it, ‘Love of a book, even a sinister book, love that generates out of concentrated meditation on its pieces a different and needed book; the transformative, frankly instrumental love of the artifacts of a culture, threatening though that culture itself may be: perhaps no impulse has less warrant than such love in the climate of a hermeneutic of suspicion’ (Sedgwick, 1996: 278).

My interest in the publication history of Sedgwick's work on paranoid reading is not simply corrective. There *is* something odd about a citational error that appears so contagiously and that casts the current turn toward reparative reading as coincident with the political and critical present that animated Sedgwick's intervention. By restoring Sedgwick's call for reparative reading to nearly a decade earlier than is often cited, I am locating her challenge to the hegemony of paranoid reading in the very years when queer theory was first finding institutional form. This makes the centrality of Judith Butler's work for Sedgwick's anatomy of paranoid reading especially important, as it highlights Sedgwick's awareness of their divergent critical instincts before their dual billing as 'founders' of queer theory was firm. It also alerts us to the coexistence of paranoid and reparative critical practices as part of the queer theoretical project from the outset, making it important to address not only how these distinctions are currently cast, but the poverty of any intellectual history of the field that writes them either as antithetical or as sequential. For her part, Sedgwick repeatedly acknowledged that her dissection of the critical tactics of paranoid reading was not possible without the very tools she critiqued, and there is still no way to read Butler without sensing how, for her, paranoid forms of revelation help nurture subjects for whom survival is always a matter of interpretative intervention. In these contexts, it becomes clear that Sedgwick was not rejecting paranoid criticism in generic terms; her focus was more narrowly on its critical hegemony and the difficulties scholars faced in the 1990s trying to confer critical authority on any other interpretative mode.

In the context of *our* critical present, then, where it is possible to discern an entire body of work seconding Sedgwick's reparative intentions as if there is no difference between her context and our own, the questions to be asked now are these: What precisely motivates the widespread embrace of reparative reading for queer feminist readers today? And what do scholars hope to leave behind when they make the reparative 'turn' in rhetorical formulations that cast it as a new and significantly better one? While there is no way to answer these questions completely, I have a few ideas – we could even call them suspicions – about reparative reading's contemporary allure, culled from the interpretative investments I developed in negotiating the bipolar environment of my childhood. For while I spent many years perfecting my ability to diagnose the signs of coming disequilibrium, it was clear that my commitment to symptomatic reading held no future-generating promise for the object whose suffering I wanted to end. On the contrary, it incited my mother to rage against what she saw as my negative and arrogant assessment, as any mention of repetition betrayed her best intentions. To deflect her anger and no doubt to manage my own, I learned to cultivate alternative strategies. If, today, I do not herald the reparative inclinations of these strategies as a better response to the present's ongoing insecurities, it is not because of their near total failure in alleviating my mother's condition. The stakes, as I see it, are much higher, as I have come to wonder what it means to confer love on an object as a tactical strategy in rescuing one's self from condemnation.

Affective asynchronies

Much of the queer feminist archive that concerns me here traces its critical intuition to Sedgwick's definitional turn toward reparative reading, which is understood as an investment in tracking subjects in their everyday life worlds where politics with a big P and the muscularity of the critical idioms that have claimed it have been downgraded *to feel*, not just to analyse, the world in non-dialectical, post post-structuralist terms. The literary inclinations of most of this work, like Sedgwick's own, mean that the everyday is largely cited in textual environments that reflect the object attachments of contemporary literary inquiry, thereby privileging novels, poems, memoirs, films, experimental videos, performances, and critical theories, as well as activist documents, cabaret, cartoons, crafting, journalism, and various ephemera from popular culture made valuable by the influences of cultural studies. It also means an emphasis on the personal voice, similar to Sedgwick's own careful distinction between the categorical exclamation 'I am a woman' and the necessary specification of always being '*this particular one*' (1990: 59, emphasis mine). Ann Cvetkovich's recent book *Depression: A Public Feeling* is exemplary in this regard. Organisationally, it is split between an opening memoir called the 'Depression Journals' in which the author presents documents from her own history of depression and three chapters, collectively called a 'speculative' essay, that use cultural materials 'from the insurgent and experimental genres of queer cultures' to 'speak back' to the medical and self-help models that shape current common sense (Cvetkovich, 2012: 23, 161, 160). '[M]y examples are reparative ones', she writes, naming her method 're-description', which aims to express all the ways in which 'depression is ordinary – as is its "cure," which resides not in medical treatment but in the art of daily living' (Cvetkovich, 2012: 161; 159; 161). Responding to Sedgwick's earlier criticism of her work, Cvetkovich hopes to interrupt the 'left-progressive... rush to meta-commentary' by 'mov[ing] past the work of critique or the exposure of social constructions' to offer 'a compelling description, one that doesn't reduce lived experience to a list of symptoms' (2012: 11, 13, 15).

In its introduction, *Depression* offers an overview of scholarship attending to affect at the intersection of feminist and queer inquiries, registering its resistance to the temporality of the new that the figure of an 'affective turn' suggests. When *was* feminist inquiry not interested in affect, she asks? The answer is obvious, though as Cvetkovich notes, there is no single theoretical genealogy for the work on affect in the queer feminist archive. Some work is posited in distinctly Deleuzian terms while other scholarship, like her own, speaks of affect in its everyday idiom, as feeling, emotion, and sentiment. More precisely, we might cite two scholarly trajectories that simultaneously convene and diverge here: an older emphasis on everyday life arising from the protocols of standpoint theory and its rather fabled encounter with poststructuralist takes on the subject; and the more recent reorientation toward the body in the context of what is called 'the new materialism', where critical practices are being honed away from social constructionist emphases on ideology and performativity in favour of less static engagements with embodied life, including those that forfeit the centrality of the human altogether.¹³ While the latter intends a

direct assault on the essentialist theoretical phobias of earlier years in the name of renewed attention to the ontological, the former – what I think of as the everyday affect school – reads both embodiment and everyday life in affective terms and has been especially influential in founding a distinct feminist project within and for queer studies today. Its critical engagement with reparative reading moves in multiple temporal directions, aspiring toward the future as well as the past in affective tonalities that reimagine the project of living in and through the present. An interesting contrast can be found in Heather Love's *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007) and Elizabeth Freeman's *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010), both of which trace their projects to Sedgwick's call for reparative reading as the critical impulse that turns their gaze toward the past – toward 'history' – to affectively nurture the present, albeit in very different terms. Taken together, they help demonstrate what it means to say that in queer feminist criticism time itself has become a reparative affect.

Love's book from 2007 is centred on queer writing in the modern period and owes a debt, as the author puts it, to 'a long tradition of work on queer negativity' (2007: 22), which includes Lee Edelman's influential *No Future* (2004), the most formidable contribution to what is called the antisocial thesis in queer studies since Leo Bersani's biting 'Is the Rectum a Grave?' (1987). For Love, the importance of this tradition lies in its interest in negative affect, but rather than aim its political intervention as an interruption of reproductive futurity, she wants to hold on to the queer past as a scene of 'ruined or failed sociality', which puts her project in 'dialogue with critics working on shame, melancholia, depression, and pathos – the experience of failure rather than negativity itself' (2007: 22, 23). By situating her project in line with Sedgwick's call for reparative reading, Love eschews 'exposure as a reading protocol' in order to emphasise 'the descriptive rather than the critical' (2007: 23). She thus calls for thinking 'with' rather than 'against' her objects of study – Walter Pater, Willa Cather, Radclyffe Hall, and Sylvia Townsend Warner – in order to ask questions about how 'feeling backward' can offer affective resources for queer survival in the political present where forgetting has become the keynote of a progressivist historical consciousness (Love, 2007: 23). Indeed, in Love's terms, the mainstream successes of gay and lesbian political projects – gay marriage, the decriminalisation of sodomy, and the end of Don't Ask, Don't Tell – threaten to marginalise the past, what she calls 'the bad old days before Stonewall' (2007: 28). In this context, she finds it important to counter Butler's (1993) concern that 'queer' might never be able to escape its association with injury by calling precisely for a return to history to secure the lessons that injury affords. 'The politics of optimism', she writes, 'diminishes the suffering of queer historical subjects; at the same time, it blinds us to the continuities between past and present' (Love, 2007: 29). In her reparative vision, Love seeks to covet the figures from the past who evoke shame and suffering, and hence to attend to 'homophobic exclusion and violence' as part of an understanding of the history of the present. In feeling her way backward, she wants to 'make space for various forms of ruined subjectivity' as a political commitment not to leave queer failure and abjection behind (Love,

2007: 162; 30; 162). In these terms, the dead offer lessons that the future might need, carving a space into the present for the asynchronies of an affectively vital political negativity.

If Love's book is taken to worry over the effacements of the past wrought by queer cultural incorporation, Elizabeth Freeman approaches the question of the politics of the present from a dramatically opposite affective perspective. Suffering, she writes, 'need not be the only food the ancestors offer' (Freeman, 2010: 19). Her project thus turns toward pleasure and the erotic, not in disregard of loss, mourning, and negativity, but as a means of embracing the psychic demands of negotiating them. 'At one point in my life as a scholar', she explains, 'I thought the point of queer was to be always ahead of actually existing social possibilities. On this model, it seemed that truly queer queers would dissolve forms, disintegrate identities, level taxonomies, scorn the social, and even repudiate politics altogether' (Freeman, 2010: xiii). Reading this stance as a form of paranoid criticism, Freeman finds herself today 'interested in the tail end of things . . . whatever has been declared useless' (2010: xiii). In its central concern for a non-teleological understanding of queer time, her book 'turns us backward to prior moments, forward to embarrassing utopias, sideways to forms of being and belonging that seem, on the face of it, completely banal'. 'This', she writes, 'is the essence of what I think Sedgwick means by reparative criticism: that because we can't know in advance . . . what is queer and what is not, we gather and combine eclectically, dragging a bunch of cultural debris around us and stacking it in idiosyncratic piles' (Freeman, 2010: xiii). To emphasise this point, Freeman organises her book around 'minor visual works by minor artists' to consider the temporality of a present marked, even overdetermined, by a sense of 'historical post-ness' (2010: xiv). While much hand-wringing can be found in popular and academic criticism about the fantasies of postal achievement, Freeman is less interested in forging a corrective than in attending to the details of imaginative works that embrace the afterlife of revolution as part of the political present tense. All her artists were born in the 1960s or 1970s, making them part of a generation that inherited a 'series of failed revolutions' that are now 'impossible to realize in their original mode' (Freeman, 2010: xiv). Hence, the knowledge that capitalism appropriates dissent 'is no reason to end with despair' but a key feature of the works that engage her (Freeman, 2010: xvi). In these terms, grand narratives do come to an end but people continue to find 'other possibilities for living' (Freeman, 2010: xxii). By deliberating on these possibilities, Freeman's reparative practice returns to the seemingly outmoded activity of 'close reading', which she casts in affective terms, as the ability 'to take pleasure in tarrying' in order to enter the temporal complexity of history (2010: xvii). 'Time Binds' is her figure for this work and the historical compass in which it is enmeshed, where capitalism's modern insistence on progressive temporalities is interrupted, sometimes exploded, by the never fully repressed insurgencies of anachronism, asynchrony, and 'temporal drag' (Freeman, 2010: 59). Through close reading, Freeman lingers in the language and visual life of her objects of study, hoping to share their aspirations and angles of vision as a way of treating 'texts and their formal work as theories of their own' (2010: xvii).

Like Cvetkovich and Love, Freeman is drawn to the intimacy with the object of study that reparative reading affords, even as her affective attentions move toward the pleasures to be found, not the losses to be embraced or overcome. For my purposes, the affective differences that attend these texts are ultimately less interesting than the reparative claims they collectively make. All cite one another's work as evocations of a Sedgwickian inheritance, and even Love and Freeman define their different moods as compatible ones, given that the queer relation to time is mutually cast as an affective one. In one sense, then, the cultivated 'turn' to reparative reading in the queer feminist archive might be understood as a practice of critical community formation, one that actively performs a transfer of critical allegiances from critique to close reading, from Butler to Sedgwick, and from the itineraries of critical theory to those more closely aligned with literary and cultural studies. In emphasising the creative act – novels, films, memoirs – they all put faith in their objects of study as affectively rich environments for cultivating a response to the conditions of the political present, one that simultaneously embraces ambivalence, rejects the demands of progress, and forgoes the dominance of the symptom as the organising agency of criticism. In the process, the political value of interpretative practice quite definitely shifts, as ideological warfare is replaced by the priority of redescription, and critique is downgraded to make room, as Sedgwick hoped, for other styles of thought. Sensation, we might say, displaces the authority of suspicion.

But these are not the only consequences of the reparative turn that characterises queer feminist criticism. The status of the critic is very much at stake in the reorientation toward the object, marking the political distance that has been travelled between Sedgwick's early call for reparative reading and the contemporary turn that enthusiastically cites it as temporally its own. Here, in a present in which the value of critical thinking has undergone attrition in contemporary cultures that prioritise accounting without accountability, discourse without truth, and meaning without interpretation, the reparative turn quite significantly rewrites the critic's value as the consequence of the object's need. This is an interesting recalibration in light of the archive's feminist commitments, as suspicion has been central to unravelling the provincial and universalising tendencies of feminist theory as it approached the object of study – women – that first defined and then quite famously undermined it. By resisting the impulse to diagnosis and judgement, queer feminist criticism lowers the metacritical heat of its own left academic intentions, suspending paranoid criticism's well honed leap into political judgement. But if critical sovereignty is thereby diminished – as one no longer pursues an object of study in order to change it – the ongoing necessity of interpretation is otherwise secured. From this perspective, reparative reading might be alluring precisely because it confers timely value on critical practice itself. To put this in the environment of everyday living referenced at the outset of this article, we might say that reparative reading was valuable because it allowed me to hone my skills at interpretation as if *only* my mother's life depended on it. The truth of the matter was much more entangled, as I learned to sustain myself by taking my faith in interpretation as the perfect answer to *her* need.

After reparation

Not everyone associated with the affective turn in contemporary queer feminist criticism defines the move away from paranoid reading as reparative. In chapter four of *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant seconds Sedgwick's refusal of the hermeneutics of suspicion 'on the ground that it always finds the mirages and failures for which it looks', but she hesitates at the prospect of casting her own anti-paranoid intentions in reparative terms (2011: 123). 'How would we know', she writes, 'when the "repair" we intend is not another form of narcissism or smothering will?' (Berlant, 2011: 124).¹⁴ Here Berlant gets close to disclosing some of the less affirming implications of the reparative position as Melanie Klein depicted it, where the psychic complexity of the infant's dependence on the maternal breast means that the arrival into 'love' is never innocently given but instead part of a defensive manoeuvre against the infant's own murderous impulses toward the projections and part-objects that make up its world. What Sedgwick calls, following Klein, the 'mature ethical dimension' of the reparative position is thus contingent on the infant's negotiation of her own aggression in an environment in which dependence is necessary for survival but also its greatest threat (2007: 638). While Sedgwick fully recognises this negotiation, she distils the aggression that fuels it by rendering it *as* the version of the self that the reparative position intends – that is, as 'the subject's movement toward what Foucault calls "care of the self," the often very fragile concern to provide the self with pleasure and nourishment in an environment that is perceived not particularly to offer them' (1997: 15–16).¹⁵ To read the negotiation at stake in the 'anxiety-mitigating achievement' of the reparative position less reparatively, we might say that the very desire to protect the mother – or any other object – is bound up in the drama of self-definition; to love her is to repair damaging versions of the self (Sedgwick, 1996: 278).¹⁶

What does this mean for the reparative investments in reading and interpretation that I have been tracking? This question is especially pressing given how little of the work that cites Sedgwick's use of the reparative reflects on the way that, in Klein, the paranoid position is not the sole scene in which the subject encounters anxiety and aggression; both the paranoid and the reparative positions are responses to the same environmental conditions of ambivalence, risk, and dependence.¹⁷ Even Sedgwick avoided grappling at length with the less salvific implications of reparation in the three key texts that explicate its critical potential. Each version of the essay defines the reparative position as a decided critical good, celebrating, as I have noted, its impulse 'to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self' (Sedgwick, 1996: 279; 1997: 28; 2003: 149). As she puts it from the very beginning: 'Once assembled to one's own specifications, the more satisfying object is available both to be identified with and to offer one nourishment in turn' (Sedgwick, 1996: 278). But as Berlant notes, and as a psychoanalytic parsing of Klein's object relations would insist, the pledge to the good is never simply what we want it to stand for, in part because the 'inchoate self' at risk in this scenario is the critic herself. At the very least, this means that the current celebration of reparative reading as a form of

intimacy, if not love of and for the object of study, must be understood – against its burgeoning reputation – as making rather significant demands on the object, *not against the authority and security of the critic but on her behalf*.

To be sure, this demand is not about critical sovereignty in the paranoid sense, as objects of study are not subordinated to the critic's performance of interpretative mastery. On the contrary, reparative criticism takes shape around the critic's affirmative dependency on the object and seeks a dramatic revision of the political capacity of critical practice by casting such dependency in ethical terms, as a response to the object's experience and need. This revision is more than a professional renewal of the value of critical practice by scholars negotiating university environments increasingly engulfed in the insecurity and ambivalence of neoliberalisation. It is also a compensatory tactic aimed at redeeming the critic's self perception in the twilight of the hermeneutics of suspicion, where one of the most potent remnants of its critical habits can be found in the repeated accusation that the declining significance of the humanities is the critic's own fault. As this accusation goes, whole generations of critics abandoned the love of their objects, turning away from the artefacts of culture in both their formal density and their social complexity to luxuriate in the superiority of their own authorship, to the point that entire humanities departments are today organised around the texts of critics themselves. In this anti-disciplinary world of authorship-without-the-author, culture-without-literature, and the humanities-without-a-human-subject, no one – no dean or provost or board of trustees – would even need to spend their time on censure, let alone dismantlement, as the critic at war with his discipline has succeeded in undoing himself. One does not have to look much further to be reminded of how powerful are beliefs in self-invention, as this narrative repeats the thesis of neoliberal rationality that gives full agency for individual and historical outcomes in a time of institutional retrenchment to subjects themselves.

But the larger point here is not about whether we take the accusation to be false or true, but about how it comes to live in the affective atmospheres of the contemporary university. For if the reparative position is indeed 'an actual achievement', it is not enough in our current context to emphasise the 'ethical possibility' that accompanies the development of 'a guilty, empathetic view of the other as at once good, damaged, integral, and requiring and eliciting love and care' (Sedgwick, 1997: 15). It is not enough because one does not have to be paranoid to think that there is a great deal of the critic's own self investment at stake in the institutional survival of a humanities committed to the value of interpretative practice. When it comes to the matter of the critic's investment in herself, then, the widely heralded distinction between paranoid and reparative reading is not one, as both practices are engaged in producing, confirming, and sustaining critical practice as a necessary agency, no matter the different object relations and analytic itineraries that govern each. In this broader context, the defining characteristic of queer feminist criticism – its heralded refusal of the critic's authority in the name of an interpretative practice born in an ethical embrace of the object's need – may be important for what it *most shares* with paranoid

reading: an emphatic and instead empathetic attachment to *interpretation* as a self and world enhancing necessity.

Believe me, the obviousness of this statement would fill me with shame if it were not for the difficulties I have encountered in arriving here, where my own faith in the interpretative power of critical practice has been rewarded by a professional culture in which it has always been easy to pretend that the biggest challenge facing us is about why one interpretation or mode of reading is better than another. While every brand of contemporary criticism that interests me takes Sedgwick's first axiom in *Epistemology of the Closet* – 'people are different from each other' (1990: 22) – as a project of infinite elaboration, I have remained immune to the possibility that such differences may collate around the impulse and investments in interpretation itself. In vernacular terms, I am reminded of a friendship that ended many years ago with an invective to which I could never respond: 'Robyn', my former friend said in disgust, 'life is not a novel'. Today, the phrase could be turned this way: 'The world is not a text; reading and interpretation are not universal values', and while I would be drawn to demonstrating the speaker's essentialist belief in worlds and subjects that can be known before the social constructs them, the accusation would otherwise leave me speechless on the terrain of what it was most calculated to reveal: that critical practice as a tactic of everyday living is an alienating option for those unmoved by approaching the world as a test – or playground – of interpretative skills. This, it seems to me, is what haunts reparative reading as it works to reassemble interpretation's value while believing it has side-stepped the sovereign agencies and mastering hermeneutics that it pins on paranoid reading alone.

All of this is to say that my resistance to reparative reading as a proposed counter to the hermeneutics of suspicion is patently not about finding an alternative strategy to replace it. My point is more simple, if confounding: that while the pursuit of alternatives to sovereign forms of knowledge production may reorient the rhetorical pitch and hermeneutic priorities of criticism, it does not prepare any of us to explain why interpretation remains the value we resolutely cling to. *No one will read this*, a thousand scholars murmur, as we chew on the world in ways that have everything to do with finding interpretations that can sustain us. To put this in terms of the object that opens and frames this article – my mother – let me end by saying that what this mediation on reparative reading reveals is not what it means but *how it feels to know* that no interpretation I can offer will help her claim a world building agency she can believe in. That need – which she has always stood for – remains my own.

Notes

1. In delivering early versions of this article in lecture format, I was repeatedly asked about the seeming 'strangeness' of the category I invent here, *queer feminist criticism*, and its deployment not as a collaboration between queer *and* feminist criticism but as a distinct body of work in its own right. While there are certainly well established narratives that

privilege antagonism and dissensus as the political and analytic relation between queer critique and feminist criticism, it is clear that many scholars working in literary and cultural studies today are forging projects from within a set of shared political and theoretical genealogies – and in some cases revising the very inheritances of queer theory along the way, such that the famous distinction between sexuality and gender offered by Gayle Rubin (1984) and taken up by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990: 30) is repealed as a theoretical universalism. See, for instance, Sara Ahmed's work on Audre Lorde (2004), Roderick Ferguson's restoration of women of colour feminism to queer critique (2003), and my own delineation of Sedgwick's feminist commitments (Wiegman, forthcoming).

2. See especially Pedwell and Whitehead (2012), Hemmings (2012), and Gorton (2007).
3. On weak theory, see Stewart (2008), and on what I am calling compassionate redescription, see Berlant (2011) and Stewart (2011).
4. A much longer deliberation on Sedgwick's feminist inheritances can be found in Wiegman (forthcoming). See also Jagose (2009).
5. To be sure, the view I offer reflects as much as it refracts the routes of critical reception available to me as a specific kind of reader, one shaped by three institutional transformations: the professional rise of critical theory as the privileged discourse of literary studies in the early 1980s; the emergence of queer inquiry in English departments in the early 1990s; and the consolidation of feminist theory as the primary discourse of interdisciplinary legibility in Women's Studies in this century. This is one way of saying that in delineating a body of work called queer feminist criticism I am defining a *location of critical reception* as much as naming a critical archive constituted by familiar critical idioms and shared disciplinary inclinations. Along with the internationalisation of American Studies, these are also the intersections that frame the conversations of my recent book, *Object Lessons* (2012), where I pay attention to the political desire invested in identity objects of study and the disciplinary practices generated by their academic institutionalisation. That book joins much of the scholarship I discuss here to register a methodological exhaustion with critique, but instead of turning toward alternatives, it considers *the political imaginary of the alternative* as a disciplinary feature of identity knowledges in all of their contemporary manifestations: as Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, Queer Studies, and American Studies.
6. Sedgwick writes, 'As a woman and a feminist, writing (in part) about male homosexuality, I feel I must be especially explicit about the political groundings, assumptions, and ambitions of this study... My intention throughout has been to conduct an antihomophobic as well as feminist inquiry' (1985: 19). In doing so, Sedgwick seeks to intervene in the existent literature on the relationship between women and male homosexuality, which suffers, she writes, from one of two overdetermining assumptions: 'either that gay men and all women share a "natural," transhistorical alliance... or else that male homosexuality is an epitome, a personification, an effect, or perhaps a primary cause of woman-hating' (1985: 19–20). By reading both of these assumptions as false, Sedgwick develops a critical agenda aimed at promoting an 'alliance' between feminism and antihomophobia (1985: 20). This agenda entails setting feminism's own analysis of the continuum that shapes the relationship between 'women loving women' and 'women promoting the interests of women' in a wider frame of reference, one capable of accounting for the radical discontinuity that underwrites male bonds, where there has been no modern cultural or political discourse capable of negotiating the divide between 'men loving men' and 'men promoting the interests of men' (Sedgwick, 1985: 3). On the contrary, she argues,

male homosocial bonds are structured by homophobic prohibition, denial, and violent negation – not generically but as a primary characteristic of twentieth century western patriarchy. By detailing this structure through careful readings of (mostly) canonical western literature, *Between Men* makes a feminist case for rethinking the familiar but historically specific relationship between the injunction against homosexuality and the patriarchal production and sustenance of masculine bonds.

7. See for instance Best and Marcus (2009), Cvetkovich (2012), Felski (2012), Flatley (2010), Halberstam (2011), Muñoz (2006), Rooney (2010), and Weed (2012). In ‘Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading’, Heather Love acknowledges the 1997 introduction to *Novel Gazing* in a footnote, but uses the 2003 referent in the body of the text and describes both it and Sedgwick’s 2007 *South Atlantic Quarterly* essay on Melanie Klein as ‘Sedgwick’s late essays’ (Love, 2010: 240).
8. This 1995 essay is the first published evidence of Sedgwick’s engagement with the hermeneutics of suspicion. But it is noteworthy that at the outset of ‘The Future’s Eve: Reparative Reading after Sedgwick’ (2011), Ellis Hanson recalls hearing a 1995 lecture by Sedgwick that featured much of the material that would appear in the introductory essay on paranoid reading in *Novel Gazing* (Sedgwick, 1997). His recollection makes apparent an important aspect of the life cycle of academic production, which typically entails numerous conference and public talks on works-in-progress before more polished published versions appear. In November 2012, Hal Sedgwick confirmed that there is currently no record of Sedgwick’s many conference talks and invited lectures, making Hanson’s reference the earliest documentation I have found. It is highly likely that Sedgwick’s discussion of reparative reading would have been part of her public lectures as early as 1994.
9. In a footnote, Sedgwick and Frank offer a defence of their essay’s primary example. Given the significance of Cvetkovich to the queer feminist archive that I am tracking, the footnote is worth quoting at length:

Why, we’ve been asked, use a first book as our sole example in articulating this argument rather than refer by name (and of course the names might be legion and include Sedgwick) to other theorists more rankly steeped in these routines of theory and indeed more directly responsible for their popularization? We persist in this gracelessness for two reasons. First, we envisioned for this essay a gestalt strategy of involving its readers in a sudden perceptual reorganization and unexpected self-recognition . . . concerning some critical practices that might in this way be effectively defamiliarized. If we had designated a number of theorists about whom many readers will already have assigned themselves a *parti pris*, our strategy would have had no chance of success. Secondly, however, it makes sense that among the many other ways one might look at Cvetkovich’s book, one can look at it precisely as a first book that originated in a dissertation – as, that is, a rite of passage whose conventions can best dramatize the economy of transmission across academic disciplines that is our subject here. (Sedgwick and Frank, 1995: 512, n. 14)

10. ‘In retrospect, I find it interesting’, Cvetkovich writes, ‘that Sedgwick so astutely identifies the problem with which I was struggling, but in failing to notice the gestures toward the reparative in *Mixed Feelings*, she herself remains in the critical mode.

Among other things, my work on depression and public feeling is the result of a long period of pondering this encounter with Sedgwick in order to view with more compassion the blockages that accompanied my fledgling version of the affective turn' (2012: 218; n. 35). Interestingly, Silvan Tomkins is consistently misspelled as Sylvan Tompkins throughout this book (Cvetkovich, 2012: 215, n. 8; 281, n. 35). In paranoid terms, we might read this as the psychic trace of the struggle that a reparative turn toward Sedgwick entails in the aftermath of Sedgwick's early critique of Cvetkovich's work. At the same time, it is important to note, following Frank and Wilson (2012: 874, n. 7), that the spelling mistake is rife in contemporary criticism – a consequence, as they put it, of the 'fleeting use' scholars make of Tomkins's work.

11. Throughout this article, I opt for using the terms of Sedgwick's title – paranoid and reparative – to talk about critical practice in part because of the confusion that develops over the course of Sedgwick's own engagement with Klein around the category of the 'depressive'. In 'Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes', the last piece Sedgwick writes about Klein, the analysis shuttles between the 'depressive' and 'depression' on the one hand and between the 'depressive position' and 'being depressed' on the other, obscuring the differences between clinical states and developmental processes.
12. The other key example of paranoid reading for Sedgwick is D.A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police* (1989).
13. See especially Figlerowicz (2012), Wilson (1998, 2004a, 2004b, 2010), Leys (2011), Frank and Wilson (2012), Ahmed (2008), and Davis (2009).
14. Berlant presents her rejection of the reparative as a way to resist the 'overvaluation of a certain mode of virtuously intentional, self-reflective personhood' (2011: 124) which she takes as both a professional liability for academics and a parcel of the liberal determinations that comprise contemporary capitalism. She casts her difference from Sedgwick as one about crowds, internal narration, and modes of impersonality that structure scenes of disappointment. 'Eve's public stories...recount a crowded world of loving family and friends in which she thrives partly by living in the folds of her internal counternarrative. My story, if I wrote it, would locate its optimism in a crowded scene too, but mine was...not [one] of thriving but of disappointment, contempt, and threat. I salvaged my capacity to attach to persons by reconceiving of both their violence and their love as impersonal. *This isn't about me*' (Berlant, 2011: 125, emphasis in original). Berlant thus turns away from 'interiority' and the authority of first person experience in order to consider 'the impersonality of the structures and practices that conventionalize desire, intimacy, even one's own personhood' (2011: 125). Whereas the reparative reader might be said to focus on the objects that represent and sustain an attachment, Berlant's object-oriented intimacies are collated around the forms of attachment that produce and cultivate the subject's sense of personhood.
15. Sedgwick's relationship to Foucault is the topic for a much different discussion, but let me note here that Foucault's presenting of the care of the self as an ethical project has no resonance within a Kleinian framework.
16. In Klein's project, the reparative position's negotiation of aggression is an important step, not just for the individual but for the well-being of the social world as well. In reading Klein in reparative terms, Sedgwick relies on the explicit developmentalism of Kleinian thought, which requires a certain refusal – what the reparative critic would cast as generosity – to consider Klein's own writing in psychoanalytic terms: as a wish for the mother's centrality, for the productivity of identification, and for a human predisposition toward love. As is already clear, my inclinations in this article tend toward a more

distinctly psychoanalytic reading of the inheritances I track – from Klein to Sedgwick to the various figures of the queer feminist archive – but in ways that eschew critique. See Klein (1975) and Klein and Riviere (1964).

17. In a significant revision of her own account of reparative reading in *Feeling Backward* (2007), Love (2010) reads Sedgwick's signal essay as a 'call to acknowledge the negativity and the aggression at the heart of psychic life' where, she says, 'love means trying to destroy the object as well as repair it' (2010: 238, 239). For Love, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading' is a paradigmatic example of Sedgwick's insistence, across the body of her work, that both interpretative modes are necessary. 'So many of us feel compelled to answer Sedgwick's call to reparation, which cracks us out of academic business as usual and promises good things both for Sedgwick and for us. But I also think we need to answer the call to paranoia' (Love, 2010: 239). The stakes in doing so are high: 'thinking is impossible without this kind of aggression' (2010: 238). In an interesting twist, Love thus allies critical thought with Kleinian aggression – of murderous desire toward one's object. While Sedgwick never dismisses paranoid criticism and indeed acknowledges her own reliance on it, she repeatedly refutes the idea that 'thinking is impossible without this kind of aggression' (Love, 2010: 238). As I read it, the problem she tracks in the literary humanities throughout the 1990s is the sheer impossibility of thinking otherwise.

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