



A University of Sussex PhD thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

Queer's Late Style: shifting mood in the late and minor texts

Katherine Parker-Hay

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Sussex

September 2020

Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature: K.Parker-Hay 30/09/20

Table of contents

4	Acknowledgments
5	List of Figures
6	Abstract
7	INTRODUCTION
53	Prelude: a moodboard for queer theory
70	PART 1 ACADEMIC OUTPUT
71	1. Special issues, ground-clearing and the unintended consequences of genre
99	2. Anecdote in the genre of critique
122	PART 2 PARA-ACADEMIC TEXTS
123	3. Large-scale time in the prefaces of the queer canon
148	4. Critical memoir, everyday time and the queer classroom
178	5. Student writing, generational unease and teaching reparative reading
205	CONCLUSION
223	Bibliography

Acknowledgments

With thanks to my supervisors Natalia Cecire and Sara Crangle for their guidance, careful reading and for helping me see that engaging with feedback could be worth the risk.

Thank you G, for your hordes of practical skills and ability to be unobtrusively and continuously present. Thanks to you I can say with confidence that I managed to write a thesis without ever feeling especially lonely. I'd like to also acknowledge my PhD companions, Natalie, Tom, Johanna and Emily, who were willing to get right back to basics with me about how to write and why anyone would. Thank you, Jon, for the final proofread and the zany science suggestions.

Thank you to Kate Jones and Rachel Handforth at Vitae who, as promised, helped me see the higher education landscape from a different perspective.

List of Figures

Figure 1: The causal relationship between genre, temporality and mood

Figure 2: Alison is jolted out of the everyday, from Alison Bechdel, *The Essential Dykes to Watch Out For*, p. vii.

Figure 3: Alison's practices of simultaneous composition, from Alison Bechdel, *Are You My Mother?*, p. 42.

Figure 4: Alison's encounter with *Gender Trouble*, from Alison Bechdel, *The Essential Dykes to Watch Out For*, p. xvi.

Figure 5: Theorists from *Queer: A Graphic History*, from Meg-John Barker, *Queer: A Graphic History*, p. 48; 74; 94; 128.

Figure 6: McLaughlin's cycles of theoretical fashion, from Meg-John Barker, *Queer: A Graphic History*, p. 151.

Figure 7: Sedgwick's personal gripes about students

Abstract

This thesis tracks the development and mood of queer studies, side-stepping landmark works to consider minor texts such as prefaces, anecdotes, memorial special issues, belated introductions, memoirs and autotheory. Simply put, these genres afford autobiographical narration. However, more specifically I argue that they enact a decompression from the project and event; sinking into alternate lived temporalities such as the everyday, generational time and longer durations. Though these temporalities tend to be obscured in major academic outputs, which are organised around interventions and original contributions to knowledge, they are nevertheless crucial in mediating the transmission and dissemination of knowledge production. Therefore, building on recent work which reckons with the heritage, lineage and current status of identity knowledges, this thesis reads minor texts as temporal switchpoints which capture how the project gets reabsorbed into the existing-state-of-affairs. It ultimately finds that these easily overlooked genres can provide insights into the challenges of institutionalising identity knowledges and the practicalities of sustaining their activist energy over time.

Introduction

What do we hear when we hear the word “queer”, and what kind of subjectivities, activism and projects did, and does it make viable? How might we characterise its distinctive flavour? Certain words may spring to mind: heady, scandalous, exuberant, in your face; camaraderie and identification across difference. We might think of its defiant oppositionality and its assurance that it knows homophobia when it sees it. Perhaps the placards and rallying calls of ACT UP and Queer Nation are conjured for us: its assertion of presence in the chant, “We’re here, we’re queer, get used to it”, or its disregard for politics of respectability in its pronouncement “Silence = Death”. If we go to academic writing, we might recall its deft ability to sustain minoritarian/universalising tension, producing a “heightened” mood which is both exhilarating and a tricky high-wire act. We might think of the defiance with which it crosses borders and occupies space – queer activism, ‘always refuses closeting strategies of assimilation and goes for the broadest and most explicit assertion of presence’.¹ This thesis is about how queer studies would come to “feel” quite different from this, as some pressure came to be placed on that resounding *always*. It is also about the texts which afford articulation of this shifting mood.

If one of queer’s most successful tactics has been ‘its appropriation of surprise attack’,² by the beginning of the new millennium rumours were circulating that queer theory had lost its ability to startle. In 2003, David Halperin wondered whether queer theory had become too amenable to the liberal institution to make good on its promise of an embrace with the perverse,³ and, a year later Stephen Shapiro argued that institutional success had left queer theory without activist credentials.⁴ Responding to these murmurings, Judith Halberstam reflected: ‘some say that queer theory is no longer in vogue; others characterize it as fatigued or exhausted of energy and lacking in keen debates; still others wax nostalgic for an earlier moment in the history of queer studies in the academy’.⁵ Janet Halley and Andrew Parker commissioned a special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly*, which asked scholars to comment on the waning of queer interest in sex; to borrow phrasing from contributor Elizabeth Freeman, the edited collection explores how

¹ Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, ‘Queer Nationality’, in *Fear of a Queer Planet*, ed. by Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 193–229 (p. 156).

² Berlant and Freeman, p. 162.

³ David Halperin, ‘The Normalization of Queer Theory’, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 45.2–4 (2003), 339–43 <https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_17>.

⁴ Stephen Shapiro, ‘Marx to the Rescue! Queer Theory and the Crisis of Prestige’, *New Formations*, 53.1 (2004), 77–90.

⁵ Judith Halberstam, ‘Reflections on Queer Studies and Queer Pedagogy’, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 45.2–4 (2003), 361–64 (p. 361) <https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_22>.

queer theorists might come to inhabit the ‘tail ends of things, [be] willing to be bathed in their fading light’.⁶

In this thesis I argue two things at once. Firstly, I hypothesise that there is something distinctive about the mood of late queer theory, which can be characterised as a quality of disillusionment, a sinking feeling. Secondly, I argue that to track this shift in mood it is best to crane out from what has come to be recognised as the queer canon, to consider minor texts like prefaces, interviews, introductions to special issues, memoirs and autotheory which, I argue, can foreground the sensation of being ‘at the tail ends of things’. These genres play this role because there is less emphasis on an original contribution and a closure which overlaps with the arrival of social justice; they tend to be comparatively agnostic about the impact that critical texts can make in the world. And yet, these minor works are by definition auxiliary to a major mode of production on which they provide comment. I argue that this quality – their being temporally adjacent to but not quite *of* the project – leaves them unusually positioned to augment event temporalities and their transition into more ongoing and ambivalent durations. They represent temporal switchpoints, which enable me to broaden out from the kind of event history that has come to almost exclusively structure the stories we tell about identity knowledge of the past forty years.⁷ These stories thoroughly implicate feminist subjectivity and belonging; I experiment with the implications for collective subjectivity of integrating these minor texts into our stories about identity knowledge.

There are, however, practical challenges to tracking the mood of queer theory in light of a broader reluctance to pin down queer’s definition. The appeal of queerness is said to lie in its refusal of boundaries and temporal schemas; Berlant and Michel Warner write that: ‘it is not useful to consider queer theory a thing, especially one dignified by capital letters’ and it cannot ‘be assimilated to a single discourse, let alone a propositional program’.⁸ There is plenty of reason to be suspicious of such reductions of queer to singular features. Ben Highmore stresses that our own sets of associations are constantly being ‘shaped by politicians, journalists, advertisers, filmmakers and television programmers who want to vividly paint the recent past with a moodful palate’; these

⁶ Elizabeth Freeman, ‘Still After’, in *After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory*, ed. by Janet Halley and Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 27–33 (p. 30).

⁷ I borrow the term *identity knowledges* from Wiegman and will use it throughout this thesis. This paradoxical, tongue in cheek phrase refers to academic disciplines which were institutionalised in the twentieth century and concern the study of identity (race, gender, sexuality or nation). They may take a critical and/or affirmative approach to identity but nevertheless use it as a key figure in the process of achieving social justice. See Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 1–10.

⁸ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, ‘Guest Column: What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X?’, *PMLA*, 110.3 (1995), 343–49 (p. 343).

‘moodful representations’ are often ‘grotesque oversimplifications’.⁹ There is a particularly fraught history of this in the U.S. “culture wars”, where queer theory become exemplary of depravity in the academy.¹⁰ Nor is it difficult to see that the journalistic glosses use vivid mood palates not only to invite people into a collective moment but also to trivialise leftist political projects and render them seemingly uninhabitable.¹¹ I nevertheless think it bears stating that Berlant and Warner’s 1995 assertion that queer ‘is not the theory of anything in particular, and has no precise bibliographic shape’, reads oddly in light of the fact that from the perspective of the present queer theory quite obviously does have, as Michel O’Rourke puts it, a ‘working bibliographical and anthologizable shape which one can easily constitute’.¹²

I have already failed to live up to Berlant and Warner’s recommendation, having opened with a set of images that aim to conjure affective qualities which place queer within a temporal and geographical horizon of the 1980s and 90s United States. Inciting this repertoire, my opening was in a sense not dissimilar to the conventions of celebrity journalism which set the scene by providing certain mood-markers to incite interest, while also making sure that we are all on the same page. Take this opening, which seeks to provide a point of entry into early queer theory:

In the 1980s, academia underwent many transformations. Among the most surprising was that literary studies became sexy: Through the lens of high theory, scholars began injecting libido into once dry and staid intellectual realms. It was in these heady, body-fixated years that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick came of age as the queen of queer theory. With her assertions that Henry James’ fiction featured crypto-queers who longed to be fisted, or that masturbating girls lurked in Jane Austen’s novels [...].¹³

The passage seeks to tap into what Ben Highmore recognises about the way our pasts are remembered by a ‘host of cultural items [which] seem strongly flavoured: our memories have an atmosphere, a mood and a series of feelings’.¹⁴ Alert to the various, frequently insalubrious, uses to which mood can be put, I am nevertheless interested in how texts like the above use mood to create a point of entry into the affective habitus of queer, allowing us to feel at home in it (or not, as the case may be). Moreover, as queer sensibility comes to

⁹ Ben Highmore, *Cultural Feelings: Mood, Mediation and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 7.

¹⁰ See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 109.

¹¹ Debates on this have come to the forefront in recent times, with regards to the role of the media in the 2019 UK elections. See, for example, Bart Cammaerts, ‘Journalistic Representations of Jeremy Corbyn in the British Press’, *LSE*, (2020) <<http://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/research/research-projects/representations-of-jeremy-corbyn>> [accessed 20 May 2020].

¹² Micheal O’Rourke, ‘The Afterlives of Queer Theory’, *Continent*, (2011) <<http://continentcontinent.cc/index.php/continent/article/view/32>> [accessed 12 March 2020].

¹³ Maria Russo, ‘The Reeducation of a Queer Theorist’, *Salon*, (1999) <<http://www.salon.com/1999/09/27/sedgwick/>> [accessed 25 September 2017].

¹⁴ Highmore, p. 11.

stand out as a *historical* formation, whether people continue to find that entry point into its distinctive affective possibilities becomes a question worth considering.

Taking the complexities of periodisation as my background, this thesis uses the term “late queer theory” in a specific way. Rather than a literal index of period, I want to draw on its metaphorical and moody associations. I take inspiration from Edward Said’s “late style”, which he defines as an altered disposition in relation to time. He describes lateness as, ‘a moment where the artist who is fully in command of his medium nevertheless abandons communication with the social order of which he is a part and achieves a contradictory, alienated relationship with it’.¹⁵ According to Said, contrary to clichés of ripeness and harmony, late works ‘tear apart the artist’s craft and reopen the questions of meaning, success and progress that the artist’s late period is supposed to move beyond’.¹⁶ I will use the term *queer’s late style* in this thesis to designate an affective quality of disillusionment, and a subsequent entertainment of the idea that one might depart from a former, successful period of production in a way that would reopen fundamental questions about meaning and method. Thus, late style often perplexes an audience by thwarting established expectations of analytic resolution. The second term which I will draw on is also affective. *Sinking feeling* will refer to an ‘ungainly descent into the everyday’, which unfolds an emerging awareness of the gap between interpreting the world and bringing about the changes for which one has called.¹⁷ This happens at moments where codified knowledge stands out as not necessarily mapping onto the contingencies of the present. It is the reoccurrence of this sinking feeling across the work of multiple authors that I call *queer’s late style*.

I maintain that it is necessary to have a means of taking mood seriously within political disciplines, because of the role it plays in structuring horizons of political possibility. Mood is intrinsically linked to movement building and sustainability. As Johnathan Flatley puts it: ‘any kind of political project must have the “making and using” of mood as part and parcel of the project; for, no matter how clever or correct the critique or achievable the project, collective action is impossible if people are not, so to speak, in the mood’.¹⁸ This is where certain minor genres come in; as I will show, they map onto minor moods that can also index certain non-dominant temporalities. These non-dominant

¹⁵ Edward Said, *On Late Style* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), p. 7.

¹⁶ Said, p. 7; 8.

¹⁷ I borrow this phrasing from Sara Crangle and Peter Nicholls, ed., *On Bathos: Literature, Art, Music* (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 4.

¹⁸ Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 23.

temporalities determine the transmission, dissemination and therefore the continuation of fragile identity knowledge production over time. I will concentrate more fully on what this means with regards to the challenges of institutionalising activist movements in the conclusion; for now, I note that queer theory represents a case study which provides evidence of wider dynamics of identity knowledges as they interact with and are transformed by institutions.¹⁹ The rest of this introduction will theorise the concepts of “mood”, “genre” and “temporality” in order to draw out what they can tell us about the history of queer studies and identity knowledges more broadly.

Mood

Can disciplines have a mood? How might such a thing be isolated or tracked?

I use the term mood in reference to something collective and relational, which is sometimes contrasted with emotion (expressive, object orientated and arising in individuals where it works from the inside out). There has been much debate about how to define mood and emotion across the “turn to affect” within the humanities; my intention is not to rehearse definitions which have been set out elsewhere.²⁰ However, for the sake of clarity, in this thesis both mood and affect refer to “background atmospheres” which precognitively impact on our way of relating and determining value in the world. I do not lean heavily on the distinctions between emotion, affect and mood because in daily life (in which I am explicitly interested), they are typically indistinguishable: if intense enough, the inchoate forces of affect can inspire efforts to find out how or why we have been moved.²¹ However, my preference is for “mood” because there is a lack of critical consensus about whether affect can be expressed linguistically.²² I see this thesis as primarily in dialogue with thinkers who have brought identity knowledges into conversation with mood, even if not described in these terms: Janet Halley, Clare Hemmings and Robyn Wiegman. These critics

¹⁹ Queer studies makes a suitable case because it has been concerned from the beginning with its own demise; it is explicit about anxieties that might be more implicit in other identity knowledge formations. Judith Butler, ‘Critically Queer’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1.1 (1993), 17–32 (p. 21) <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-1-17>>.

²⁰ On the turn to affect in the humanities see Patricia Clough, ed., *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Clare Hemmings, ‘Invoking Affect: Cultural Theory and the Ontological Turn’, *Cultural Studies*, 19.5 (2006), 548–67; Timm Knudsen Britta and Carsten Stage, ed., *Affective Methodologies: Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). For a glossary which sets out definitions of mood, affect, emotion and structure of feeling see Flatley, pp. 11–27.

²¹ Deborah Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and Act up's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 22.

²² Notoriously, Massumi argues that ‘affect is unqualified. As such, it is not own-able or recognizable and is thus resistant to critique’. According to this definition, affect concerns the moment before language and ideology intervene to domesticate. See Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 28. This has proven to be a point of difficulty for critics who want to relate text, affect and politics. For example, Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

are each concerned with ‘field imaginaries’, defined by Charles Taylor as ‘something broad and deep, something that underpins and informs the way people *are* in relation to each other, or to a set of expectations about how things normally go’.²³ I will situate this thesis in further detail below, but for now it is worth noting that each of these critics focuses on the written conventions of the field and the effect these have on constructing communities of readers. Wiegman writes what could be true for all of these critics: ‘I am more infatuated today with *what happens in proximity to critical theory’s ambitions* than in the detail that is generated in debt or obligation to any specific figure or strand of it’.²⁴

My approach is primarily influenced by Raymond Williams’ *structures of feeling*, which is concerned with how cultural objects evidence but also mediate collective states of feeling. In *Keywords*, Williams tracks how alterations in the connotations of individual words can indicate a collective shift in transpersonal feeling: in more sudden moments of change, peers can find that they ‘just don’t speak the same language’.²⁵ As Highmore details, the term *structure of feeling* was developed shortly after Williams returned to Cambridge University, his studies having been interrupted by the Second World War.²⁶ Williams had been involved in various leftist projects at Cambridge, but on returning to resume his studies, certain approaches felt less available and realistic: ‘the student culture had altered [...] this is not just about semantics but about the tools available to understand oneself and the ease of undertaking certain political projects’.²⁷ Highmore reads this experience in these terms: ‘something had changed at the level of intuitive life. [...] as far as this goes it is not impossible to talk the language of pre-war politics [but] you can’t be guaranteed an immediate comprehension and you might need to explain and qualify the terms and values you are using’.²⁸

Williams’ method is attuned to the process by which shifts in collective mood occur. This thesis draws inspiration from the critics who have used his methods to unpick the dynamics of historical moments and/or subgroups with high levels of descriptive detail – critics like Lauren Berlant, Jonathan Flatley, Ben Highmore, Sianne Ngai, and Kathleen Stewart. Some of these thinkers – specifically Flatley, Highmore, Ngai – have developed Williams’ elusive phrase by drawing on Martin Heidegger’s *Stimmung*. Heidegger theorises mood as a mechanism or schema that attunes our attention within our environments.

²³ Frances Kelly, *The Idea of the PhD* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 4. See also Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

²⁴ Wiegman, p. 19.

²⁵ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1983), p. 11.

²⁶ Highmore, pp. 24–32.

²⁷ Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: Verso, 2015), p. 61.

²⁸ Highmore, p. 26.

According to Heidegger, ‘moods [*Stimmungen*] are the fundamental ways in which we find ourselves disposed in such and such a way’.²⁹ Resembling Williams, he understands that mood plays a vital role in creating a world and giving us agency within this world by constituting the situation within which we can act. As Charles Guignon summarises, ‘[mood] provides us with a determinate range of possible roles and self-determinations’.³⁰ Like others, I find Heidegger’s *Stimmungen* compatible with *structures of feeling*; both emphasise the collective, primordial nature of mood and therefore can be used for thinking about the fundamentally political role it has in structuring social life and making certain projects feel realistic and inviting.

Williams often frames his interest in mood in relation to a concern with how and why political projects collapse. He sometimes speaks of this in terms of feeling flat or lethargic but by this he primarily means that there has been a refocusing of collective energy, a shift in distributions of interest. Highmore summarises that Williams’ approach is to track ‘the rising and falling quota of hope’ by attending to semantic and tonal patterns across a large number of works.³¹ This would involve isolating a dominant mode and then ‘tracing [...] successive modulations in [that] structure of feeling, until you reach a point where there is a qualitative break’.³² In other words, his method looks for patterns across different works produced in the same time period. ‘I think that ‘structure’ is also a word that attempts to toughen up the phrase (or masculinise it), to stop it sounding too emotional’, muses Highmore, but ‘the phrase could be adjusted to ‘patterns of feeling’ [...] without losing any essential features’.³³ Williams is interested in the collective sensibility of a cohort sharing formative experiences. Asked to clarify the term in a somewhat combative interview with the *New Left Review*, Williams elaborates:

the point of the deliberately contradictory phrase, with which I have never been happy, is that it is a structure in the sense that you could perceive it operating in one work after another which weren’t otherwise connected – people weren’t learning it from each other; yet it was one of feeling much more than thought – a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones, of which the best evidence was often the actual conventions of literary and dramatic writing.³⁴

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 67.

³⁰ Charles Guignon, ‘Moods in Heidegger’s Being and Time’, in *What Is an Emotion?*, ed. by Cheshire Calhoun and Robert Solomon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 230–43 (p. 233).

³¹ Highmore, p. 32.

³² Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 161.

³³ Highmore, p. 22.

³⁴ Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 159.

Williams acknowledges that mood is difficult to grasp with any certainty, especially because there is usually disparity between the official discourse of institutions and the ways in which these ideas are lived by actual people in unfixed and half-articulated ways; changing structures of feeling are the result of ‘the interaction between the official consciousness of an epoch – codified in its doctrines and legislation – and the whole process of actually living the consequences’.³⁵ This means that historical records often miss something important about life as it is lived as a complex whole. Nevertheless, according to Williams, cultural objects can evidence pre-emergent structures of feeling; from these works, we might draw wider hypotheses about the practical consciousness of a public or subgroup: ‘what must be happening on those occasions [when new work produces a sudden shock of recognition] is that an experience which is really very wide suddenly finds a semantic figure that articulates it’.³⁶

Sinking (queer) moods

Drawing on Williams’ methods, this thesis traces an emergent mood in queer theory, which I call its “sinking feeling”. This mood can be located in the literary convention of a (re)turn to autobiographical writing – not in the sense of a transparent account of the self, but writing which hugs the contours of experience in a present tense; the pathos of such moments is typically held in check by a tight ironic construction. This sinking feeling is in some ways analogous to Fredric Jameson’s understanding of affective narration as described in *The Antinomies of Realism*. He writes that within realism there is a tension between two temporalities: a narrative drive which confirms to chronological plot and which concerns the fated, or known in advance; in addition, there is a descriptive impulse that is more concerned with present tense and scene. He defines affect as the ‘reduction to the body’; not a consciously aware self, with a distinct biography, but rather an ‘isolated body [that] begins to know more global waves of generalised sensations’ that seem not directly or seamlessly convertible into more abstract narrative.³⁷ He argues that the ‘impulses of scenic elaboration, description and above all affective investment’ constitute a temporality that ‘secretly abhors’ the temporalities that ‘constitute the force of the tale’ and they therefore continually threaten to denarrativize it.³⁸ According to Jameson, this kind of affective narration continually seems as though it were about to outweigh and

³⁵ Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 159.

³⁶ Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 164.

³⁷ Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (London: Verso, 2013), p. 27.

³⁸ Jameson, p. 11.

denarrativize plot which would bring about ‘a lowering of tone, and as it were a decompression, a return to the flatlands of everyday life, a slow disengagement from the event’.³⁹ Jameson’s concern is specifically with realism; however, as the first part of this thesis will explore, there can be a similar tension at play in critical writing. Jane Gallop’s *Anecdotal Theory* seems to be referring to this when she argues for the literariness of the anecdotal, which remains tied to the ‘uncanny detail of lived experience’ and therefore can be used to intervene or interrupt what has been organised and fixed by established theory.⁴⁰

Making theory accountable to the overlooked may seem inherently progressive. However, as Gallop acknowledges, the charm of the particular, of chance and the locally embattled, can sometimes be at the expense of general categories and large distinctions. In other words, shrinking all abstractions to the small and specific can halt the mind at that domain. Toril Moi writes of how theory distinguishes itself in its claim to general validity of a kind not dependent on our specific position in the present tense of experience. She argues that the ambition to speak in the language of abstract truth needs not negate or repress the claims of the personal which, are ‘good starting points for further investigation’. However, these must be only be ‘starting points’ from which we must necessarily ‘go on to work hard to widen and deepen our emotional response through deeper understanding’; otherwise will be writing ‘raw autobiography’ and therefore ‘we will not be writing theory’.⁴¹ According to Moi, by definition, theory tries to make the crucial step of moving us beyond the present tense, closed circuit of lived sensation. She explains that, though feminists have increasingly wanted to argue for experience and subjectivity against ostensibly masculine theory, if we only try to speak of our own experiences, without an attempt at a wider perspective, we end up isolated; we are left ‘all alone and feeling blue’.⁴²

As this thesis will show, a turn to affective narration has particular significance within the field of queer studies, where questions of how the subjective tracks with the universal are foundational. Deborah Gould provides a historical account of the importance of the transformation of affect in the emergence of a queer itinerary. Focusing on *Act Up*, Gould examines the structuring role of collective mood in gay and lesbian subcultures. She works from the premise that gay people experience nonrecognition in heteronormative society, from which variously stems sensations of shame, sadness, frustration and, above all, ambivalence.⁴³ She hypothesises, however, that moral shock regarding overt family and

³⁹ Jameson, p. 28.

⁴⁰ Jane Gallop, *Anecdotal Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 2–3.

⁴¹ Toril Moi, *Sex, Gender, And The Body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 165.

⁴² Moi, p. 163.

⁴³ Gould, p. 58.

government neglect during the AIDS crisis was a catalyst which enabled a cross-section of gay and lesbian people to channel this endemic ambivalence that otherwise proved stultifying to political action. She describes how the visceral reaction of outrage in the face of such blatant disregard made a new set of 'political possibilities' and activism 'doable, desirable and necessary'.⁴⁴ In other words, historical circumstances produced an emergent structure of feeling. Gould argues that the mobilisation and transformation of affect allowed a movement to form around shared goals: Act Up 'authoriz[ed] selected feelings and actions; such as rage and indignation, while 'downplaying and even invalidating others' such as despair and ambivalence and, in this way, the movement provided 'a pedagogy regarding what to feel and what to do in light of those feelings'.⁴⁵ Gould's study traces how Act Up was able to channel collective ambivalence into collective rage; any residual self-abasement being projected outward in a stance of militant oppositionality and indignation.

However, Gould argues that these strategies were necessarily temporary. She writes that 'ambivalence is characterized by the simultaneous feeling of two contradictory sentiments, a "resolution" to it that effectively elevates one of the contradictory feelings and suppresses the other is necessarily unstable'.⁴⁶ In other words, according to Gould, the transformation of affect which allowed Act Up to get off the ground was also responsible for it falling apart. Gould argues that, because the movement sanctioned a limited range of feelings, it was not well resourced to handle 'outlaw emotions', such as the return of ambivalence and despair, when they arose in response to changing context.⁴⁷ Her arguments share some resonance with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theorisation about the role of paranoia in early AIDS activism. In the *Weather in Proust*, Sedgwick explains that her original essay 'overlooked the crudest, most contingent, and probably most important reason' for the 'overdetermination' of paranoia and queer writing. She describes the 'punishing stress' and 'dread' that pervaded the early years of the AIDS crisis, which required the mobilisation of 'powerful resources of resistance in the face of it'.⁴⁸ She also describes that her motivation for experimenting with alternative methods of reading, most notably reparative, was a way to respond to affects which emerged in light of changes in the political context of AIDS activism and her own diagnosis with breast cancer; she describes how she began to feel that the affects which were valorised by and fantastically

⁴⁴ Gould, p. 55.

⁴⁵ Gould, p. 28.

⁴⁶ Gould, p. 136.

⁴⁷ Gould, p. 432.

⁴⁸ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, ed. by Jonathan Goldberg and Michael Moon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 138.

productive for the early queer movement were not ones that could help her deal with the contingencies of her new circumstances.

It may seem counterintuitive to align a sinking feeling with the reparative position; reparative affects mostly get associated with positive emotions like love, altruism and an ethical care for the other. However, Sedgwick makes it clear that the depressive position is an ‘anxiety mitigating mechanism’ which kicks in only in response to a realisation that we have played a role in changing and perhaps damaging our environment through our actions, thoughts or projections. Sedgwick’s work explicitly ties the depressive position to ambivalence and explains its connection with depression:

What makes the depressive position “depressive”? The threshold to the depressive position is the simple, foundational, authentically very difficult understanding that good and bad tend to be inseparable at every level. [...] Once assembled, these more realistic, durable, and satisfying internal objects are available to be identified with, to offer one and to be offered nourishment and comfort in turn. Yet the pressure of that founding, depressive realisation can also continually impel the psyche back towards depression [in the form of] remorse, shame, the buzzing confusion that makes thought impossible, depression itself, mourning for the lost ideal, and – most often relevant – a paralysing apprehension of the inexorable laws of unintended consequences.⁴⁹

This description, and specifically this tipping point between altruism and depression, maps reasonably well onto the mood that I will be tracing in this thesis. As made clear by this, and also Gould’s account, though it may have its own advantages, ambivalence has serious risks too. Sedgwick works from Klein’s understanding that introjection and projection, associated with the paranoid position, are essential because they ‘equi[p] the human mind for the lifelong necessities to discriminate and select, take in or expel’ and more fundamentally it ‘link[s] the mind with the world in a continual exchange which makes growth possible’.⁵⁰ Projection allows for active framing, and it is useful and necessary as a means of managing a hostile world. By contrast, the depressive position can enable more durable relationships; however, because it sees the world as inevitably and irrevocably damaged, with good and bad entangled at every level, it is a disposition that can tip into a paralysing confusion; an inability to think and master an environment that might hurt us.

I work from the assumption that queer theory’s early success was in its deft ability to sustain minoritarian/universalizing tension, producing a “heightened” mood. This required an active framing of a hostile environment, and for organisation to be possible it necessarily required an extension beyond first person anguish to more abstract

⁴⁹ E. K. Sedgwick, J. Halley, and A. Parker, ‘Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 106.3 (2007), 625–42 (p. 637).

⁵⁰ Meira Likiernan, *Melanie Klein: Her Work in Context* (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 78.

understandings of how personal pain connects with wider structures. One of the things distinguishing queer projects has been, to borrow Warner's phrasing, its 'an aggressive impulse towards generalisation'.⁵¹ Heather Love writes, in a similar vein, that 'the semantic flexibility of queer – its weird ability to touch almost anything – is one of the most exciting things about it'. And she says that its ability to toggle between minoritarian experiences of alienation and universalizing discourses was the defining feature that enabled it to "outperform" the gay and lesbian studies that preceded it.⁵² I will argue that, in the context of this early success, the late writing that keeps the reader in proximity to the author's embodied experience produces a deflation, as this remarkable tension collapses back into what momentarily looks as though it may be undialectical identity politics and despair regarding the possibility of ever rising above one's circumstances.

As evident from Gould's study, we do not need the entire Kleinian apparatus of psychic processes to think through the role of returning ambivalence in social justice movements and scholarship. However, wary of the associations with developmental maturity, I have nevertheless found Klein's work, and particularly the work that Sedgwick does in translating it into queer critical contexts, impossible to give up; not because of the framework itself, but because these theories of ambivalence are animated by raw, subjective detail. As Meira Likierman explains, Klein tends to mix theory with subjective description experienced from the inside; she had 'a tendency to use a term to both describe the subject's internal experience and, simultaneously, to offer a technical psychoanalytic designation of a phenomenon'.⁵³ This approach is picked up by Sedgwick in her late work to glorious effect; we have not just *ambivalence* but 'buzzing confusion that makes thought impossible, depression itself, mourning for the lost ideal, and – most often relevant – a paralysing apprehension of the inexorable laws of unintended consequences'. I find the microscopic specificity of these descriptions useful for approaching the nuance of late queer style; mood is widely acknowledged to be diffuse, intractable and by definition difficult to pin down.

However, in light of the debates surrounding postcritique, it is worth making clear from the outset that this thesis does not take the position that critical theory is any more stifling or limited than other genres. I do not turn to minor genres because I want to revalorise the low. Nor am I necessarily arguing that, without recourse to metanarratives,

⁵¹ Michael Warner, ed., *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. xxvi.

⁵² Heather Love, 'Queer -- This', in *After Sex?: On Writing since Queer Theory*, ed. by Janet Halley and Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 180–91 (pp. 181–82).

⁵³ Likierman, p. 108.

the only hope for justice lies with local actions and little narratives.⁵⁴ I focus on these auxiliary texts because, as I will argue, they or not organised by closure in the same way that critical writing tends to be and therefore they are often more calibrated to mood in the wake of the project. ‘Closure is, after all’, writes Wiegman, ‘*necessary* not just for the academic professional in need of a recent publication, but also, more urgently, for the political demands implicit in left identity critique’.⁵⁵ As I will explore more fully in the conclusion, if we concentrate our resources only on carving out space for the new, we can be left bereft of resources for movement sustainability. In addition to its language, what I find most useful about the reparative is that it is concerned with, to borrow from José Esteban Muñoz, resources which kick in *after* critique’s exposure of the logic which underlies social stigma. The reparative is, ‘a resource to imagine something else that might follow social stigma and even ruination [...] it may indeed be about the individual imagining some sort of personal redress, or carving out [...] a sustainable life’.⁵⁶ However, I try not to create too rigid a binary between academic and their auxiliary genres; Part 1 of this thesis looks at output which stretches the boundaries of argumentation but nevertheless “counts” as academic output. In the second part of the thesis, I explore para-academic texts which exist *in relation* to a major work. My broader aim is to read minor critical genres in literary ways, producing a continuity across “literary” and “critical texts” and looking at the affordances of these interstitial genres that fit firmly in neither category.

Collective mood, textual mood

Williams sees texts as artefacts of collective mood, with authors reaching for semantic figures that express emergent sensibilities; interested critics can therefore, according to Williams, take a relatively empirical approach to tracking incremental changes across works from multiple authors. Williams writes that his approach aims at an, ‘elucidation of the composition and continuity of theme within [writer’s] works and therefore is ‘barely concerned with [reader] response at all’.⁵⁷ I am interested in charting a style of writing across the work of multiple authors too; however, I do not think that, in this specific context at least, it is possible to differentiate mood from reader response. As I will explore in Chapter 1, what are understood to be queer theory’s most inaugurating texts

⁵⁴ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1984), p. 40.

⁵⁵ Wiegman, p. 313.

⁵⁶ José Muñoz, ‘Race, Sex and the Incommensurate’, in *Queer Futures: Reconsidering Ethics, Activism, and the Political*, ed. by Elahe Haschemi Yekani, Eveline Kilian, and Beatrice Michaelis (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 103–16 (p. 111).

⁵⁷ Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 193.

can also be read as an invocation to a historically constituted gay/queer subject whom they seek to nurture and will into being through the scene of address. In the preface to her *Between Men*, for example, Sedgwick recognises that her work from this period held a ‘phantasmic relation’ to a potential readership of gay men for whom it ‘palpably yearns’; she describes this as an ‘intimate, desiring, direct address’, which emanates from ‘an unaccustomed and, to some degree, unspecified place on the map of cultural authority, of gender/sexuality, of disciplinarily’.⁵⁸ As will become evident, address continues to play an important role in the late and minor works of queer theory. Here too there is a keen awareness of audience, though less in the form of a yearning than an ambivalence about having to occupy, in the wake of the project, a highly circumscribed field of forces which delimit the positions that it is possible to take.⁵⁹ Here too the anticipated scene of address matters for mood.

Williams’ caution about the subjective dimension of mood may stem from his relationship to the professionalisation of literary criticism in Cambridge during the 1930s.⁶⁰ In establishing the place of objectivity for the discipline, New Critics were keen to exclude notions of reader response generally, and their theorisations of mood are careful to separate “tone” from “feeling” in order to concentrate on the text’s ‘dramatic attitude towards the listener’.⁶¹ However, as Ngai traces, this separation proved difficult to maintain in practice – she detects a clunkiness in the avoidance of dimension of feeling which is associated with the ordinary usage of the term mood and tone. Pointing out that subsequent critics have found it necessary to keep expanding this restricted definition, Ngai draws on Heidegger’s *Stimmung* to argue that tone should be broadened from ‘a dramatic attitude’ to include ‘a global and hyperrelational concept of feeling that encompasses attitude: a literary text’s affective bearing, orientation or “set toward” its audience and world’.⁶² This definition concerns how the text disposes the reader: it is not limited to the emotional *effects* on individual readers nor internal *features*; rather, it encompasses the way that internal features operate to position the reader in relation to author and world, predisposing them to care for certain things.

Adam Frank’s *Transferrential Poetics, from Poe to Warhol* provides me with a template for analysing the affective dimensions of anticipated audience response and its impact on

⁵⁸ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. xix.

⁵⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 30.

⁶⁰ On this relationship see Williams, *Politics and Letters*, pp. 190-95; 335.

⁶¹ I. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgement* (New York: Hancourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929), p. 175.

⁶² Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 43.

textual composition. Drawing on Silvan Tomkins and psychoanalytic concepts of transference, Frank examines the strategies by which texts seek contact with audiences; he is interested in the 'powerful wishes about and images of how an audience will respond to a work' as well as the 'guiding ideas, theories or phantasies of how writing [...] may touch or make contact with an audience'.⁶³ He explains that theories of transference and affect have 'permitted me to develop techniques of attention to and a vocabulary to describe compositional force and audience response (my own, in the first instance)'. Like Frank, in the first instance I will use my own responses to understand how the minor texts of late queer theory seek to touch their audiences, in negative as well as positive senses. Where possible, I will draw on reviews and other responses to extend evidence of how mood is generated in the interface between author, audience and text. This approach of course does risk the subjectivity which New Critics were keen to avoid; however, I think this is a necessary risk for doing justice to texts which are so keenly shaped by anticipated audience response. I will be keeping in mind, however, that attempts to cultivate audience-reader relations do not guarantee that *actual* readers will be willing to take up these invitations. This is an especially important consideration in light of the minor status of auxiliary texts, which inevitably face an uphill battle when it comes to reworking the major texts on which they pass comment and reframe.

Genres

The first part of my argument is that, in the context of queer theory, a shift in temporality has afforded a shift in affect; however, the second part of my argument addresses how accessing this shift is complicated by the way genre functions to create in advance a horizon of expectations between audience, author and text. Genre, I argue, can make salient and amplify emergent structures of feeling. However, it can also block feeling structures from being articulated. As I will show throughout, mutually reinforcing, the causal relationship between temporality, mood and genre is often difficult to determine in practice. For purposes of clarity, however, I provide Figure 1 as a schematisation:

⁶³ Adam Frank, *Transferential Poetics, from Poe to Warhol* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), p. 2 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctt9qds3q>> [accessed 23 June 2019].

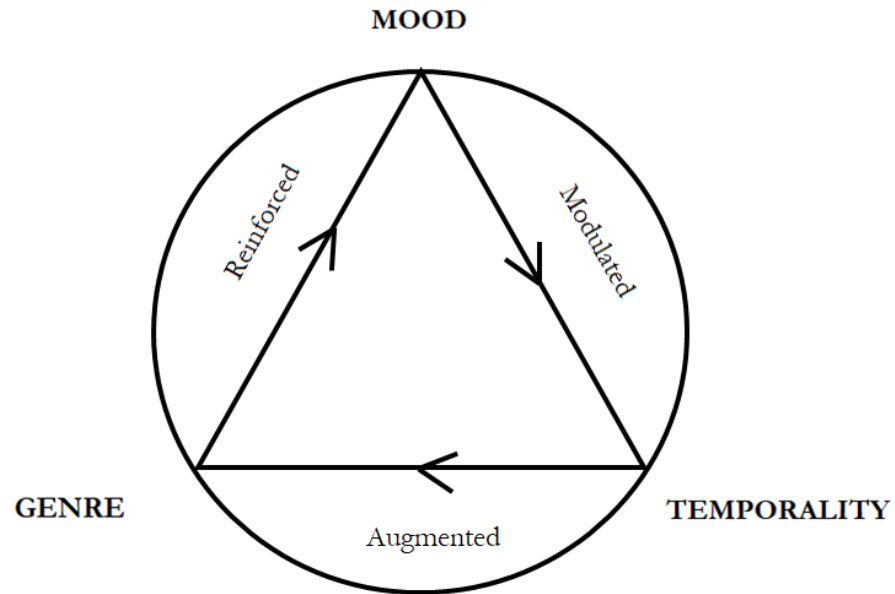


Figure 1: The causal relationship between genre, temporality and mood

Firstly, the relationship between mood and temporality: it is difficult to conceptualise the former without some reference to the latter. As Rita Felski and Susan Fraiman write, mood is typically defined in temporal terms as ‘prolonged feeling states’; the contrast here is to emotion which has a shorter duration. Colloquial understandings of mood, moreover, often draw on temporal descriptors: ‘a mood lingers, tarries, settles in, accumulates, sticks around’.⁶⁴ If all moods unfold in the temporal dimension, this feature is especially obvious with regard to the kind of disillusionment that interests me in this thesis. Such moods would seem to accord with what Ernst Bloch calls ‘expectant emotions’, which refer to objects that don’t ‘yet lie ready [...] in the available world’ and therefore have a ‘greater anticipatory character in their intention, their substance, and their object’; unlike those whose ‘intention drives are short term’, the expectant emotions or moods ‘open out entirely into this [temporal] horizon’.⁶⁵

Moving to the bottom line of the diagram, genre too plays a role in mediating emergent mood. Mood can influence selection of method or form, but these choices then actively promote and disseminate mood.⁶⁶ Heidegger understands moods to be schemas that organize our horizons of experience, providing a ‘state of readiness for some affects and not for others’.⁶⁷ This has clear overlaps with contemporary understandings of genre.

⁶⁴ Rita Felski and Susan Fraiman, ‘Introduction: Are You in the Mood?’, *New Literary History*, 43.3 (2012), v–xii (p. v) <<https://doi.org/doi:10.1353/nlh.2012.0029>>.

⁶⁵ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), I, p. 74.

⁶⁶ Felski and Fraiman, p. vi.

⁶⁷ Flatley, p. 17.

Like mood, ‘different genres are concerned to establish different world views’.⁶⁸

Historically, genre study has been concerned with dividing texts around core, static criteria; Robert Allen notes that, ‘for most of its 2000 years [genre study] has taken as its principle task the division of the world of literature into types and the naming of those types – much as the botanist divides the world of flora into varieties of plants’.⁶⁹ However, contemporary thinkers are more likely to think of genre as a constellation of overlapping modes or devices which shift over time, depending on recognition and use. Genre constructs a relationship between author and audience, providing a framework of expectations that aid interpretation and orient the audience towards a preferred reading; John Frow argues that genre ‘defines a set of expectations which guide our engagement with texts’, and it schematises what will be ‘appropriate, probable, and thus believable’.⁷⁰ There are, then, some clear overlaps between genre and mood, even if they are not the same thing. Both are schemas which construct interpretation in advance.

However, despite the crossover, elusiveness is more baked into the definition of mood than it is genre. Working from the assumption that mood and genre are schemas that each orientate certain attitudes, this thesis looks at how genre might amplify, make salient but also block emergent structures of feeling. There is precedent for this in Williams’ work. He argues that authors can be seen to grapple with conventions to express embryonic moods. When successful, their work can provide a jolt of recognition. However, Williams also suggests that structures of feeling can remain inarticulate if conditions are not conducive to their expression; in these cases, a structure of feeling might surface only as a textual disturbance or blockage. He gives the example of working class communities and explains that, though it is misguided to see culture as the exclusive preview of the elite, there can nevertheless be times when groups lack access to a means of cultural production and therefore their structures of feeling are never fully articulated in the preserved cultural record: ‘there are historical experiences which never do find their semantic figures at all’.⁷¹ The first part of this thesis will examine moments of surface disturbance which emerge in academic output and which come into tension with another drive which is to arrive at new insight.

Now to turn to the final line of the diagram. Both Williams and Heidegger suggest that mood comes first, creating the conditions which orient us towards certain projects or

⁶⁸ Sonia Livingstone, *Making Sense of Television: The Psychology of Audience Interpretation* (London: Pergamon, 1990), p. 155.

⁶⁹ Robert Allen, ‘Bursting Bubbles: “Soap Opera” Audiences and the Limits of Genre’, in *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*, ed. by Ellen Seiter (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 44–55 (p. 44).

⁷⁰ John Frow, *Genre* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 126.

⁷¹ Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 165.

problem-spaces. This, however, is not the only model for the relationship between genre and mood. Robyn Warhol works from the opposite assumption, with genre the primordial term. She argues that devotees to popular genres repeat their reading encounters and, as they do so, they ‘reengrave the genres’ affective patterns on their bodies while reexperiencing its narrative moves’.⁷² She is interested in how textual mechanics inform embodied subjectivity: ‘narrative forms are what I call *technologies of affect*, providing structures of feeling in the daily lives of their devotees’.⁷³ As Figure 1 captures, I do not favour either mood or genre as the primary term; Felski and Fraiman’s judgement regarding the reciprocity of mood and genre seems to me correct:

moods pave the way for ideas, helping to determine what will matter for us (or not). A state of curiosity, wonder, irritation, or optimism animates us to pursue a certain path of inquiry. At the same time, the process is reciprocal and dynamic; styles of thinking, in their turn, also promote and sustain moods [which are] are not only captured in works of philosophy and poetry but are actively promoted and disseminated by the same works.⁷⁴

I too work from the idea that these terms are mutually reinforcing and sometimes manifestly circular. Though not the same, mood and genre overlap; genre can accommodate many moods, but it also shapes them and, because mood is so notoriously fragile, genre can push mood to the very edges of the discursive framework where it is barely articulated.

Situating the study

As mentioned above, this thesis is in dialogue with studies that analyse the field imaginary of identity knowledges. Though not explicitly defined in terms of mood, those studies are clearly interested in critique as a genre with certain conventions that produce critical atmospheres or horizons of expectation. For example, Halley’s *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* provides a genealogy of the break-off disciplines that arose from 1990s “difference feminism” and she critiques more recent expectations for disciplinary convergence in the aftermath of these breaks.⁷⁵ Halley urges for a return to an ethics of divergence, which she sees as typical of a previous moment of theory writing. Clare Hemming’s *Why Stories Matter: the Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* takes a different view on divergence but similarly critiques habitual narratives which we draw on to make

⁷² Robyn Warhol, *Having a Good Cry: Effeminate Feelings & Pop-Culture Forms* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002), p. 8.

⁷³ Warhol, p. 7.

⁷⁴ Felski and Fraiman, p. vi.

⁷⁵ Janet Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

sense of feminism over the past three decades.⁷⁶ She focuses on mundane conventions of academic writing – the common-sense glosses, segues and patterns of citation in journal articles.⁷⁷ Both books want to disrupt what they perceive to be a calcified grammar which creates the unconscious expectations of how to practice contemporary critical theory.

There is a dual ambition in both books, which we might understand as being in tension. On the one hand, they engage a slow scholarship, *sitting with* rather than rushing to *use* the commonplace techniques of argumentation. However, on the other hand, these books might be understood to be providing a critique of critical writing. They seek to intervene in our critical habits by making us conscious of how they function. This dual intention is crisply expressed in the opening paragraph of *Why Stories Matter*:

[this book] explores the narrative form [of feminist stories] and charts their interaction with other stories about feminism and social change. It asks what might be at stake in feminist storytelling, and *most importantly it seeks to intervene* in these stories, to realign their political grammar to allow a different vision of feminist past, present and future.⁷⁸

In other words, the book will (1) inhabit the gap between expectation for transformative politics and actual effects, to understand what is at stake in identity knowledges; and, (2) intervene to transform the imaginary which has been described. Of the two, the *most important* will be this second step. Within this genre, it is difficult to imagine that the importance could fall anywhere other than in being able to move us to this second step. This is that widening of perspective which Moi understands to be the relief effect of theory writing.⁷⁹ Hemmings addresses this effect directly in her opening, which goes on to describe that the project is worth engaging with in the first place because of feminist theory's 'tradition of dogged optimism that allows its practitioners to understand and experience life differently'.⁸⁰ The value of theorising, then, is the way it allows us to step back and understand our circumstances with new insight.

Both Hemmings and Halley describe how the relief effect provided by critique has intersected with their own biographies, having "come up" in context of a certain trajectory of feminist development. They speak of having witnessed the theory that they experienced first-hand being narrativized in a way which flattened its complexity and made it unrecognisable. For example, Hemmings explains how the common-sense narrative that queer supplanted feminism, Judith Butler in particular having paralysed feminist projects,

⁷⁶ Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁷⁷ Hemmings, p. 18.

⁷⁸ Hemmings, p. 1. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁹ Moi, p. 165.

⁸⁰ Hemmings, p. 3.

did not match her first-hand experiences of reading *Gender Trouble* before such narratives had taken hold; it had meant a lot to Hemmings, as a graduate student, to read the *conversation* which *Gender Trouble* establishes between itself and Wittig's lesbian feminism.⁸¹ Hemmings describes how the flattening narrative compromises her own coming to feminist theory. My own, quite different emphasis possibly results from the different conditions in which I encountered queer and feminist studies. By contrast to what Hemmings and Halley describe, my graduate education in women's studies approached queer theory and feminism as institutionalised in almost equal measures. Heather Love calls attention to the difference that it can make to learn identity knowledges in modules where the knowledge and the critique of that knowledge happens at the same time; often in the same week's reading.⁸² My experience was one of women's studies and all its split off disciplines in the ruins; hope and disillusionment were thoroughly intertwined.⁸³ For example, tellingly, the first lecture of my women's studies masters was called "The Impossibility of Women's Studies". In this context, the "life" of identity knowledge was almost inseparable from the twin spectre of its death and the question was not how to bring one inquiry back so much as how to productively inhabit these ruins.

Wendy Brown describes this as a question of 'not how we may thrive in the aftermath of the dissemination of our analytical objects, but *what are we* in the wake of a dream in which those objects were consigned to history?'⁸⁴ Brown recommends a 'certain dwelling' with this lost hope, to understand 'who we now are as thinking, political beings who both were formed by and lost a certain critical promise'.⁸⁵ These seemed to me like important questions, especially in context of the peculiar experience of taking Women's Studies in the UK, which required the continual act of justifying it as a choice in the face of incredulous peers who without fail wanted to know not only what on earth women's studies *is*, but also what *kind of person* would choose to study such a thing. The 'stumbling and stuttering', the dwelling within the 'disturbed ground, of inarticulateness' which Brown recommends was certainly, I found, not the ideal way to survive an expensive, temporally compressed nine-month degree in a geographically unfamiliar landscape. Though I certainly recognise it. Hemmings and Halley each provided a welcome elaboration of the atmosphere of contemporary identity knowledge; however, I was more interested in

⁸¹ Hemmings, p. 178.

⁸² Heather Love, "'Oh, the Fun We'll Have': Remembering the Prospects for Sexuality Studies", *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 10.2 (2004), 258–61 (p. 260) <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-10-2-258>>.

⁸³ I borrow this phrase from Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 169.

⁸⁴ Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 85.

⁸⁵ Brown, p. 96.

understanding what I had gotten myself into than how to intervene and imagine something different. Having seen theory after theory introduced and then dismantled through simultaneous critique, it was hard to maintain belief that any new itinerary might offer the relief effect that I had been seeking on applying to the graduate course.

There is one example of critical theory, however, which stands out in its refusal to make this second, crucial step to broaden the perspective. Robyn Wiegman's *Object Lessons* uses a method of what she calls 'inhabitation', which aims 'never to take, let alone defend, a position' but instead 'cultivate[s] pleasure in the detour, which [means] relinquishing belief in the destination as the ultimate measure of an argument's worth'.⁸⁶ I want to use this book as an edge case; it makes evident the generic conventions of critique by continually thwarting them and frustrating readerly expectations. The book argues that the history of feminism has been one of successive transfers of investment in different objects (woman becomes gender, gender becomes sex, queer studies becomes transgender studies). Wiegman argues that every time our objects evidence that they might fail us, we break with them and start again with a new term in which we reinvest our hopes of social justice. She experiments with *not* following suit. Refusing to tell us how our critical practices might be perfected, she tries instead to 'craft an interpretative environment capable of nurturing the magnetism between ourselves and our objects of study'.⁸⁷ This nurturing interpretative environment certainly could offer some repair for the experience of acclimatising to women's studies in the ruins. However, as Wiegman wryly dramatizes throughout, her method of inhabitation is difficult to sustain in this genre, 'in part because everything that I have learnt about critical authority urges me to travel in the opposite direction'.⁸⁸ We can see how the genre of critique works through the extent to which she has to bend over backwards to try to do criticism in a different mode – the narrative is characterised by a hyperawareness of its audience, who it anticipates will read for the kind of resolution that it cannot grant. As Zahid Chaudhary writes in an introduction to a dossier of critical responses, 'in order to do justice to its own objects – institutional and disciplinary formations, the movements of political desire – [*Object Lessons*] cannot and indeed must not offer directions'.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Robyn Wiegman, 'Wishful Thinking', *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 202–13 (p. 203) <<https://doi.org/doi:10.1353/ff.2013.0038>>.

⁸⁷ Wiegman, 'Wishful Thinking', p. 203.

⁸⁸ Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, p. 135.

⁸⁹ Zahid Chaudhary, 'Introduction', *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 129–34 (p. 131) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0029>>.

I want to turn briefly to the dossier of reviews edited by Chaudhary, because these represent textual evidence of the relationship that the text constructs with an audience whose anticipations it seeks to provoke and frustrate. The essay responses evidence that the genre always threatens to impose a mood at the expense of Wiegman's stated one. Almost all of the ten responses refer to how perplexing they find the book's invitation to resist analytic closure and remain in what O'Rourke calls its 'unfinished world'.⁹⁰ This incredulity accords with John Frow's understanding of genre as a schema which: 'defines a set of expectations which guide our engagement with texts' and therefore determines what is 'appropriate, probable, and thus believable'.⁹¹ For example, Antonio Viego's response of frustration despite himself is mirrored in many of the responses. Viego writes: 'I am embarrassed and pestered by the following questions I want to ask *Object Lessons*: Seriously, are you with us or not? [...] What do I call you? [...] Are you as worn down by the political desire for social justice that functions as an edict for those working in identity-knowledge fields as I am?'.⁹²

A number of respondents point to one passage in particular as exercising their ability to shift their horizons of what is, within this genre, appropriate, probable, and thus believable. Respondents are drawn to the following passage, taken from the introductory chapter which is tellingly titled 'How to Read This Book':

Object Lessons is not, then, a critique. It is not even a critique of critique. It is not an intervention. I am not trying to make us conscious of critical habits so that we can change them. It is not an argument against other arguments, nor a dismissal of what others have said or done. It is not a new theory. It offers no new objects or analytics of study. It is an inhabitation of the world-making stakes of identity knowledges and the field imaginary that sutures us to them—a performance, in other words, of the risk and reward, the amnesia and optimism, and the fear and pleasure sustained by living with and within them.⁹³

This is a disorienting passage. Interestingly, for some this passage is simply implausible. Robert F. Reid-Pharr writes of this passage: 'I have to admit that I do not really believe Wiegman here. Indeed, after reading *Object Lessons*, I felt less like imagining the risk, reward, amnesia, optimism, fear and pleasure of working within African American Studies, queer studies, and American Studies, and more like throwing up my fists and leading anyone who

⁹⁰ Michael O'Rourke, 'Objects, Objects, Objects (and Some Objections)', *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 190–201 (p. 198) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0038>>.

⁹¹ Frow, p. 126.

⁹² Antonio Viego, 'The Madness of Curing', *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 154–59 (p. 158) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0036>>.

⁹³ Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, p. 35.

might follow in a chorus of “fired Up. Won’t take no more”.⁹⁴ Other respondents are less affronted by the invitation not to seek a resolution in aid of social justice; however, the majority nevertheless address what they perceive to be the contribution of the book to research, irrespective of the book’s insistence that it offers no new analytics. For example, Michel O’Rourke’s response respectfully reads the above passage as an instance of false modesty, writing that her claim to be offering no new objects of study ‘is really not true’ and reasons that Wiegman ‘has a rare gift, which few other critics possess’.⁹⁵ Such statements make sense: academia is organised around the generation of original ideas. The dossier provides a bundle of evidence that mood is generated in the interaction between text, author and reader; the author represents only one element and therefore cannot thwart horizons of expectation through sheer will alone. Wiegman’s book is of interest to me because of the effort that it suggests is necessary to work against critical conventions; the effort not to use them draws attention to those conventions that otherwise are so familiar that they can pass our notice. The skill required not to follow implicit expectations speaks volumes. As respondent Nick Mitchell puts it, Wiegman can pull off this virtuoso performance because she is ‘so much at home’ with these ways of thinking; the book is ‘a confrontation that plays the game of critique so well that it can refuse to go where critique of critique would logically lead – to the promise that there is something beyond critique that will be adequate to what we have invested in it’.⁹⁶

Bechdel

I want to compare and contrast *Object Lessons* with another text that also affords an inhabitation with identity knowledges and an examination of how subjectivities are formed in proximity to them. The compiled version of Alison Bechdel’s syndicated comic strip *Dykes to Watch Out For* contains a delayed ‘Cartoonist’s Introduction’ which explores the strip’s relationship to these knowledge formations.⁹⁷ Bechdel’s comic strip collection follows a band of predominantly lesbian characters based in the USA and aims to make lesbian culture publicly visible. Constructed over the years between 1987 and 2008, the document encompasses and thematically intersects with the emergence and span of twentieth and early twenty-first century queer theory, with an emphasis on its relationship to other identity knowledge formations. However, sutured to the everyday, its narrative

⁹⁴ Robert Reid-Pharr, ‘Tarrying with the ‘Private Parts’, *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 149–53 (p. 152).

⁹⁵ O’Rourke, *Objects, Objects, Objects (and Some Objections)*, p. 195.

⁹⁶ Nick Mitchell, ‘The Object of “Object Lessons”: Thoughts and Questions’, *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 180–89 (p. 188) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0044>>.

⁹⁷ Alison Bechdel, *The Essential Dykes to Watch Out For* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009).

unfolds at some remove from academic networks of journal publications, monographs, reviews and conferences and therefore provides a kind of shadow history of the period. While in *Object Lessons* it is necessary for the author to be hyper-vigilant about audience from the outset, Bechdel's introduction deprecatingly narrates that her strips *accidentally* produced an inhabitation with identity knowledges by virtue of genre conventions which she failed to interrogate at the outset. Bechdel describes how she came to realise this in retrospect, and only because of the contrast her project seemed to strike with the high critical theory of the 1990s that emerged mid-way through the strip's production. This comparison will help me to be specific about the features of critique which interest me. Though recent studies in the sub-field of postcritique have sought to approach critical theory as a distinctive genre, they have sometimes been said to rely on straw man arguments, creating generalisations too broad to sustain in the face of diversity.⁹⁸ Readers have not always recognised the picture of critique that it paints. Though I for the most part can recognise that picture, I will nevertheless, using Bechdel's Cartoonist's Introduction as a stage setting, aim to be as specific as possible about what genre devices can open and foreclose, and the historic contingency of these effects which are not always predictable in advance.

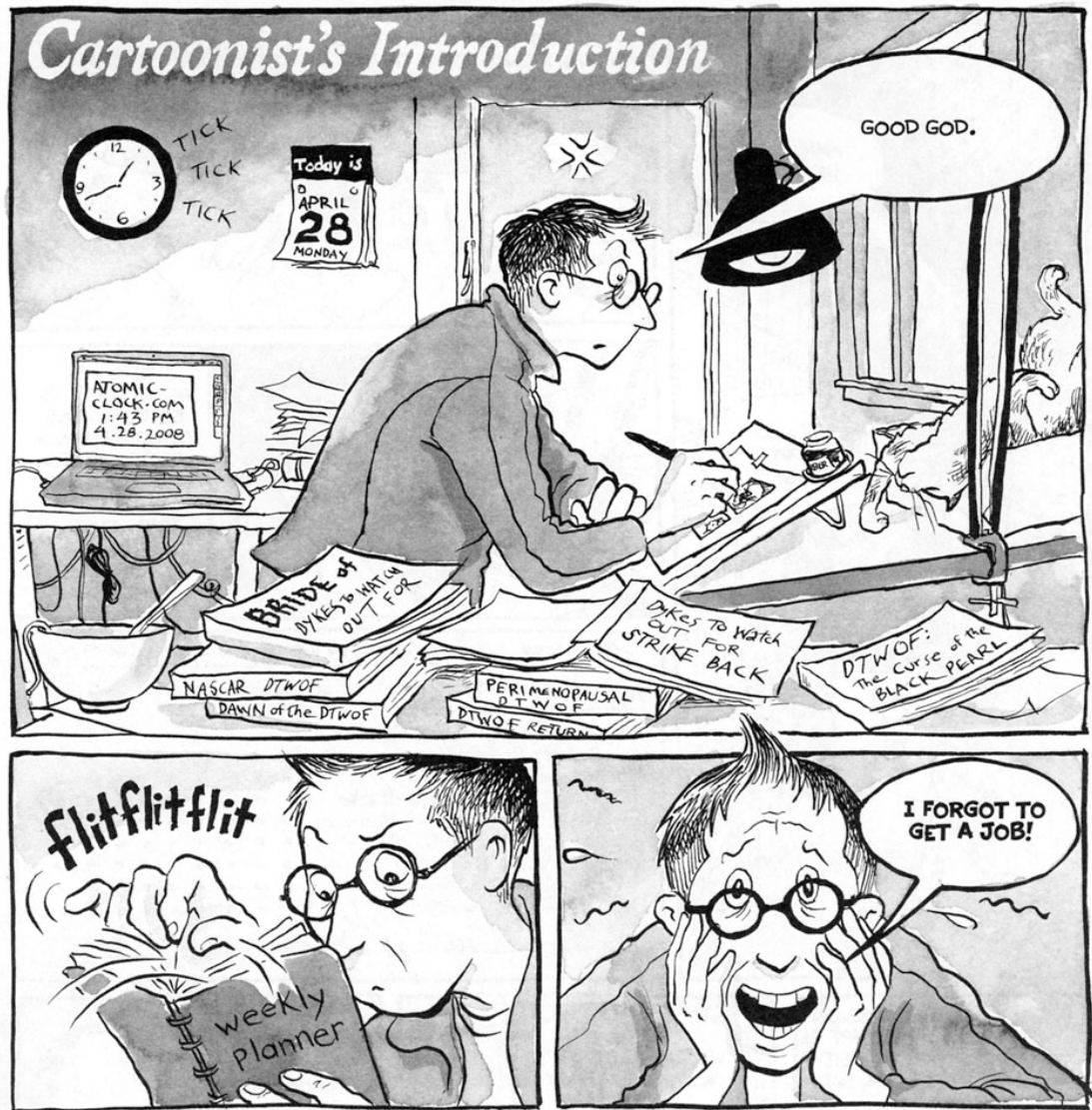
Bechdel explains that when she started out with her comics project, which would provide a catalogue of lesbian experience that would pin down a lesbian essence for the world to see and love, she could not have foreseen that this inquiry would collide with 1990s high theory that would trouble precisely such terms as "woman", "lesbian" and "essence".⁹⁹ Bechdel narrates how the lack of closure in serial production meant that her project ran away from her. In the opening panels of the introduction (Figure 2), we are invited to understand the collection as the product of daily monotony and habitual perception. "Alison" is stood over a work desk, mid-brushstroke, and she comes to the sudden realisation that time has passed but she has failed to spend it meaningfully. This introduction marks a transition between experiential registers; Bechdel is jolted out of the sleepwalking, natural attitude into analytic awareness because of an encounter with high theory. She parodies this as being jolted out of the abject state of having lived a life totally anchored in the everyday (or for three decades, at least). She represents herself as an object of almost exotic anthropological interest; one of those subjects who for Henri Lefebvre

⁹⁸ For example, Felski's work seeks to understand critique as a 'a transpersonal and widespread phenomenon'. This, however, necessarily relies on generalisations. See Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 4.

⁹⁹ Bechdel, pp. xiv–xv.

quintessentially represent the everyday: 'Everyday life weighs heaviest on women', he writes; 'they are the subject of everyday life and its victims'.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), p. 63.



Above, Figure 2: Alison is jolted out of the everyday

Left, Figure 3: Alison's practices of simultaneous composition

In the panels which follow, we are shown an Alison who is determined to understand the logic underpinning the everyday so as to retroactively justify her project. However, she remains unable to bring the daily into concrete focus. Alison manically flicks through her diary to retrieve answers, but none are to be found therein. The narrative then shows her enter a gargantuan archive (a drawer of personal documents on a magnified scale). Alison's official documents amass at her feet, but the deeper coherence of her project remains opaque and she is unable to bring the recalcitrant realm of the everyday under critical scrutiny while inhabiting a position within it. Drawing on Felski's theorisation of the logic of the everyday, we can understand why these retroactive examinations are liable to fail; 'like the blurred speck at the edge of one's vision that disappears when looked at directly', writes Felski, 'the everyday ceases to be everyday when it is subject to critical scrutiny'.¹⁰¹

Alison closes her Introduction by imploring the reader to intervene and decide for themselves on the strip's epistemic values as well as how these might relate to the critical theory with which it coincides but to which it remains auxiliary. The 'Cartoonist's Introduction' therefore situates itself ambivalently to 1990s queer theory, as both constituted by that moment but attached to feminist epistemologies and assumptions that preceded it, owing to its mode of production as a serialized narrative, explicitly composed at regular increments as part of a work routine. Using self-deprecating confessions to "camera," Alison recalls how, midway through the project, she was interrupted by critical theory of the 1990s that, with its characteristic scrutiny of categories and demystification of habits felt intuitively incompatible with the compositional foundation of her work. She establishes an exaggerated, binary contrast between her serial and the conceptual elegance of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, as shown in Figure 4:

¹⁰¹ Rita Felski, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p. 78.

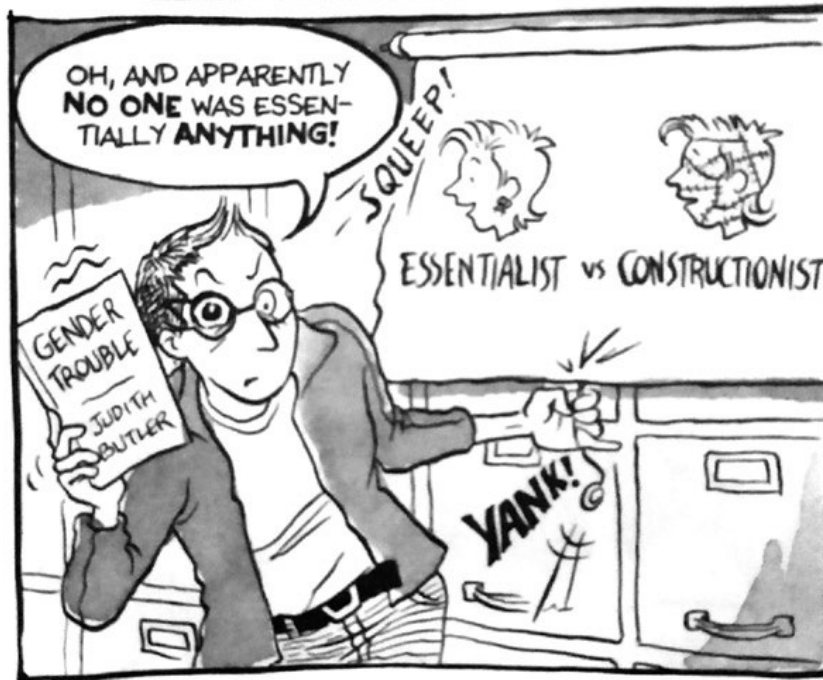


Figure 4: Alison's encounter with *Gender Trouble*

With exasperation and disbelief, Alison thrusts a copy of the book against the pane of the panel and exclaims, “Oh, and apparently no one was essentially anything!”. According to this reasoning, *Gender Trouble* succeeds by scrutinising its premises and terms and painstakingly differentiating its position in relation to an existing field. Sedgwick describes the orientation of *Gender Trouble* in similar terms, writing that it conducts ‘repeated and scouringly thorough demonstrations [...] that there can have been no moment prior to the imposition of the totalizing Law of gender difference’.¹⁰² Bechdel contrasts such vigilance against her own “natural attitude” which took as read that visibility would equate to progress: ‘If people could only see us...How could they help but love us?! ...I mean, seriously! Lesbians were so awesome! Free thinkers! Vegetarians! At the forefront of every social justice movement!’. Who could fail to see that ‘lesbians are well...essentially more evolved’?¹⁰³

As Bechdel narrates it, this problem arose because her own project proceeded without particular scrutiny of such key terms and without any particular ambition to “clear the field”. Bechdel describes a “peculiar reciprocity” with a growing public, which meant she had the “dubious privilege” of receiving constant feedback about how to progress the

¹⁰² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 130.

¹⁰³ Bechdel, p. xv.

narrative.¹⁰⁴ She also rejuvenated the strip by responding to current events and trends.¹⁰⁵ Bechdel describes how for this reason by the 1990s the conceptual coherence of the strip had run away from her and she could not isolate let alone defend its premises. In other words, the strip keeps to the grammar of everyday life; its complex simultaneity, where no one thing is ever quite fully at the centre of attention.¹⁰⁶ It is only in stepping out from the temporal frame of the everyday, provoked by an encounter with critical theory, that moves her away from this temporal frame and allows her to adopt a more reflexive attitude. Though Bechdel narrates this as a personal failure, according to Cynthia Geraghty, a lack of closure is typical of the genre; serials stay successful if they remain attuned to what happens in public culture, shifting focus to stay relevant, while continually compromising between narrative continuity and the need to function in the present.¹⁰⁷ For Hughes and Lund serials are for a similar reason able to ‘bind history’ in ways that allow the reader to pause between instalments and wonder at the ever-elusive shape of the whole which can never be fully in their grasp.¹⁰⁸ In ways that accord with Figure 4, Hughes and Lund argue that that serials confuted the temporality of catastrophic rupture, favouring instead the binding of large-scale historical time.

The ‘Cartoonist’s Introduction’ calls attention to the affordances of each genre by depicting a subject who moves between the temporal registers to which they are attuned. This introduction is a para-academic text, poised between these temporal frames. In this particular case, but also more broadly in this thesis, I approach the interface between genre and mood in terms of *affordances*. In *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*, Caroline Levine borrows from product design in defining ‘affordance’ as a potential use which is latent in materials and designs. Levine argues that, though form inherently limits, it can also have non-obvious potentialities; individual formal arrangements can offer unexpected possibilities as they travel across time and are taken up in different political contexts or bought into combination with one another.¹⁰⁹ In illustration, she writes that:

A fork affords stabbing and scooping. A doorknob affords not only hardness and durability, but also turning, pushing and pulling. [However] designed things may also have unexpected affordances generated by imaginative users: we may hang signs or

¹⁰⁴ Alison Bechdel, *The Indelible Alison Bechdel: Confessions, Comics, and Miscellaneous Dykes to Watch out for* (Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1998), p. 207.

¹⁰⁵ Bechdel, *The Indelible Alison Bechdel*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁶ Ben Highmore, *Ordinary Lives* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ C. Geraghty, ‘Continuous Serial – a Definition’, in *Coronation Street*, ed. by R. Dyer (London: B.F.I. Publishing, 1981), pp. 9–26 (p. 18).

¹⁰⁸ Linda Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1991), p. 6; pp. 68–70.

¹⁰⁹ Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

clothes on a doorknob, for example, or use a fork to pry open a lid, and so expand the intended affordances of an object'.¹¹⁰

Levine applies this idea from design to literary and political forms, to understand the ways in which 'patterns and arrangements carry their affordance with them as they move across time and space'. This means that different forms are drawn upon by actors in different moments to make use of their latent possibilities. Historical contingencies shape the meaning or values of a form, even as the form itself remains stable across different contexts. In this thesis I follow Levine's recommendation that we 'attend to the specificity of particular historical situations to understand the ways in which forms overlap and collide'.¹¹¹ Bechdel's 'Cartoonist's Introduction' can be understood as one such collision with unexpected consequences. Bechdel, through this deprecating image, demonstrates that these potentialities will not necessarily be obvious to authors in advance.

If Bechdel's panel is an example of an author who claims not to have known in advance the affordances of form, Williams' work suggests that thinkers can sometimes be proactive, either consciously or unconsciously, in seeking out conventions which aptly articulate a nascent feeling state. This thesis looks at a number of auxiliary genres; genres which create an interface with critical theory. In each case it is not especially obvious whether the minor genre is adopted because it *reflects* a widely circulating feeling or whether instead these genres are adopted and then performatively *produce* a sinking feeling. Interestingly, Levine's work suggests that both can be true. According to Levine, genres are portable; therefore minor, auxiliary texts may promise to be useful at a moment in which it starts to become evident that a wider pattern of feeling is under-addressed in the kind of academic writing that "counts" when it comes to metrics. However, this appeal would necessarily be contingent on availability; minor genres like prefaces, interviews, reflective introductions and memoirs are only realistically available to those that have the kind of status which makes other people interested in what might be called their minor experiences.¹¹² However, the fact that these minor genres are not typically obligatory makes the turning towards them for their latent use value stand out as potentially all the more significant. In the following section I want to tease out what the latent affordances of the minor genres of queer theory might be.

¹¹⁰ Levine, p. 6.

¹¹¹ Levine, pp. 7–8.

¹¹² Moi, p. 153.

Temporality

Bechdel's panel suggests that *Gender Trouble*, and the critical theory that it represents, arrives on the cultural scene as an event. William Sewell notes, "the event" is a remarkable occurrence that represents a break with routine practice and which touches off a series of occurrences.¹¹³ In the panel, *Gender Trouble* is surrounded by movement lines that radiate outward: the cartoonist is emphatically shaking the book at us with the effect that it is physicalized, so as to make plain its singularity, impact, and unique insight. If the serial was produced out of routine, *Gender Trouble* is the antidote that blasts apart daily life and catapults Alison into a different experiential frame: she clutches the book and leans forward, her one magnified eye lending her a somewhat crazed appearance; her eyebrows are raised, as if she cannot get up to speed with what she has read. As Sewell writes, in the immediate aftermath of the event, actors are 'beset with insecurity: they are and unsure how to get on with life' and this can be seen in a variety of responses such as 'anxiety, fear, or exhilaration; incessant activity, paralysis, extreme caution, or reckless abandon. But it almost certainly raises the emotional intensity of life, at least for those whose existence is closely tied to the dislocated structures.'¹¹⁴ This seems to be the case for the Alison of this fictional world.

It is not unusual to hear critical theory of the 1980s and 1990s referred to as an explosion of excitement for those involved; with new frameworks proliferating, each promising to overcome limitations of the former and allow us to see the world afresh.¹¹⁵ Arguably, critical theory is amenable to event history because it tends to stake a critical position with regards to habitual and received knowledge. We saw this amenability in the way that Wiegman wrestles against this function, insisting that her work creates no new objects or itinerates. Brown explicitly links critique to ruptures with that which already exists, writing that, 'the crisis that incites critique [...] signals a rupture of temporal continuity, which is at the same time a rupture in a political imaginary, a rupture in a collective self-understanding'.¹¹⁶ I do not want to suggest that critical theory *always* has these effects in the world. It does, however, in the context of institutionalisation, often mandate in advance that we predict the effects of our work will be and that they will matter. This is not, then, to suggest that all critical theory always actually constitutes an event; however, the temporal continuity which it ruptures in making an original

¹¹³ William Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 227.

¹¹⁴ Sewell, p. 229.

¹¹⁵ Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, p. 19.

¹¹⁶ Brown, p. 7.

contribution makes it reasonable to say that the genre proceeds, affectively at least, on the assumption that it might.

As Hemmings makes clear, when critical theory *does* have such effects, it is not usually because of internal textual features alone but the way that these features are taken up at nodes of intuitional power that encode their meaning. This is suggested by Bechdel's comic: the representation of *Gender Trouble* is iconic rather than literal; the cover artwork is stripped away and with these details absent, the book becomes representative of something much wider than itself as a literal object. Hemmings argues that feminist theory of the past few decades has been thoroughly narrativized, packaged in ways that establish a settled feminist past which we judge from a position in the more knowing present.¹¹⁷ She dryly comments: 'you may already know without me telling you that "the past" most often refers to the 1970s, that reference to identity and difference denotes the 1980s, and that the 1990s stands for a decade of difference proper, as that which must be returned from in the noughties'.¹¹⁸ The stories we tell about feminism revolve around a series of profound ruptures which displace that which preceded, and decades are used to index and formalise these breaks. One of her key examples is the way in which Butler is used as a transitional figure to secure feminist progress narratives. 'Butler's critiques appear to emerge out of the blue'; she is cited as 'singularly responsible' for bringing about 'an extraordinary range of transformations in and of feminist theory' that 'pushed feminism forward and ushered in a new era'.¹¹⁹ In the panel, Bechdel parodies, without necessarily critiquing, the phenomenon whereby contributions of other feminists are transcended and erased as Butler enters the scene to unsettle feminist culture. In this case, Bechdel stands in for the lesbian feminism that is displaced.

In a concrete condensation, Bechdel captures the temporality of the event but also temporalities which manage the anxiety caused by rupture by appropriating and acting upon it in terms of the existing cultural categories. Bechdel's introduction is a para-academic text which addresses the event history of theory but also how this is reabsorbed into the pre-existing structures.¹²⁰ Indeed, far from the break which this individual panel suggests, the collection that we are about to read shows that Bechdel did not actually cease cartooning because of this disorienting encounter but instead continued to publish regular strips throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. Her introduction shows us

¹¹⁷ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, p. 5.

¹¹⁸ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, p. 5.

¹¹⁹ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, p. 56.

¹²⁰ Sewell, p. 227.

that, despite a moment of paralysis, the daily work of the strip could continue simultaneously with, perhaps working itself out underneath, the comparatively rapid vibrations of high theory as a history of events. Henri Lefebvre uses a metaphor to describe this kind of temporal simultaneity: '[temporalities of philosophy and everyday life] are divided by a mountain range, but the path of philosophy keeps to the heights, thus overlooking that of everyday life; ahead the track winds, barely visible, through thickets, thorn-bushes and swamps'.¹²¹ For Lefebvre, everyday temporalities constitute a partial perspective, which unfolds slowly, often having a retardation effect on history because it repeats itself and unfolds cyclically. He contrasts this with the temporality of philosophy, which pertains to the history of events and forms a kind of surface disturbance atop comparatively slow-moving swathes of time.

Feminism and queer theory have often posited that time is multilinear, plural and multidirectional. Victoria Browne notices, however, that these calls for multiple temporalities are frequently without specific content; this makes it difficult to understand what is meant by the idea that there are different times at the same time.¹²² Addressing this, Browne models how a number of temporalities function and ultimately coexist – Browne focuses on “the trace”, “narrative time”, “calendar time” and “generational time” and, delineating their features, she also conveys how poly-temporal time is ‘produced through the intersection of different temporal layers and strands that combine in distinct ways to produce particular experiences and discourse formations of historical time’.¹²³ Drawing on the work of Chakrabarty, she explains that human subjects exist in ‘time-knots’ and their practices of embodiment contain multiple temporal dimensions which saturate their existence and are conjoined in disjunctive ways. Browne describes her task as one of generating genealogies of these temporalities to ‘contemplate the necessarily fragmentary histories of human belonging, which never add up to a totality, a whole, or a one’. She focuses on temporalities which foreground but extend beyond the individual experience. Her interest is in temporalities which are necessary for communication and collective organisation and therefore require a sense of shared time or *coevalness*. She is concerned with how we might ‘release into space’ these temporalities, without that necessitating equally grand-counternarratives.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Lefebvre, p. 14.

¹²² Victoria Browne, *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 26.

¹²³ Browne, p. 31.

¹²⁴ Browne, p. 29.

The Bechdel cartoon seems to represent such a ‘time-knot’, in which a subject’s lived experiences constitute multiple temporalities which are cojoined in a disjunctive fashion. Though Bechdel self-deprecatingly implies that she has spent decades in soul-destroying routine, her memoir *Are You My Mother* paints different, perhaps more realistic, picture of a life which moves *between* temporal registers. In *Are You My Mother?* Bechdel pictures herself working simultaneously on her comic and her more literary and experimental *Fun Home* (Figure 3). The caption explains that she, ‘was in the thick of writing a book about my father’, while also ‘carving out time for this from my job writing and drawing a comic strip’,¹²⁵ and the panel shows a section of ‘Dykes to Watch Out For’ in newspaper format, and on top is a bookmarked tome of *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*. The implication: Bechdel balances both routine work (the comic) with endeavours more critical (research for the graphic memoir). The relative positions of the materials suggest that research on Freud comprises a greater proportion of her conscious thought; however, it is supported and made possible by the routine and taken-for-granted endeavours of her freelance work. The panel succinctly and elegantly points to the way that routines form a distinct part of mental life, providing the preconditions which make critical thinking sustainable. Felski insists that every person’s life moves between different temporal frameworks in this way, no matter how seemingly anchored in the mundane.¹²⁶ She describes the mundane as a precondition for more critical orientations: the daily is, ‘the essential, taken-for-granted continuum of mundane activities that frames our forays into more esoteric or exotic worlds’.¹²⁷

This thesis concentrates on temporalities which mediate event history. As Sewell asserts, ‘in spite of the punctualist connotations of the term, historical events are never instantaneous happenings: they always have a duration, a period that elapses between the initial rupture and the subsequent structural transformation’.¹²⁸ I address this transition between event history and more ongoing and ambivalent durations by adapting Browne’s model of polytemporalities that meet at the location of the embodied subject. Inspired by her pluralisation, each chapter of this thesis matches a different temporality to a genre to which it is amenable. This will provide an opening onto structures of feeling that are otherwise obscured within official academic writing that is structured around the generation of new insight which is arrived at through successful closure. Therefore, I turn

¹²⁵ Alison Bechdel, *Are You My Mother?: A Comic Drama* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2012), p. 42.

¹²⁶ Rita Felski, ‘Introduction’, *New Literary History*, 33.4 (2002), 607–22 (p. 617).

¹²⁷ Felski, *Doing Time*, p. 77.

¹²⁸ Sewell, p. 229.

to minor genres of queer theory – such as special issue introductions, anecdotes, belated prefaces, critical memoir and autotheory. Each of these genres takes self-conscious distance from the productions of the late 1980s and early 1990s but nevertheless has an auxiliary relation with them and gains its appeal in relation to that prior moment. I maintain that these minor texts are attuned to the *points of transition* between event history and other temporalities. They constitute temporal switchpoints, capturing the process of the event getting reabsorbed into the existing-state-of-affairs.

In some ways, this project aligns with queer theory's ongoing interest in temporality. The 2007 roundtable on the topic has been said to have provoked and reflected "queer's turn to time".¹²⁹ However, for good reason, this turn has tended to be concerned precisely with how queer bodies, in all their unruliness, might jam the smooth functioning of homogenous time. Those I focus on here are slightly different to such oppositional temporalities. While queer studies has tended to focus on 'questions of untimeliness, anachronism, futurity, lagging, dragging and non-linearity', those I focus on here – generational time, duration, and the everyday – are more likely to be critiqued for their conservative effects.¹³⁰ However, queer theorists of temporality have also been wary about too quickly associating queer *people* with the non-linear.¹³¹ This thesis is influenced by the temporal turn generally but more specifically those who have focused on the de-idealisation of queerness, acknowledging 'the "complex personhood" of queer, racialized, and subaltern persons [who are] too often assigned the psychically flat role of righting the ills of an unjust social order'.¹³² It is inspired by those who are keen to draw out the unsustainability of 'the demand that anyone live a life that is all one thing'.¹³³ The return to the ordinary, banal problems of reception can feel like a downsizing of theory's ambitions. However, as Lisle Olsen notes, 'to deflate heightened experience is not always to refuse revolutionary impulses' because 'the return to the ordinary is inevitable, if not part of the epiphanic moment itself'. She explains that, 'ordinary life becomes the context in which epiphany subsumed, reconsidered, and assessed in light of its continuity or its ability to change one's previous behaviour'.¹³⁴ In this instance, it is not a case of choosing the minor

¹²⁹ Carolyn Dinshaw et al., 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 13.2–3 (2007), 177–95 (p. 182). See also Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. xxii.

¹³⁰ Deborah Withers, *Feminism, Digital Culture and the Politics of Transmission: Theory, Practice and Cultural Heritage* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), p. 8.

¹³¹ Dinshaw et al., pp. 186–87.

¹³² Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 11.

¹³³ Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2015), p. 74.

¹³⁴ Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 8.

text over the major mode; the ordinary over critique. The paratexts of the queer canon have made me love and feel the need for the critical moment of intervention more, not less. The paratexts which I look at are concerned with how the queer moment is given form and integrated back into ordinary life ‘where things happen, for better or worse, through legal institutions, social systems, and the biological necessities of living’.¹³⁵ I want to think about the *movement between* critical and more natural attitudes, as well as the texts that mediate this transition when, by definition, the ordinary is that which is not worth noticing.

The Corpus

Though concerned with the minor, by implication, this study is invested in the major term. This dual interest is most obvious in the attention which it pays to the work of Gayle Rubin, Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Though I do not focus on their work exclusively, I find it particularly productive for thinking about the shifting mood of queer theory. These writers are prolific producers of minor texts – they are continually commissioned to write another preface, give another interview; their students write reflective pieces about what it was like to be taught by them.¹³⁶ Furthermore, in minor works, Rubin, Butler and Sedgwick are each frequently asked to reflect on how queer theory and/or activism has changed and how this relates to a former period of production which their work is made to stand in for as a proxy.

My focus on iconic figures as mediators of transpersonal mood has precedent in Alan Sinfield’s study of Oscar Wilde and Victoria Hesford’s work on Kate Millet – both look at figures who came to represent a site of ‘contest and change’ in the wider subcultural sphere, impacting on how a historical moment is remembered.¹³⁷ Rubin, Butler and Sedgwick have each been subject to a particular kind of ‘author function’ – their name signifies not only their own work but ‘the possibility and the rules of formation of other texts’.¹³⁸ This is as much a result of how they are positioned within the social field as the content of their research; however, in practice, the two tend to bleed into one another. Sedgwick, for example, reflects on how her public identity was formed ‘mostly’ in relation to her status as a founder of a field. She describes how:

¹³⁵ Olson, p. 9.

¹³⁶ On this broad phenomenon see Moi, p. 153.

¹³⁷ Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment* (London: Cassell, 1994), p. 125; Victoria Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 4.

¹³⁸ Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. by Donald Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 131.

my two decades of thinking, lecturing, and writing in [queer theory] have been almost recklessly generative in terms of public identity, in fact. This was mostly because issues of homosexuality were suddenly becoming such a salient, openly contested area of public discourse; and I'd managed to make myself available, to a certain extent, to offer a face and a voice and a particular style to a theory movement, within a much larger emerging gay lesbian queer [sic] and transgender movement, that embodied some of the deepest-rooted energies of a great many cultural producers both within and outside of the academy. To be able to fulfil this role, for a while, and substantially affect the shape of some antihomophobic approaches, was a tremendous privilege.¹³⁹

Her public identity has been 'almost recklessly generative'; encouraging articles and monographs but also the kind of texts which interest me here: a wealth of minor works such as prefaces, interviews and a memoir. In ways that accord with Sinfield's understanding of figures as nodes through which collective mood is channelled, Sedgwick recalls how she managed to offer a style of embodiment and thinking that could be harnessed for a broader political itinerary. Sedgwick, in other words, became a 'repository for a complex array of affect and emotion'.¹⁴⁰ For better or worse, her work therefore provides a kind of "practical knowledge" about the *feel* of queer in its intersection between activism and the academy.

I have found *Queer: A Graphic History* a useful tool for thinking about the strong affective surround that attaches to these figures.¹⁴¹ The book is a graphic novel primer that uses characters from activism and academia to introduce key ideas of queer studies in an accessible manner; each page has a paragraph summary of a key concept, which is illustrated by cartoon figures representing a public who work through the problem to which the theory speaks. In addition to the summary, images of key thinkers are included, who articulate neat distillations of their ideas in speech bubbles. "Summary", "theorist" and "public" share the space of each page; however, the theorists seem to occupy a different existential frame – signalled by a greater degree of pictorial realism, which gives them comparative texture, weight and physical specificity (Figure 5). Comics theorist Scott McCloud states: 'iconic, simplified forms' are a kind of blank slate which encourages identification' and, by contrast, greater pictorial realism tends to emphasise 'difference' and encourages us to focus on the 'messenger as well as the message'.¹⁴² There is a similar contrast between temporal frameworks as that used by Bechdel. Here, as readers, we are encouraged to project ourselves into the figures of the public who struggle with the muddle

¹³⁹ Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, pp. 69–70.

¹⁴⁰ Hesford, p. 15.

¹⁴¹ Meg-John Barker, *Queer: A Graphic History* (London: Icon Books, 2016).

¹⁴² Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994), p. 37.

of everyday life in which they are living. We are perhaps invited to desire the more rigorous vision that the theorist provides and from which we might learn (the Butler panel below is a good illustration of a contrast which runs throughout). Inciting difference and desire, the clarity which the theorists embody come to feel like a much-needed resource for negotiating the mundane violence and general confusion of the social world.

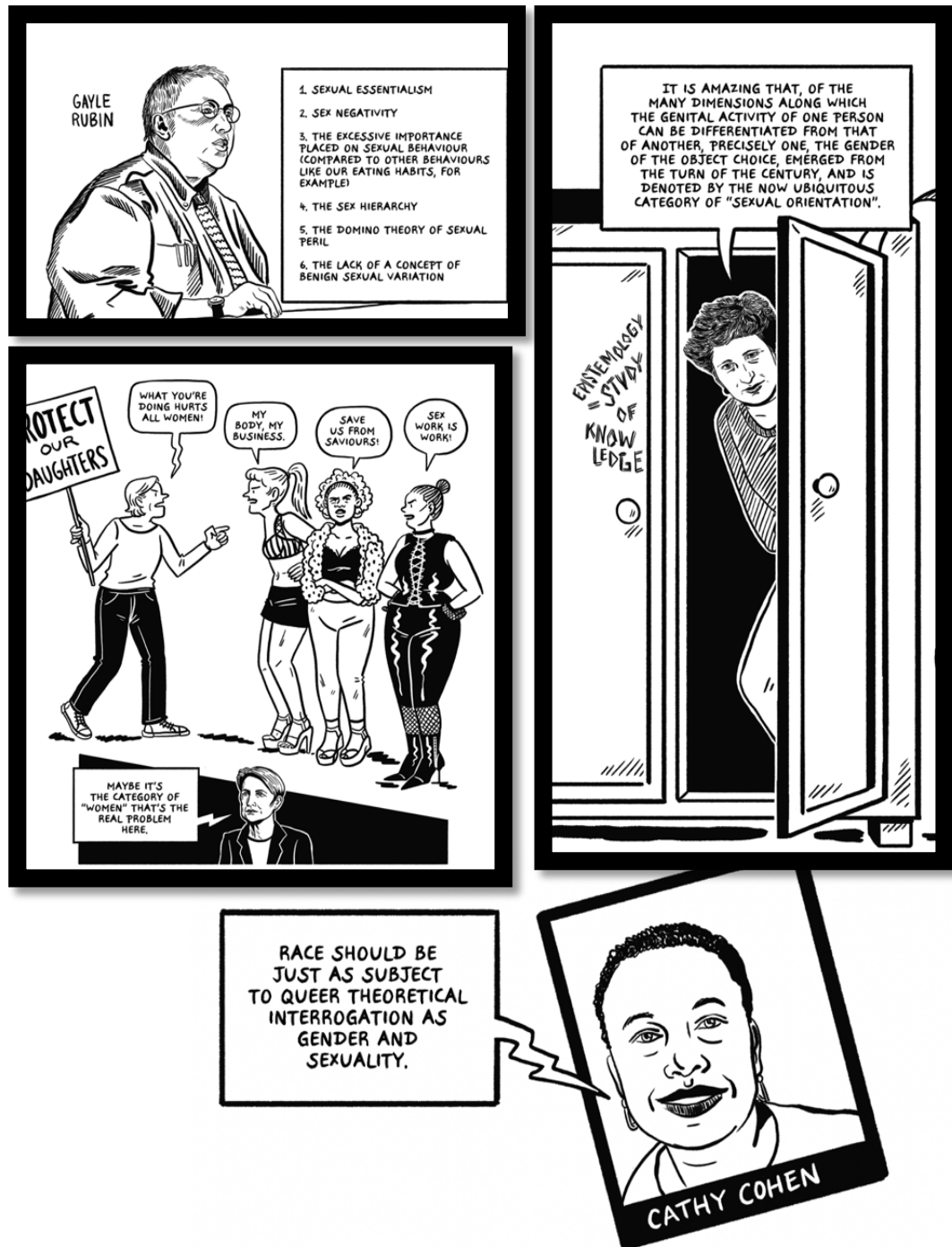


Figure 5: Theorists from *Queer: A Graphic History*

This method is consistent across *Queer: A Graphic History* and all the key thinkers are represented in a consistent way. However, to my mind, a heightened affect seems to get attached to certain figures, perhaps because these figures, like Rubin, Butler and Sedgwick, *already* have such an established celebrity status which this figurative treatment both indexes and magnifies. The heightened affective resonance is, I would suggest, moreover a product of the way that this formal treatment accords not only with their celebrity status but the fact that their work is so often elsewhere distilled to their literal bodies and soundbites. Moreover, when this happens, they tend to get frozen into a kind of perpetual present tense, becoming a ‘face and a voice and a particular style to a theory movement’.

Sedgwick embraces this as a ‘tremendous privilege’ but the passage also indicates some ambivalence about having been frozen in time. Though she ‘somehow managed’ a neat overlap this was only possible ‘for a while’, the passage goes on to explain that she is now more interested in diverging from that with which she is foremostly associated. Butler has similarly drawn attention to the constraining effects of being assigned a static position in the social imaginary. She asks:

What are the institutional histories [...] that ‘position’ me here now? If there is something called ‘Butler’s position’, is this one I devise, publish and defend, that belongs to me as a kind of academic property? Or is there a grammar of the subject that merely encourages us to position me as the proprietor of these theories?¹⁴³

Indeed, Butler’s work tends to express much more ambivalence than does Sedgwick’s about making herself ‘available for identification’. For example, she asserts in an interview that ‘the idea that I should somehow make my body manifest in my text is [...] oppressive to me [...] women are made to make their bodies available to others as a defining feature of femininity’.¹⁴⁴ Not only are these figures tasked with embodying and articulating a prior historical moment, they also, for this reason, verbalise the desire for and difficulty of generating a queer production that would move in different directions; look non-identical to itself. This too makes their work highly productive with regards to thinking about the possibility of late queer style.

I have not meant the above to be a criticism of the graphic novel – I am obviously not detached from the phenomenon it has helped me to describe. Indeed, if anything *Queer: A Graphic History* is refreshing because of its *continuity* of representation across all the key thinkers depicted – unlike how things usually happen, in the world of the graphic novel

¹⁴³ Judith Butler, ‘Contingent Foundations’, in *Feminists Theorise the Political*, ed. by Judith Butler and Joan Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 3–21 (pp. 8–9).

¹⁴⁴ Judith Butler and Bronwyn Davies, *Judith Butler in Conversation: Analyzing the Texts and Talk of Everyday Life* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 14.

everyone's work gets reduced and attached to a literal body, irrespective of gender, race, sexuality and celebrity status. In other words, the representation is conventional and appropriate to the graphic novel and thereby throws into relief the uneven distribution of attention that often plays out unnecessarily elsewhere. The graphic novel is useful for me as a means of thinking through the ethics of my own corpus and approach. For example, I do not think it is coincidental that, despite the coalitionary nature of queer politics, all three of these figures which I turn to as a repository for the shifting mood of queer theory are white women. I don't, however, think the significance of this is best thought of in terms of essentialised identity categories.¹⁴⁵ I think this is better understood in terms of how these figures are positioned in relation to the women's activism and queer theory's emergence as, in part, a response to this activism. As Wiegman has shown, the *articulation* of queer theory as a distinct method in the late 1980s and early 1990s is tied up with a growing disillusionment with "woman" as an organisational term that could deliver social justice. Butler, Rubin and Sedgwick's inaugurating queer texts each have in common a desire to articulate a mode of inquiry in response to frustrations with a version of feminism that has overlooked and sometimes scapegoated lesbian and gay experience. Though they may not have understood their projects in precisely this way at the time, the result is a crisp and impassioned definition of an approach which is distinct from a feminism that already exists. In other words, a palpable disappointment with the previous term provides the motivation to articulate something *else*. As I will explore in Chapter 1, the mood of early queer theory becomes especially obvious at points where there is a transfer in the anticipated scene of address, as the text begins to envisage a proto-queer reader who embodies a criss-cross of identification which may include but is not limited to the category "woman".

However, this is a particular drama with which not everyone will feel equally connected. For instance, arguably, the sharp oscillation between hope and disavowal that Wiegman describes as so important for the emergence of queer theory is less characteristic of women of colour feminism than the white women's movement; Benita Roth, for instance, has argued that women of colour approached the women's movement with ambivalence from the outset. We might therefore assume that the pattern of hope and disillusionment would be less prominent in their work. According to Roth, we tend to associate *second wave* with white feminism, but the age was characterised by simultaneous

¹⁴⁵ In this, I follow Berlant who writes that she is interested in 'how statuses like class, race, nation, gender, and sexuality [...] operate amid the rich subjective lives of beings [...] But it is not as though the normative affect management styles of any status saturate the whole of anyone's being, psychology, way of interacting with themselves and the world'. See Berlant, p. 20.

but relatively autonomous movements – with black feminism emerging through Civil Rights/Black Liberation and Chicana feminism developing out of the Chicano movement. She argues that these three movements influenced one another but at the same time maintained a degree of antagonism.¹⁴⁶ Importantly, according to Roth, though women of colour did not in principle reject core ideas of the white women's movement, in practice they were not especially hopeful about its ability to deliver social justice that would be meaningful for them and were hesitant to work on gender to the neglect of class and race. Roth describes how, women of colour felt the 'pull of competing loyalties', and experienced hesitancy and scepticism with regards to the women's movement from the beginning. Roth concludes that women of colour therefore took a 'different road to feminism'.¹⁴⁷

Researching affect in anniversary special issue introductions, I was initially interested to include *GLQ*'s commemoration of Cathy Cohen's 'Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?' and her twenty-year retrospective introduction. It promised to share similar qualities to reflective introductions authored by Rubin on the reception of 'Thinking Sex' and Butler on the reception of *Gender Trouble*.¹⁴⁸ This did not quite prove to be the case. Despite Cohen's wistful assessment that that activism of today 'may not [fulfil] the radical potential of queer that I envisioned twenty years ago',¹⁴⁹ Cohen overall expresses less disappointment about the consequences of her work. Like Rubin and Butler, she seeks to recontextualise her efforts, to intervene in what Hemmings calls the 'technologies of the presumed'.¹⁵⁰ However, the mood is far less sinking. We might surmise that less faith in a movement (as described by Roth), might equate to less surprise when the object around which it is organised fails to deliver. Indeed, Cohen's description of her relationship with feminism and queer studies accords with Roth's account: though Cohen describes having a 'longing for a radical formation', which the term queer seemed to represent, 'many in Black LGBT communities approached the idea and term of queer with greater skepticism and reluctance'.¹⁵¹ Continuity is stressed over divergence. She finally stresses *ongoing* disillusionment and an *ongoing* faith in overlapping and mutually informing traditions anyhow: 'this may not be the

¹⁴⁶ Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁴⁷ Roth, p. 75.

¹⁴⁸ Cathy Cohen, 'The Radical Potential Of Queer?: Twenty Years Later', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 21.5 (2019), 140–44.

¹⁴⁹ Cohen, p. 143.

¹⁵⁰ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, p. 19.

¹⁵¹ Cohen, p. 143.

radical potential of queer that I envisioned twenty years ago, but this combination of Black feminism and a commitment to queer as a continuation of the Black radical tradition may be our best hope for the radical movements and queer futures we all deserve'.¹⁵²

I want to make clear that this is not a project that makes claims about how queer studies should be remembered; nor does it provide a corrective to the way that attention is currently distributed. There is obviously a risk of reifying the reputation of these figures by focusing on them. I do believe, however, that this thesis can complement recovery projects which re-historicise queer theory to uncover overlooked and alternative trajectories. I am just not the person to write them because I have been too enchanted by early landmark texts of queer theory which threw into disarray my own feminist identifications. This is a drama that does speak to me. Moreover, though I consider recovery projects important, I have learnt to take seriously that facts do not necessarily disrupt the narratives we tell about the recent past if they leave the dominant affective grammar intact.¹⁵³ As the affective turn has consistently warned, the left can place too much faith in the superiority of its evidence and arguments, while overlooking mood and affect which are not rational. Berlant writes that: 'political subjects, political discourses, and opinion itself are fundamentally incoherent [...]. Intellectuals have a hard time bearing that fact, because they are trained to persuade by making better arguments'.¹⁵⁴ Without an understanding of mood as a technology of calibration, which forecloses certain possibilities and opens others, the distribution of the sensible can stay in place – irrespective of complicating details. This study takes seriously this idea that our objects are enmeshed in fantasy; in particular, it is concerned with how, as Kadji Amin puts it, '[queer] remains haunted by the political and transgressive charge of the early 1990s moment, and [...] this haunting orients it toward particular political and intellectual projects in the present'.¹⁵⁵ In other words, this thesis tries not to leap too quickly to intervene in the existing narrative; perhaps ironically, its intervention is to stay as long as possible with the sinking feeling of late queer theory, by extending out into genres that don't require closure and a thesis statement as a means of ordering insight.

¹⁵² Cohen, p. 143.

¹⁵³ Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, p. 176.

¹⁵⁴ Lauren Berlant, 'Unfeeling Kerry', *Theory & Event*, 8.2 (2005), 1–9 (p. 7) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/tae.2005.0021>>.

¹⁵⁵ Amin, p. 185.

The Chapters

Overview

The thesis begins with a **Prelude**, which sets out some characteristics of late queer style by focusing on three key historical drivers of change: institutionalisation, immanent critique and pedagogic labour. Broadly speaking, the thesis is then divided into two parts. **Part 1** comprises two chapters, both of which consider texts that would unproblematically “count” in academic metric systems: special issue introductions and articles/monographs. It considers the extent to which late queer style can be expressed within genres that require measurable contributions to knowledge. **Part 2** broadens to consider the paratexts that are less organised around polemics of the new and therefore, I argue, can represent transition points into daily, generational and larger scales of time.

Part 1

Chapter 1 considers special issue introductions by Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler, which reflect on the reception of their landmark earlier works. These authors use introductions to call for intellectual modesty and practices which render queer’s figure/ground relationships more fluid. Both experiment with adding back mundane details that were bracketed in the process of framing *Gender Trouble* and ‘Thinking Sex’ as critical interventions. In reflecting on previous queer production, while also calling for something new, these special issue introductions help me to pinpoint the mood of “high” queer theory and think about late queer style as a point of differentiation. However, I find a tension in these introductions between a desire to distance from the conventions of ritualised academic writing and the need to retain the minoritarian “critical attitude” which was thoroughly interwoven with these conventions in inaugural queer texts. Furthermore, the tension is exacerbated by the aspiration to elaborate modest practices within a genre that is organised around the celebration of original insight.

Chapter 2 addresses academic journal articles/monographs, but focuses specifically on anecdotal passages within these texts. I argue that anecdotes represent a crisis point at which a partially established queer discourse runs into difficulties in accounting for a moment of lived experience. In some ways these anecdotes operate as notorious in new historicist essays, constituting an ethical tipping point which punctures abstraction in favour of a return to the real. However, rather than the one-upmanship often associated with this move, here the viability of the queer subject position is explicitly at stake in the narrative. These anecdotal ruptures represent present-tense crises which raise questions

about how the glitch will be ‘resolved’. However, these anecdotes are finally, more or less, sublated into argument. I maintain, therefore, that the genre of critique knows queer theory’s late mood dimly through the sinking asides that it goes on to resolve. However, for all that the genre registers this sinking feeling obliquely, critique does have the advantage of giving permission and reason for an elaboration of these minor crises – even if the point is to finally arrive elsewhere. Moreover, compressing this material tends to paradoxically render it highly memorable. I look at moments where, by virtue of brevity, these anecdotal moments are rendered so startling that they threaten to swamp the narrative drive towards closure.

Part 2

Having looked at the difficulty of expressing a sinking feeling within genres of critical theory, Chapter 3 transitions into a consideration of para-academic material. The third chapter examines delayed prefaces to Butler’s *Gender Trouble* and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet*. I argue that, with its strange temporal positioning, the delayed preface is attuned to large-scale time, recalcitrance and gradual change. Whereas the texts considered in the first part of this thesis establish a line of movement from concrete to abstract, the delayed prefaces show a reverse formation by collapsing back into minoritarian subjectivity and an elaboration of the text’s first conditions. Generally speaking, the delayed preface genre draws on conventions of the embodiment effect and direct addresses to a reading public. However, I argue that these features are loaded in this disciplinary context: the collapse of the minoritarian/universalizing tension into undialectical identity politics represents a failure, a letting down, a deflation that is also to some extent a relief.

Chapter 4 considers the genre of critical memoir. I examine how Sedgwick’s late work and Sarah Schulman’s *Gentrification of the Mind* document the immediate whirl of a life lived in the present tense of identity knowledges, and the difficulty of remaining internally consistent with these formations over time. These critical memoirs feature the classroom in particular as a site in which different structures of feeling clash in a moment of late queer theory. Queer’s oppositional stance and its refusal that it should fall to eccentric people to accommodate the needs of the majority, prove virtually untenable in the context of daily classroom work which is about accommodating motivated ignorance in order to help the learner interpret out of their own implication in knowledge. Localised images of the uncanny classroom draw attention to a lack of fit between discursive positions and material locations, introducing a state of mundane crisis over whether queer scripts should shift. I

conclude this chapter by looking at Sedgwick's 'Paranoid Reading Reparative Reading' through the lens of memoir, arguing that, though it can be distilled to a statement about the need for reparative reading over and above suspicious reading, it also uses images of the authorial self to invite the reader to step into the experiential present tense of this crisis about what queer theory should look like as it is applied to contexts other than the activist AIDS cultures from which it is derived.

Chapter 5 focuses on student writing, found in autotheory and memorial essays. This writing not only represents student subjectivity but uses "student voice" to engage with the difficulties of extending late queer theory beyond the classroom. I argue that, despite how readily generational models can be critiqued, the figure of the "problem student" is taken up nonetheless and used to explore a difficulty in the transmission of queer methods as the discipline turns against itself in a deliberately contradictory stance. In this context "the student" can be regarded as a conduit, mediating bonds between wider discursive communities about what queer theory should look and feel like in the present. Graduate education has typically been concerned with academic subjectification; however, these texts show a disruption in the "journey" towards becoming an independent researcher in light of the increased precarity of academic employment that coincides with an education in "uncritical" reading. These para-academic texts create thick descriptions of inhabiting this position in an ongoing sense; late queer style gets ontologised in the student-figure who attempts to feel their way into the discipline at a moment of contradictory lateness.

In the Conclusion, I consider the wider implications of studying minor texts. I describe the moods and themes which are made available by expanding the parameters of queer theory and consider how these texts can be theorised, both in relation to each other and to texts more canonical to the field. I argue that by circumventing closure and focusing on how the project is absorbed into the ongoing state of affairs, minor texts can provide an affective antidote to impact case studies of the neoliberal university. I also argue that minor texts represent a location for thinking about the challenges of institutionalising identity knowledges. When we rely solely on activist and academic genres for thinking about the story of identity knowledges, we can find ourselves without resources for thinking about how the ruptures necessary to gain critical purchase are absorbed back into ordinary life. Without negating the importance of intervention, minor texts can offer a "third" space for thinking about how the energies and insights of identity knowledges can be sustained.

Prelude: a moodboard for queer theory

In this piece, I want to open up a preparatory space to explore some of the contradictory obligations and expectations that characterise living with queer theory in the present; themes which will recur across the thesis in my analyses of local articulations of the mood of late queer theory. As I define it, this mood pertains to disillusionment in the face of an emergent gap between the official discourse of queer theory and the process of living its consequences.¹ Following Janet Halley, I think of theories as schemas which ‘throw into visibility different stakes which we then distribute when we act politically and legally’.² Theory shapes reality for us, shifting the available terms for identity, consciousness and desire; however, when theories become consolidated, their effectiveness can dull as we are presented with instances that do not fit favoured schemas. Williams argues that when discourse substantively separates from experience, we can see writers and artists grasping for new figures and conventions; sometimes, however, these diffuse experiences are only ever registered in the form of disturbances, tensions or blockages.³ This thesis finds that a distinctive anxiety is produced when such gaps emerge in the context of identity knowledges because here it is axiomatic that there should not to be too stark a division between academic theory and lived experience; as Wendy Brown influentially articulates, critical theorists of the left are tasked with the responsibility of developing theories that respond to the needs and character of the age.⁴

In particular, this prelude considers a cluster of the historical factors which spur an acceleration of the gap between codified and lived queer theory. They represent a divergence from the historical context that allowed queer theory to emerge as a distinct sensibility and itinerary of response. As Deborah Gould argues with regard to grass-roots queer activism and its subsequent development, ‘changes in a movement context and the affective states generated as a result can challenge the practices, feelings, habitus, and imaginaries that organise and indeed constitute a movement, making it difficult for the movement to persist’.⁵ The factors I look at here implicitly inform affective states generated in response to movement context. Something inconsistent with the current schema is encountered, and a state of disequilibrium is produced. However, as Gould notes, at first these affective states are typically ‘emergent, amorphous, operating largely

¹ Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: Verso, 2015), p. 159.

² Janet Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 4.

³ Williams, p. 164.

⁴ Wendy Brown, ‘Resisting Left Melancholy’, *Boundary 2*, 26.3 (1999), 19–27 (p. 21).

⁵ Gould, pp. 269–70.

beneath conscious awareness’ and, therefore, ‘may be difficult to assimilate and address even as they exert pressure on the movement’s existing customs, routines, systems, rituals, procedures that have heretofore worked’.⁶ I too am interested in how changes in context generate unexpected affects which in turn influence whether established political tactics will succeed in local instances. Therefore, this prelude introduces three contextual changes, which tend to come in a bundle to exert pressure on a late queer habitus: *institutionalisation*, *immanent critique* and *student resistance*.

A second and equally important ambition for this prelude is to experiment with a method of approaching these factors in a way that would formally replicate both their amorphous qualities and entanglement; I want to develop a method that can address discomfort rather than provide a resolution to mood through analysis. Conventional narrative structures requires logical delineation; however, the factors that I am interested in here present themselves as a problem precisely because they are resistant to narrativization because of their amorphous entanglement. One of the basic lessons of psychoanalysis is that when we are unable to step back and narrativize experiences we get “stuck” in patterns of response that may well be ill-adapted to our current circumstances and needs.⁷ With this in mind, I want to use this space to convey ideas that eschew conventional narrative constructions of argumentation – to stay attuned to their mood generating capacity, they need to be expressed cumulatively, through collage and juxtaposition. I want to provide a space that could access rather than transcend mood and, therefore, I envisage what follows as “moodboard”, which brings together a collage of themes that are allowed to culminate and therefore evoke a tangle of elements which in combination exert pressure on field imaginary of queer studies.

Institutionalisation

Firstly, I want to consider the double-bind of institutionalised queer studies. Broadly speaking, identity knowledges have been all too cognisant of the lure and dangers of institutional legitimisation. Referring to Cultural Studies, Stuart Hall acknowledges that professionalisation represents, ‘a moment of profound danger’ because, when an oppositional knowledge formation reaches a stage of ‘theoretical fluency’, there is a risk that its methods will ‘formalise out of existence the critical questions of power, history and

⁶ Gould, p. 270.

⁷ Otto Kernberg, ‘The Influence of Joseph Sandler’s Work on Contemporary Psychoanalysis’, *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 25.2 (2005), 173–83 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/07351692509349126>>.

politics'.⁸ Elsewhere, Roderick Ferguson's historically informed analysis details how the academy took an approach of adaptive homogeny when it came to its negotiation of the oppositional discourse of post-60s movements.⁹ When activist programmes like feminism and critical race studies sought space in the academy, they had to make compromises which inevitably weakened the demands of their critique and made oppositional stances less imaginable.

Such concerns apply equally well to queer theory. However, its positioning with regards to the university is perhaps acutely paradoxical, because of the extent to which the incompatibility between "institutionalisation" and "queer" strikes at the heart of their respective definitions. Queer literally defines itself in terms of its suspicion of social reproduction of a kind that passes off as natural. The dust-jacket to the essay collection *Queer Times, Queer Becomings* reads: 'if queer theorists have agreed on anything, it is that for queer thought to have any specificity at all, it must be characterized by becoming, the constant breaking of habits'.¹⁰ And yet, as Caroline Levine summaries, institutions create 'path dependency', the repetition of practices over time, because once an institution has started on a certain rote the cost of reversal is high.¹¹ We easily confuse the term *institution* with edifices and physical buildings, she explains, but universities are much more about the endurance of practices over time, which means their rituals last well beyond their initial agendas. Institutions by definition remain 'relatively stable through repetition over time [and therefore] the different values that produced those ways of organising people and ideas actually *persist in the forms of the institutions themselves*'.¹² This accords with Pierre Bourdieu's influential argument that universities are predominantly a collection of activities for selection and surrogation, which allows new roles to be filled with more of the same in a way that ensures the reproduction of the existing field of power.¹³ Of course, the university also offers a site for critique and innovative thinking; however, in practice this is difficult to separate from its other missions – such as the reproduction and preservation of national cultures. This is true at the macro-level but also at the more micro, disciplinary level. As Thomas Kuhn's classic argument notes, though research cultures require moments of innovation and divergence, they are more usually concerned with the

⁸ Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies', in *Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 277–94 (p. 278).

⁹ Roderick Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

¹⁰ E. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen, *Queer Times, Queer Becomings* (Albany: Suny Press, 2011).

¹¹ Caroline Levine, *Forms: Wholes, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 59.

¹² Levine, p. 60.

¹³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 40.

reproduction of norms; disciplines take accepted frameworks for granted, reserving the ground-breaking mode for rare occasions.¹⁴ This provides the background to David Halperin's wry observation that, 'there is something odd, suspiciously odd, about the rapidity with which queer theory – whose claim to radical politics derived from its anti-assimilationist posture, from its shocking embrace of the abnormal and the marginal – has been embraced by, canonized by, and absorbed into the (largely heterosexual) institutions of knowledge, as lesbian and gay studies never were'.¹⁵

Moreover, the challenge of negotiating embedded conservative and patriarchal values has only been further complicated by a different set of values which have surfaced in light of the neoliberalisation of higher education. Concomitant with the rise of queer theory has been a transnational shift towards knowledge-based economies, which conceptualise knowledge as an output that can be capitalised for national advantage; if that is, the knowledge generated can be successfully locked into systems that render it manageable.¹⁶ Roland Barnett argues that this emergent outlook ushered in a greater overlap between university and state; prior to this, 'the universities were on the fringe of society' and, though they 'were performing not unimportant functions', their outputs were nevertheless 'not of continuing and central interest to many in the land'.¹⁷ However, with knowledge now deemed imperative to national affluence, university outputs have been felt to be too important to be left in the hands of academics. As Barnett summarises, government and society now play a more proactive role in determining the kind of knowledge that they wish for themselves, and therefore universities are increasingly accountable to external agendas. Therefore, research cultures with the political autonomy necessary for societal critique, an ideal which underpins the nineteenth century notion of university, has found itself under sustained challenge. Graduates of the neoliberal university must leave with transferrable skills that are deemed relevant to the wider national economy and staff are subject to surveillance mechanisms and standardised output measurements that are said to increase productivity, maximise social impact and ensure public accountability.

There are certain feminist and widening participation agendas that would favour this ostensible break from a conservative university institution to one that is more accountable to its public. The argument might run that professionalisation lends

¹⁴ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

¹⁵ David Halperin, 'The Normalization of Queer Theory', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 45.2–4 (2003), 339–43 (p. 341) <https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_17>.

¹⁶ Pam Green and Robin Usher, 'Fast Supervision: Changing Supervisory Practice in Changing Times', *Studies in Continuing Education*, 25.1 (2003), 37–50 (p. 38) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01580370309281>>.

¹⁷ Ronald Barnett, *The Limits of Competence: Knowledge, Higher Education and Society* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994), p. 21.

transparency to the otherwise obscure and retrograde criteria for academic success which excludes non-traditional academic subjects. Regulation can hold in check the patriarchal mechanisms of social reproduction which are the university's default mode. However, this line of argument is not particularly amenable to queer heuristics, which found its distinctive voice by showing that a feminism that too quickly collaborates with government agendas and surveillance does more harm than good to the vulnerable subjects for whom it ostensibly speaks. Tellingly, one of the most influential working apparatuses for critiquing the neoliberal university, Stephen Ball's theorisation of the *performative university*, draws on Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* to understand how surveillance mechanisms are internalised to produce docile subjects.¹⁸ Therefore, though there is an argument that a shift towards the neoliberal university challenges some of the more recalcitrant mechanisms of the patriarchal system, I would suggest that it has not replaced them in any straightforward sense but rather has made critique of such conservative structures increasingly arduous because resistance to mechanisms of neoliberal surveillance get read as a defence of ivory tower academia; as if neoliberalism and traditionalism are the only possible positions for the contemporary university.

As Sabine Hark describes, identity knowledge workers easily find themselves in a double bind because critiquing the neoliberal university requires mastering the rules of the game; effective criticism depends not only on intentions but also on 'one's virtuosity in handling the existing structures and action schemata'. Therefore, 'the paradoxical precondition for dissent is participation'.¹⁹ This would perhaps not be so much of a problem were it not for the fact that the very reason that institutions are useful for human societies is that they allow organisations to make low level decisions on the individual's behalf, which then frees up people's energy for higher order thinking.²⁰ If, however, the thought style of the institution is actually at odds with the individual's values then presumably, far from an energy saving device, ethical negotiation of the institution will require relentless vigilance of a kind that risks exhausting the discipline of its critical and counter-cultural energy. Maria do Mar Pereira's *Power, Knowledge and Feminist Scholarship* provides some empirical evidence of this drain in collective energy.²¹ Investigating the status of gender studies and the academic labour that underpins it, Mar Pereira conducted

¹⁸ Stephen Ball, 'The Teacher's Soul and the Terrors of Performativity', *Journal of Education Policy*, 18.2 (2003), 215–28 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043065>>.

¹⁹ Sabine Hark, 'Contending Directions. Gender Studies in the Entrepreneurial University', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 54 (2016), 84–90 (p. 88) <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.06.009>>.

²⁰ Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (London: Routledge, 1987), p. 18.

²¹ Maria do Mar Pereira, *Power, Knowledge and Feminist Scholarship: An Ethnography of Academia* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

semi-structured interviews with academics over the years 2008/2009, during which time her interviewees were involved in establishing new gender studies programmes in Portugal. An unexpected six-year break in her data collection meant that she found herself returning to collect a second round of evidence. Interestingly, her findings showed a change in collective mood – this is significant for my purposes, not because her findings are straightforwardly generalisable, but because mood is notoriously hard to evidence at all.²² Comparing her data, the author found some continuation – on both occasions, interviewees spoke of feeling tired, but in the later interviews there was a ‘diffuse but palpable and unmistakable shift’.²³ In the earlier period interviewees were exhausted by the labour of securing institutional recognition for a new field but this was accompanied by a ‘rousing belief in the need to fight and resist’.²⁴ Six years later, her participants still spoke of exhaustion, but their reports had a different flavour which was characterised not by individualised depression per se but by a despondency that the researcher could literally ‘feel in the air’.²⁵ Her subjects reported that they no longer had time for lengthy engagements with their research and found themselves being increasingly strategic about fitting ideas into accredited frameworks.

Writing in the face of critique

I turn now to critical writing habits which overlap with dynamics of institutionalisation but are not reducible to them, for the fact that they are conditions more of our own making.²⁶ I am specifically concerned with narratives of legitimisation that rely on polemics of the new. Though there is not a neat line-up of institutional and theoretical emergence (queer studies still happens in programmes called LGBT studies or Women’s and Gender Studies), there was nevertheless a moment when, as Clare Hemmings recalls, just the act of aligning oneself with sex was ‘to mark [one’s] difference from the mainstream and from violence’, belonging to ‘the present and future rather than of a necessarily co-opted feminist past’.²⁷ I trace a shift whereby sex as an object of study is no longer so obviously a corrective to the exclusions of a prevailing paradigm but is equally likely to be considered the *source* of such exclusions. I describe how this has forced a

²² Rosalind Gill and Ngaire Donaghue, ‘Resilience, Apps and Reluctant Individualism: Technologies of Self in the Neoliberal Academy’, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 54 (2016), 91–99 (p. 91) <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.06.016>>.

²³ Pereira, p. 629.

²⁴ Pereira, p. 677.

²⁵ Pereira, p. 654.

²⁶ Robyn Wiegman, ‘Wishful Thinking’, *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 202–13 (p. 205) <<https://doi.org/doi:10.1353/ff.2013.0038>>.

²⁷ Clare Hemmings, ‘Is Gender Studies Singular? Stories of Queer/Feminist Difference and Displacement’, *Differences*, 27 (2016), 79–102 (pp. 83–84).

dilemma about whether the field should expand to be accountable to wider terrains or contract to focus back on the particular experiences of non-normative sex and the people who love it.

Janice McLaughlin helpfully sets out how, in disciplinary contexts, progress narratives function as a series of imperatives (Figure 6). She explains that ‘theoretical debates move through cycles of what is thought interesting, new and appropriate’, but the appropriate is shaped to ‘gain approval within institutions, generate conference circuits, and capture publishers, future postgraduates and the media’s attention’. Furthermore, this ‘continued enactment of academic ritualised debate’ is heightened by regulatory measures of performance which enforce disciplinary separation in the name of originality.²⁸

²⁸ J. McLaughlin, ‘The Return of the Materials’, in *Intersections between Feminist and Queer Theory*, ed. by D. Richardson et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 59-77 (p. 60).

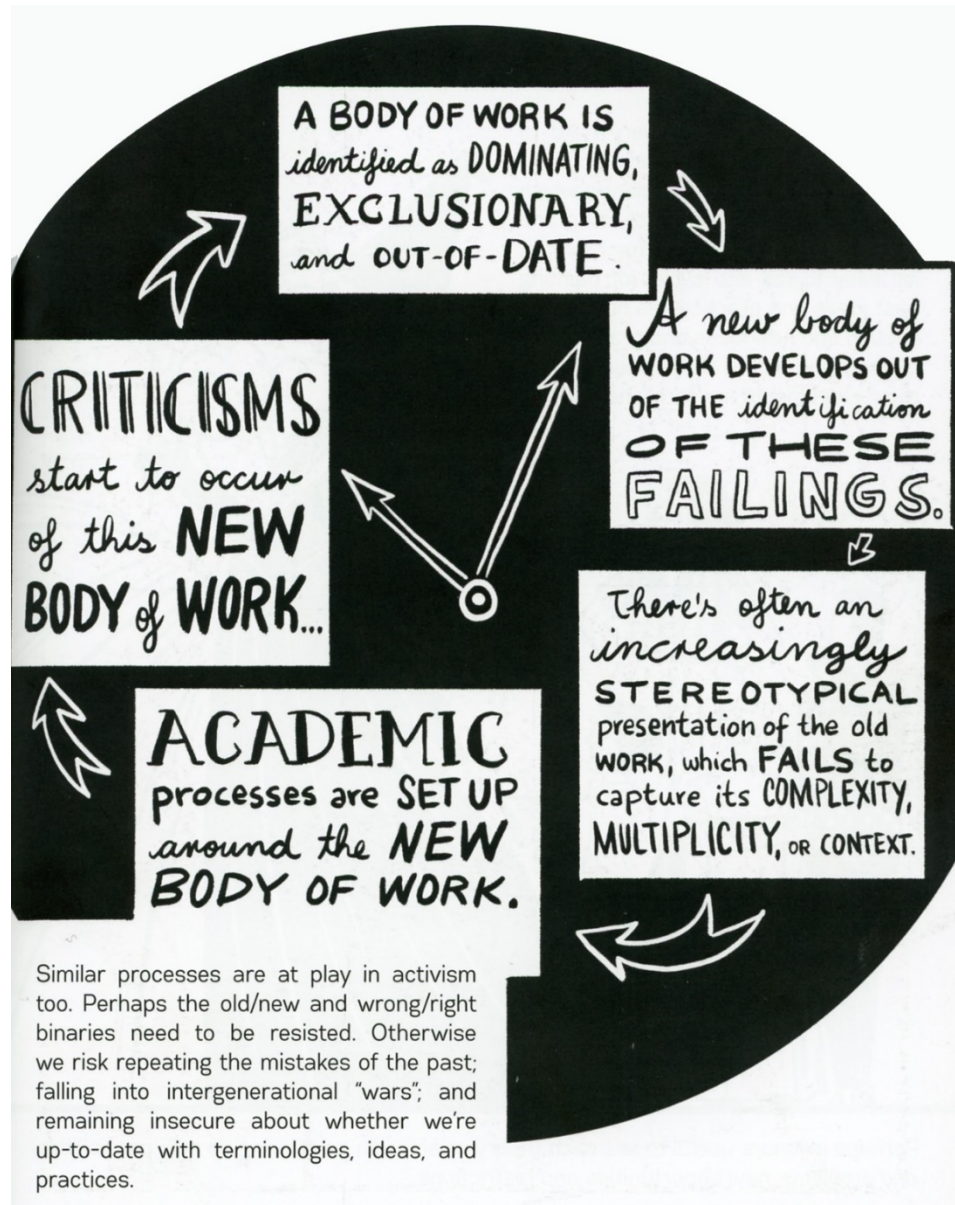


Figure 6: McLaughlin's cycles of theoretical fashion

This diagram captures how new fields emerge: an established body of knowledge is found to be dominating and this provides justification for an intervention. However, in making the corrective, the new inquiry inevitably establishes its own boundaries and, ‘so the cycle begins again’.²⁹ I find this diagram a useful thought aid because it captures how developmental narratives are not only linear but circular to the extent that they forget that which has been achieved and the reasons it was thought necessary, which means the new body of work is likely to run into similar problems that inspired the body of work from which it diverged.

Hemmings recognises this process operating in the context of queer studies and its relationship with feminism. Drawing on her anecdotal experience of a conference at Sussex University in 2013 called (Im)possibly Queer International Feminisms, Hemmings notes the prevalence of virtue signalling whereby participants seemed to be aligning themselves with queer in order to mark themselves out as ‘part of the present and future rather than of a necessarily coopted feminist past’. Hemmings explains this phenomenon by detailing how queer theory became legible as a distinctive method in its articulation of its divergence from a body of work that it called feminism. In the process, sex was ‘proposed as *not gender*, *not only gender*, and *not gender in its heteronormative modes* [and as a result] gender itself became fatally sutured to that heteronormativity’.³⁰ She charts how an overly heterosexualised gender thereby came to stand for the retrograde, exclusionary and bluntly material and queer was left representing by contrast all that is creative, transformative and pleasurable. Her narrative maps onto Wiegman’s argument that in identity knowledge formations, transference between categories occurs as a mechanism for managing rather than engaging disillusionment; critical difficulties get displaced onto the supposed complicity of the former category so that the new, untarnished object can signify that which the former is said to inevitably exclude.³¹

Although, as I will explore in Chapter 1, I have reservations about whether this can fully account for the relationship between queer theory and feminism, I think nevertheless that cycles of theoretical fashion can tell us much about the mood of late queer theory as it adjusts to the writing in the face of internal and external critique. Hemmings describes the year 2016 as still caught up in this process of transference between objects, with the conference attendees out of pace with the ways in which new bodies of work have already developed out of the identifications of queer’s own failings. She writes: ‘one very important

²⁹ McLaughlin, p. 72.

³⁰ Hemmings, p. 85.

³¹ Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 63.

difference to the staging of this relationship in the present is that *both* feminism and sexuality studies have now had their objects roundly critiqued'.³² She further explains that:

Ironically enough, perhaps, it seems that sexuality has become the same kind of poisoned chalice for queer studies as gender has been for feminism. [...] For queer theorists, the price of inhabiting a transgressive, anticapitalist position in the present is the disavowal of the object that brought the field into being. [...] The object turns out to represent rather than dismantle the power relations that contain and constrain that object, and the subjects and fields so associated become similarly tarnished: old fashioned, outmoded, or dangerous and even violent. [...] But something else happens here, too, even if we think it might be a good idea to move away from objects that are about to blow. And this is that there is an over association of power with the objects themselves— and the people who do not want to relinquish them—rather than with the discursive and material power relations that give those objects meaning.³³

Though according to McLaughlin's logic this disillusionment would be both generic and entirely predictable, there is perhaps a specific flavour for queer theory because of how overt it has been about its ability to pair universalising and minoritarian dimension in ways that give it purchase over many domains but not at the expense of the particular experiences of gay and lesbian people. However, as queer theory has come to be tarnished with accusations of false-universalism, a dilemma emerges over whether it would be best to re-centre sex practices and thus accept a narrower and more deterministic framing, or opt instead for broader and less complicit terrains, which would be consistent with queer's founding avant-gardism, but risk in the process displacing those for whom it was supposed to speak. However, even to opt for expansiveness does not fully resolve the problem; Hemmings writes, 'the sprinting away from the proper object of sexuality as fast as one can – for dear, transgressive, and critical life – produces its own crisis since one can only displace sexuality as an object so far' because, without its referent to gay people, there would be little to distinguish between queer theory and deconstruction.³⁴

There is a tendency to downplay the genuine challenge that has been provided by critique along the lines that these conversations do not attack a beloved object but come from those who are committed to its improvement.³⁵ Though this makes sense, it can have the disadvantage of underplaying the ambivalence of those who have been moved to provide a critique in light of their own painful exclusion and have found relief in being able

³² Hemmings, p. 87.

³³ Hemmings, p. 90.

³⁴ Hemmings, p. 90.

³⁵ Wiegman makes this point about women of colour's critique of the category of *women*, writing that 'After all, on what interpretative terms can we read such critiques as a matter of disidentification alone, as if the massive effort by women of colour and lesbians to change the representational dispensation of *women* was expended with no interest in changing the calculus of who was and who was not included in it?'. See Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, pp. 63–64.

to imagine something different. I want to briefly look at a couple of examples of how the critiques of queer theory represent a challenge to the foundations of the queer itinerary, as opposed to improving the object's existing terrain in an additive fashion.

The first example comes from queer of colour critique. There are important arguments to be made that people of colour have always been at the forefront of queer thinking, even if not always under that name.³⁶ I want to look, however, at Cathy Cohen's 1997 article which explicitly defines itself in dialogue with queer theory, arguing that queer has failed to fulfil its radical promise and, going forward it needed to abandon its implicit fascination with white, gay men in favour of an intersectional coalition between 'punks, bulldaggers and welfare queens'.³⁷ Cohen is clearly invested in queer as an object, but a close reading shows that, if queer theory has to be taken on its existing terms, then she would be prepared to take it or leave it. She makes it clear that she is not just calling out a false universalism that could be easily addressed; she is making an argument the effects of which would require a reckoning that would make "queer" feel quite different from that which hitherto has made it recognisable as a distinctive political style.

Specifically, Cohen makes the point that queer needs to make room for family and church; despite the fact that these institutions are notoriously homophobic. Cohen wonders what would happen to queer as a sensibility or structure of feeling driven by righteous indignation in context of the AIDS crisis, if it were to find itself operating under conditions that were not necessarily favourable to the needs of gay men and their specific variant of social alienation. What would queer studies look like, she wonders, if it was no longer able to confidently divide the world up with statements like "I hate straights"? Would queer studies still be able to cohere around a collective political agenda?³⁸ This challenge to the foundation of the dominant queer habitus also maps onto Patrick Johnson's queer of critique challenge which states that, if queer theory has no room for his 'poor, black, eighty-something, southern, homophobic grandmother' then he, as an 'educated, middle-class, thirty-something', is not interested either.³⁹ Giving up on the potential of Queer Studies, he offers the alternative of Quare Studies which would be able to fully accommodate for the fact that when it comes to what his grandmother can teach queer studies the answer is: 'everything. Or *almost* everything'.

³⁶ Often cited in this capacity is Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007) and Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., *This Bridge Called My Back* (New York: Suny Press, 2015).

³⁷ Cathy Cohen, 'Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 3.4 (1997), 437–65 (p. 438) <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-3-4-437>>.

³⁸ Cohen, p. 449.

³⁹ E. Johnson, "'Quare" studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know about Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 21.1 (2001), 1–25 (p. 2) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10462930128119>>.

Others have challenged the foundations of queer theory by pointing out the violence of separating gender and sex. This criticism has come for obvious reasons from feminism but perhaps more unexpectedly has come from transgender and bisexual scholars who have claimed that their experiences fail to be legible without keeping gender as a central term of analysis.⁴⁰ In a challenge which similarly addresses the foundations which the queer project lays down, Steven Angeladis argues for the importance of gender for an understanding of bisexual experience. He asserts that queer theory is hamstrung from the beginning by its animating project of ‘working the hetero/homosexual opposition to the point of exhaustion’ which precludes any earnest consideration of bisexuality as a meaningful reality in the present tense.⁴¹ Though these critiques of queer theory, as well as the two critique of colour articles mentioned above, are in no way representative of what has become a large body of work, I have drawn attention to them because they are instances which make clear that they are challenging the foundational and grounds of queer methods, those that make it most recognisable to itself as a distinctive project. These critiques find a problem at the root of queer theory, forwarding that it only recognises white lesbian and gay people as inhabiting the vanguard position, at the expense of other minoritarian groups which it excludes in the process.

The question for queer theory becomes one of how elastic it can be in its response to internal critique and whether or not this will preclude its ability to remain meaningful as a distinct cultural intervention. In 1993, Butler states that ‘the contingency of the term [queer]’ is key to its definition. She writes that it is ‘necessary [to] let it be vanquished by those who are excluded by the term but justifiably expect representation by it, to let it take on meanings that cannot now be anticipated by a younger generation whose political vocabulary may well carry a very different set of investments?’⁴² This process, of letting the term be vanquished, could be seen in full swing around the turn of the millennium, as evidenced by a flurry of special issues which explicitly sought to problematise the grounds of the discipline and question the necessity of its keywords and assumptions. Critics asked themselves: is sex still the proper object of queer studies?⁴³ Could we have a queer theory

⁴⁰ For influential transgender critique see Ki Namaste, ‘Tragic Misreadings: Queer Theory’s Erasure of Transgender Subjectivity’, in *Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Anthology*, ed. by Brett Beemyn and Mickey Eliason (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 183–203; Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

⁴¹ Steven Angelides, ‘Historicizing (Bi)Sexuality’, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 52.1–2 (2006), 125–58 (p. 150) <https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v52n01_06>.

⁴² Judith Butler, ‘Critically Queer’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1.1 (1993), 17–32 (p. 21) <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-1-17>>.

⁴³ Janet Halley and Andrew Parker, ed., *After Sex?: On Writing since Queer Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

without the valorisation of anti-normativity?⁴⁴ And, what is queer about queer studies now?⁴⁵

However, these special issues remain controversial, and the reason for this would seem to be that critique of queer theory has not just come from inside but has coincided with a right-wing backlash (most of those discussed in this thesis are writing in the context of U.S. politics which has a distinctive set of attributes). The rise of the new right emerged after the election of Ronald Reagan but has continued through the New Democrats' policies of the 1990s and the Compassionate Conservative Republicans of the millennium. Lisa Duggan has pointed out the continuity across these political periods, with their values of free-market capitalism and anti-state-welfare; as well as their tactics of garnering public outrage by, 'attacking the vulnerable outer edges of progressive institutions, at points where public support is weakest'.⁴⁶ Across the 1990s, queer theory became explicitly entangled in the "cultural wars", its publications proving an easy target for sensationalised journalism. Notoriously, Roger Kimball referenced the title of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's conference paper 'Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl', which was then picked up by journalists who adopted the phrase as a short-hand for the outrageous depravity of the academy.⁴⁷ As will be evident in later chapters, this political background makes a non-defensive elasticity more challenging. The local moments that I look at inhabit the difficulty of stepping back to disaggregating run of the mill culture war attacks, from critiques by field outsiders (including student outsiders) and criticisms which, however harsh, come from a place of wanting to forward and expand the discipline and keep it accountable to excluded others.

Pedagogy and student resistance

The final theme that I want to add to the "mood board" concerns the routine labour of teaching theory in the classroom. Leftist, critical pedagogy, with its roots in the student movements, tends to hold high aspirations for teaching as a means of social transformation. Richard Boyd remembers being of a generation that came to classrooms in the wake of these upheavals, 'convinced that I could and would be the ally of my students in our mutual struggle for liberation from the structures of oppression', with teacher and student 'united in resistance, struggling against authoritarianism in all its manifestations and

⁴⁴ Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth Wilson, ed., Special Issue: Queer Theory without Antinormativity, *Differences*, 26.1 (2015) <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2880582>>.

⁴⁵ David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Muñoz, ed., Special Issue: What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?, *Social Text*, 23.3–4 (2005).

⁴⁶ Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), p. 32.

⁴⁷ Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education* (New York: Scott Foresman, 1990), pp. 145–46.

mutually committed to the search for genuine empowerment’.⁴⁸ As I will address in Chapter 5, there is much evidence of the transformative potential of queer pedagogy; however, here I want to focus on how these utopian expectations can be intimidatingly difficult to live up to in practice.⁴⁹ To explore this theme, I draw on a classroom scene from Maggie Nelson’s *The Argonauts* because it opens up a counter-discourse of teaching and ambivalence.⁵⁰ *The Argonauts* covers many themes, notably queer love and pregnancy but, despite the author’s unabashed celebration of her queer and feminist teachers, it also articulates the sometimes weird ways in which identity knowledges track through institutions and are experienced by subjects at some remove from the activist traditions out of which they derive; as a *Guardian* reviewer notes, the book is a tribute to teachers from the perspective of a ‘student and young writer [who] was “forged in the fire” of feminist and queer theory’.⁵¹

An evocative miniature which especially interests me concerns Nelson’s memories of a college course led by professor of feminist theory, Christina Crosby. Christina runs her classroom to a – dare I say – poststructuralist agenda, probing the possibilities and limits of resistance in a Foucauldian universe. In other words, she is committed to queer feminism as a universalising theoretical rubric but also a minoritarian discourse which she dramatizes through her personal style and approach to the classroom – Nelson remembers how her teacher was a ‘radiant and elegant and butch, not stone and not soft’ and a woman who had ‘spent a lifetime complicating and deconstructing identity and teaching others to do the same’.⁵² Like any good teacher of anti-identitarianism, Christina does not come out in the classroom and indeed makes a point of refusing to. However, her principled refusal of disclosure provokes an unanticipated reaction in her students. Notwithstanding its radicalism in the abstract, Christina’s poststructuralism does not *by virtue of content* overturn the structurally enforced power relations of the classroom; these formalised student/teacher relations incite the student body to push back against the teacher’s curriculum irrespective of content.

Nelson recalls how, Christina drove her students wild with desire to solve the mystery of her identity. Contrary to inspiring through her own example, Nelson recalls that

⁴⁸ Richard Boyd, ‘Reading Student Resistance: The Case of the Missing Other’, *JAC*, 19.4 (1999), 589–605 (p. 590).

⁴⁹ Lauren Berlant, ‘Feminism and the Institutions of Intimacy’ in *The Politics of Research*, ed. by E. Kaplan and George Levine (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 143–61 (p. 147).

⁵⁰ Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2015).

⁵¹ Paul Laity, ‘Maggie Nelson Interview: “People write to me to let me know that, in case I missed it, there are only two genders”’, *The Guardian*, (2016) <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/02/books-interview-maggie-nelson-genders>> [accessed 26 January 2019].

⁵² Nelson, p. 58.

those who had been taught by Christina had ‘all wanted her to come out in a more public and coherent fashion’.⁵³ We can surmise that Christina’s epistemological position, avant-garde poststructuralism, is distorted as it is fed through the prism of pedagogic countertransference and reshaped by the institutionally sanctioned position from which it is being articulated. Her students read it as pedantic and withholding. They want to forge their own idioms in resistance. As I explored in the previous section, and as Gerald Graff has pointed out with specific reference to pedagogy, the institution and professionalisation are ‘not neutral principles of organization, but agents that transform the cultural and literary-critical “isms” [which] feed into them, often to the point of subverting their original purpose, or so deflecting them that they become unrecognisable to outsiders’.⁵⁴ The extent of the distortion is brought into focus when one of Christina’s seminar groups stage a coup:

They were frustrated by the poststructuralist ethos of her teaching. They were tired of dismantling identities, tired of hearing that the most resistance one can muster in a Foucauldian universe was to work the trap one was inevitably in. So they staged a walk out and held a class in a private setting, to which they invited Christina as a guest. When people arrived, Christina told me, a student handed everyone an index card and asked them to write “how they identified” on it, then pin it to their lapel. Christina was mortified [...] she’d spent a lifetime complicating and deconstructing identity and teaching others to do the same, and now, as if in a tier of hell, she was being handed an index card and a Sharpie and being told to squeeze a Homeric epithet onto it. Defeated, she wrote “Lover of Babe”. (Babe was her dog, a mischievous white lab).⁵⁵

This squeam-inducing anecdote lends precision to Graff’s warning that, when it comes to institutions, ‘what goes in is not necessarily what comes out’.⁵⁶ Christina’s reaction could easily be read in terms of a quite basic mortification: her teaching has failed. However, Nelson does not seem to want us to interpret this occurrence through that lens. When Nelson hears this story, she ‘cringed all over’, recognising that as a student of Christina’s she too had wanted disclosure. The irony is not that the students fail to take proper note of the curriculum; it seems unlikely that the message would have got through had Christina only better explained poststructuralism. The alternative staged by her students is too neatly the opposite of what she had intended, to be the result of careless listening or distraction.

I find this scene sharply illustrative of the mundane risks of engaged pedagogy because it takes to the extreme the dynamics of classroom resistance that otherwise remain subtle and therefore often barely perceptible. As Boyd warns, ‘as much as we might talk

⁵³ Nelson, p. 59.

⁵⁴ Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 5.

⁵⁵ Nelson, p. 59.

⁵⁶ Graff, p. 5.

about the student-centered classroom, as much as we might try to destabilize traditional lines of authority, power relations in today's [...] classes continue to bear more than a passing resemblance to those hierarchical structures initiated by [traditional practitioners]'.⁵⁷ It is therefore difficult to bypass transference, countertransference and resistance when instructors still 'bestow grades' and therefore 'continue to possess a power that inevitably must be resisted by some (perhaps even all?) students in one form or another'.⁵⁸ Indeed, Boyd disconcertingly suggests that a strong political commitment is more rather than less likely to generate resistance, because resistance is typically proportionate to the firmness of the teacher's agenda. Passionately resisting the teacher's will for seminar conduct, her students formalise its opposite and, presumably unknowingly (hence Nelson's vicarious embarrassment), reinstall the kind of cultural-feminist consciousness raising session which queer politics had sought to learn from and define itself against as an alternative. In some ways this scene is legible through McLaughlin's formalisation of the cycles of theoretical fashion above (Figure 6). However, in this scene the extent to which this is a *cycle*, as opposed to progress, is excruciatingly literal. The students do not seem to possess awareness that their "innovation" is actually consistent with an older identarian model that looks *just like* something with which we have already experienced problems. Nelson is embarrassed on their behalf; for Christina, and for herself.

A final note. Though I have chosen this scene as an exemplification of the challenges of queer pedagogy, it is worth noting that its distinctive affect would make less sense without the background pressures of institutionalisation, the downsizing of the university that increases faculty workload, the right-wing backlashes against campus politics and the complex and unresolved relationship between feminism and poststructuralism. This makes a minor and potentially unproblematic moment like this dense with affect. Moreover, in addition to this, a long tradition of feminism mandates 'a teacher who is infinitely patient, available and confident in her knowledge, an intellectual and sexual role model'.⁵⁹ This bind may explain why Christina takes up the invitation to stay for the activity, despite it representing a 'tier of hell'. She has the power to pull the class back into line, but the contradictory obligations of queer/feminist pedagogy means that she is unable to shut down the class but equally unable to participate enthusiastically. Nevertheless, queer heuristics are not abandoned despite looking and feeling a little different as a style of response. Christina does foreground student need in this scene but, crucially, not to the

⁵⁷ Boyd, p. 591.

⁵⁸ Boyd, p. 591.

⁵⁹ Berlant, p. 147.

extent that this becomes – to borrow from contemporary pedagogy-speak – a student-centred classroom. Christina manages to find a way, without resorting to force, to keep on refusing the terms with which she is presented – she makes good on the students request for identification by declaring that her preference is for her dog. This is in complete accordance with post-structuralist queer methods: ‘deviancy returns from abjection’ writes Alan Sinfield, ‘by deploying just those terms which regulated it in the first place’ and resistance happens when the queer ‘embarrass the dominant by appropriating its concepts and imagery’ which highlights to all that ‘the social order *cannot but produce* faultlines through which its own criteria for plausibility fall into contest and disarray’.⁶⁰ This is a quieter method, one less confident in its ability to distinguish the dissident from dominance but it is nevertheless still recognisable *as* queer method. Indeed, we might read Christina’s name tag identification as a last-ditch attempt at creating a teachable moment.

The range of affects throbbing through this little scene, with its pathos, deprecation and disillusionment, will arise over and again in this thesis. This prelude has been an attempt to delineate some of these tensions, without detangling them in such a way that their difficulties get transcend in the process. My interest, finally, has not been in how they operate individually but in how these incremental changes in context combine in ways that challenge existing methods and imaginaries. Moreover, because they overlap and involve negative feelings of complicity and ambivalence, it is difficult to win the kind of cool distance which could abstract from the jumbled opacity of everyday life to offer some relief. Because I am interested in the quality of the affect more than the relief, I have attempted to make a space for these elements to culminate as an image, a moodboard of late queer theory.

⁶⁰ Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment* (London: Cassell, 1994), p. 17.

PART 1: ACADEMIC OUTPUT

Part 1 comprises two chapters, both of which examine “official academic outputs”. These chapters consider moments when minoritarian and academic discourses overlap and moments when they seem to part ways, linking the latter instances with a sinking feeling. It considers the extent to which this sinking feeling can be expressed within genres that require measurable contributions to knowledge and the relief effect of critique.

Chapter 1: special issues, ground-clearing and the unintended consequences of genre

This chapter approaches special issues, and their introductions in particular, as an independent genre of academic writing, one in which a discursive community comes together to take the pulse of a field or adumbrate a prescient new direction of enquiry. To borrow Anne-Lise François' terminology, we might think of the desire animating the special issue genre in terms of a reluctance that there be 'uncounted experience' or processes that work themselves out without requiring intervention in the form of human powers of articulation.¹ I examine this genre of writing in context of a deluge of special issues commissioned on the turn of the millennium, which sought to question the established "grounds" of queer theory in order to explore the possibility of new directions. These publications each questioned whether queer theory's field-founding assumptions might be problematised without that necessarily generating a paralysing split at the heart of the queer project. I want to focus on two introductions to special issues in particular, one authored by Gayle Rubin and one by Judith Butler.² The stakes of what is a broader trend of disciplinary of soul-searching are heightened in this context because the authors take their own texts as objects of scrutiny – in order to provide what Kadji Amin elsewhere calls 'a reckoning with the field's affective haunting by the inaugural moment of the U.S. 1990s'.³

As well as focusing on the special issue introduction as a distinct genre of academic writing, this chapter is concerned with the difficulties of expressing an emergent late queer style within official academic publications. In the Prelude, I began to explore recent arguments that queer theory's emergence was dependent on a divergence from gender in order to foreground questions of sex. Robyn Wiegman, Clare Hemmings and Janice McLaughlin each insist that this was not a heroic act on queer theory's part; the agency in this shift came from the implicit rules of disciplines which regenerate themselves by mandating such splits. I argue that their descriptions of inaugurating texts of queer texts like *Gender Trouble* and 'Thinking Sex' are accurate but nevertheless underemphasise a

¹ Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. xvi.

² Gayle Rubin's 'Blood Under the Bridge' is the opening essay to a *GLQ* anniversary issue that sought to celebrate 'Thinking Sex'. See Gayle Rubin, 'Blood Under the Bridge: Reflections on "Thinking Sex"', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 17.1 (2011), 15–48 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2010-015>>. I read this alongside Butler's 'Against Proper Objects', an article that examines the reception of *Gender Trouble* and 'Thinking Sex' in terms of what might be considered the 'proper object' of queer studies. This essay which was commissioned as an introduction to a 1994 special issue of *Differences*, and later reissued as the 1997 *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*. See Judith Butler, 'Against Proper Objects', in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. by Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 1–30.

³ Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 177.

complicating factor: though these texts do indeed rely on such institutionalised grammars, the texts render this momentarily coextensive with the lived difficulties of working within the women's movement while not assuming heterosexual personhood. In 'Against Proper Objects', Butler explains that *Gender Trouble* is an artefact of 'the acerbic culmination of [a] history of unease and anger with feminism'.⁴ I do not finally think that it is possible to parse this history from the dynamics of institutionalisation that Wiegman, Hemmings and McLaughlin critique.

Recognising with hindsight that field-founding statements are a technique of institutional legitimisation, both Rubin and Butler use their special issue introductions to call for intellectual modesty and work-practices that emphasise gratitude towards the traditions that enable new work to emerge. However, I argue that these pieces grapple with the challenge of how to honour the extent to which any given project remains dependent on the traditions from which it departs, while *simultaneously* making space for the critical distance and granular distinctions of analytic thinking. In particular, they capture the difficulty of doing justice to this simultaneous need from within a domain of official academic writing that is organised to celebrate and foreground original insight. Both introductions experiment with adding back mundane details that were bracketed in the process of framing *Gender Trouble* and 'Thinking Sex' as critical interventions; however, both also continually come up against the problem of reifying the everyday as they turn their focus to it. This chapter finds that their laudable aspirations for new working practices are implicitly tempered by the anxiety that it might be impossible to throw-out institutionalised critique while still keeping hold of the minoritarian "critical attitude" that has become thoroughly interwoven with it. More evident in pervasive mood than explicit statement, these reflective special issues imply that there may be destructive aspects of left politics that cannot be retroactively repurposed to good ends.⁵

Articulating late queer style in special issue introductions

Butler's 'Against Proper Objects' and Rubin's 'Blood under the Bridge' share a self-conscious distance from their canonical former works, adopting a self-reflexive mood of apprehensiveness about unforeseen consequences. Both begin by explaining that they were commissioned to provide a reflective piece, with the implication that they have been diverted from the generation of new knowledge and been given the permission to consider the afterlives of existing contributions. In this section I argue that in response to this

⁴ Butler, p. 3.

⁵ Elizabeth Wilson, *Gut Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), p. 6.

invitation, Butler and Rubin intervene at the level of collective mood to argue for new modes of enquiry which would better align with the needs of the present, now that queer theory has proven amenable to institutionalisation. They advocate for this new mode by creating some distance from the mood-markers of their field-founding texts; specifically, they reverse some of the ground-clearing which they formerly engaged, in order to retroactively override less salubrious political effects which have become increasingly obvious with time. They add back the complications which were bracketed in framing their projects as critical interventions and insist that establishing solid grounds of inquiry provided closure which was really a fantasy because it required circumscribing the kind of questions asked. Butler writes: ‘to suggest that we “break” with gender always comes at a cost and, perhaps also, with its spectral return. The normative weight of gender is not suddenly thrown off at the moment when we imagine ourselves to be fully identified with what we do’.⁶

‘Against Proper Objects’ opens with a tone of obvious frustration. Butler explains how the essay had originally been an introduction for two interviews for a special issue of *Differences* on the topic of an encounter between feminism and queer theory. She has thought this ‘timely and potentially productive’. Later, she was asked to rewrite her essay as an introduction to a published volume which would include the interviews alongside essay contributions. Having agreed, she is later dismayed to read the essays that her introduction was commissioned to front: ‘I forgot at that moment how quickly a critical encounter gets misconstrued as a war’.⁷ Butler starts by narrating this shock and her subsequent attempt to interrogate its source. The first two paragraphs lash out at what she considers to be poor readers, those who misconstrue immanent critique as an attempt to destroy its object – a group in which the reader may wonder whether they are being (fairly or unfairly) counted. However, the fourth paragraph introduces a sinking feeling, as the accusatory tone turns inwards. In a classically depressive transformation, Butler states with painful simplicity: ‘my own contribution to this debate has perhaps not been as constructive as it could have been and I offer the following words to recontextualise the critique I have offered’.⁸ The opening shows us that damage has been done, though it is uncertain who is at fault. Having “raged” against readers and then “raged” against herself-as-author, the essay shifts into its argument proper as it settles for a site of blame on which both author and reader might

⁶ Butler, p. 3.

⁷ Butler, p. 1.

⁸ Butler, p. 2.

agree: the fault lies not with individuals but with the language and generic conventions of institutionalised critique.

The essay's central concern is the way that minority disciplines instantiate false dichotomies with regards to their domains of analysis. Butler warns against 'those methodological demands which force separations in the interests of canonization and provisional institutional legitimation'.⁹ In an affectively powerful moment, she uses melancholic imagery to express the kind of loss and severance enacted by field-founding statements, writing that:

The institution of the "proper object" takes place, as usual, through a mundane sort of violence. Indeed, we might read moments of methodological founding as pervasively anti-historical acts, beginnings which fabricate their legitimating histories through retro-active narrative, burying complicity and division in and through the funerary figure of the ground.¹⁰

Butler stresses that these "grounds" can only be established through cartoonish versions of existing work, which conveniently allow the author to stage a more expansive future which their project might bring into being. Butler establishes that this 'mundane' practice can have real-world consequences. She describes how it leaves us unable to access the tools we need for holistic analysis. The ghostly imagery is suggestive of the loss: we 'bury' our complicity; the ground on which we stake our claims becomes 'funerary' and, if we determine to break with gender, we should expect its 'spectral return'.¹¹ This accords with McLaughlin's analysis of critical practice. Specifically, McLaughlin argues that 'when whole bodies of work get mislaid or stereotyped there is a danger of forgetting that [...] there are ideas of merit amongst rejected works and that such works influence those texts that present themselves as their replacement'.¹²

Like Butler, Rubin's 'Blood Under the Bridge' waivers regarding who is to blame for the unexpected response to her 'Thinking Sex', but she too ultimately settles on the problematic ways that debates are framed within institutional culture. 'I should reiterate' writes Rubin, that antifeminism was not one of my objectives'.¹³ She explains that, 'while the essay has sometimes been interpreted as a rejection of feminism, I saw it as completely within the best traditions of feminist discourse, particularly the constant self-critical striving toward more analytic clarity and descriptive precision about inequality and injustice'. She

⁹ Butler, p. 24.

¹⁰ Butler, p. 9.

¹¹ Butler, p. 3.

¹² J. McLaughlin, 'The Return of the Material' in *Intersections between Feminist and Queer Theory*, ed. by D. Richardson et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 59-77 (p. 68).

¹³ Rubin, p. 37.

adds that, ‘unfortunately, as time erodes the details of context, such conversations, internal to feminism, are often seen as more oppositional than they were ever intended to be’.¹⁴ There is something similarly melancholic about the image of time eroding the details of context – a point I will return to in the final section of this chapter. For now, though, I want to keep the focus on how Rubin and Butler work to retroactively counter these regrettable effects. Rubin is keen to stress that, in the local conversation to which the paper was speaking, she could safely assume that nobody would perceive her as anti-feminist; it was more likely that the audience’s feminist commitments would mean she would fail to catch their attention. Having been more rather than less successful than anticipated, the special issues retroactively relax more forceful rhetorical devices of the former works and strip them of their mood-markers.

For example, in an argument that echoes Biddy Martin’s argument that queer theory fails to render the ‘figure-ground relationship’ between sex and gender ‘mobile, fluid or reversible’,¹⁵ Butler asserts that ‘the “grounds” of autonomy’ [...] are rifted grounds, a series of constituting differentiations which at once contest the claim to autonomy and offer in its place a more expansive, mobile mapping of power’. She advises that ‘there is more to learn from upsetting these grounds, reversing the exclusions by which they are instated’.¹⁶ As well as these explicit articulations, she intervenes formally to *enact* this rifting of the grounds, showing us that much had to be bracketed for the “queer moment” to cohere. *Gender Trouble* opens with the ground-clearing assertion that, ‘for the most part feminist theory has assumed that there is some existing identity, through the category of women, who not only initiates feminist interests [...] but constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued’.¹⁷ In a deliberate reversal of emphasis, ‘Against Proper Objects’ provides a retroactive elaboration of feminist thinkers who *have* refused a biological definition of gender and the belatedly supplied list is extensive; the individual names build and take up a big chunk of space, which invites us to witness what it looks like when the carefully but artificially constructed figure/ground relationship is allowed to rift. The implication: had these names been admitted in *Gender Trouble*’s opening they would have compromised its ability to look as though it were an original intervention in its field.

Similarly, Rubin’s ‘Blood Under the Bridge’ pointedly reintroduces the tangle of the everyday, upsetting the grounds which allowed ‘Thinking Sex’ to emerge as a forceful

¹⁴ Rubin, p. 37.

¹⁵ Biddy Martin, ‘Extraordinary Homosexuals and the Fear of Being Ordinary’, in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. by Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 109–35 (p. 109).

¹⁶ Butler, p. 25.

¹⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 2.

articulation of the need for a distinct body of literature focused on sex. The infamous 1982 Barnard Conference at which the paper was notoriously read is remembered as staging a paradigm shift, with anti-pornography picketers aiming to censor the “pro-sex” feminists presenting at the event.¹⁸ Rubin, however, retroactively details the non-miraculous elements of the gathering – reminding us, or teaching us afresh, that despite the sensationalism, the conference itself was not much concerned with S&M. Like Butler, she uses an extensive list to reproduce the texture of the mundane reality and interrupt the tendency of the conference to cohere into a precise image. Rubin recalls:

topics addressed in the workshops included Jacques Lacan, abortion rights, gay and lesbian rights, pornography, teen romance, popular sex advice literature, creativity and theatre, artistic vision, butch/femme roles in both gay and straight relationships, class, race, psychotherapy, politically correct and incorrect sex, body image, disability, the sexuality of infancy and childhood, prostitution and psychoanalysis.¹⁹

Editor of the special issue, Heather Love points out that ‘Rubin’s essay begins, “The time has come to think about sex.” These well-known opening words point both to the essay’s timeliness — its intervention in the historical moment of the sex wars—as well as to its potential reanimation across many times’.²⁰ By contrast, ‘Blood Under the Bridge’, which directly follows on from Love’s introduction, blocks transcendent tendencies by stitching the essay firmly to one specific time and place. Rubin reanimates the texture of the everyday, with its stray threads that fail to build into anything in particular: expected topics, like butch/femme and politically incorrect sex do feature but are mixed with topics more readily associated with the other side of the debate (like rights and abortion), and also with topics that seem neutral in this context (theatre, Lacan, artistic vision). Rubin encourages us to recognise The Barnard Conference as not so very different from usual conference experiences: despite an ostensibly unifying theme, the idiosyncratic nature of the research, and motivated self-interest of the participants, means rarely do they cohere into one take-away message.

I want to suggest that Rubin’s technique here shares some affiliation with what Ben Highmore calls a tactic of *re-mooding*. He promotes a method of research that interrupts the strong flavour of key historical moments by adding in complicating facts, especially when these events rely on image repertoires and sensorial mood-markers. Highmore considers

¹⁸ For historical detail on the conference, as well as a consideration of how it has been subsequently narrativized, see Rachel Corbman, ‘The Scholars and the Feminists: The Barnard Sex Conference and the History of the Institutionalization of Feminism’, *Feminist Formations*, 27.3 (2015), 49–80.

¹⁹ Rubin, p. 21.

²⁰ Heather Love, ‘Introduction’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 17.1 (2011), 1–14 (p. 4).

how mood can work to the detriment of progressive politics; “the winter of discontent” provides an illustration:

The fact that late 1978 and early 1979 have been tied to a mood of ‘discontent’, which is realised by trash in the street and the odd sighting of vermin, is the moodful alibi that is used time and time again to explain the inevitability of Margaret Thatcher [...] the winter of discontent which takes on a mythic status and a continual reminder that we would not want to return to that. A cultural approach to mood might see the re-mooding of such historical periods as a particularly useful but hugely difficult task.²¹

The “winter of discontent” is more obviously an example of mood thwarting leftist aspirations than The Barnard Conference. However, Rubin makes a strong case that the conference is constructed through fantasy, with damaging effects. She calls it ‘phantom conference’, the image of which has little to do with the actual content of its reality.²² Highmore suggests that journalistic representations are calculated in opposition to leftist projects; Rubin argues that, when it comes to The Barnard Conference, something of this kind happens *even* if we think of ourselves as sympathetic to the pro-sex side of the debate. Rubin points out that celebratory responses are shaped by the narrative that was produced by the anti-sex feminists picketing the event: ‘whether people supported or opposed the conference’s aims, the exaggerated and inaccurate characterizations promulgated by the [coverage] remain to this day the conference’s dominant legend’.²³

Another technique for re-mooding which Rubin engages, aside from list-making, is the pointed deflation of associations which hold strong collective appeal. For example, as a tool of estrangement, she introduces the conference’s original, less catchy name: “The Scholar and the Feminist IX: Towards a Politics of Sexuality”. Additionally, she jumbles geographical associations which link the sex-wars with the east-coast, by focusing on developments in Australia and the Bay Area. She provides a counter image – a non-image, even – by dividing the so-called sex wars into multiple occasions, flatly labelled: Act 1, Act 2 and Act 3 and, for good measure, she adds that, ‘over the years there have been plenty of mini-Barnards’.²⁴ The facts that she supplies are no doubt true, but I suggest that they can also be read as an attempt at calculated remooding: in her hands, the conference is not an ‘event’ – a remarkable incident which arrives on the scene to touch off a series of occurrences.²⁵ It becomes a non-event, stitched to everyday life.

²¹ Ben Highmore, *Cultural Feelings: Mood, Mediation and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 12.

²² Rubin, p. 25; 27.

²³ Rubin, p. 25.

²⁴ Rubin, p. 35.

²⁵ William Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 227.

She also takes this re-mooding approach to social construction methods. Her paper, and the conference more broadly, is credited with disseminating an exciting new approach to the study of sexuality. For example, confirming the narrative that the conference represented a pre-codified version of queer studies, Butler explains that Rubin's panel presentation occasioned an 'important shift' in her thinking, in part because Rubin was 'waving around' a copy of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* and this was the first time she had seen it.²⁶ Deflating the association between social construction and social justice, 'Blood Under the Bridge' reasons that 'in many respects conventional approaches' and 'ordinary social science tools' seemed radical at the time only because they were being applied to the new and stigmatised context of sex.²⁷ She presses: in conversation, she and Carole Vance agree that 'what is odd is not that social construction theories of sexuality were developed but how long it took' and, by extension her paper was, 'little more than the application of ordinary social science tools to sexuality and gender'.²⁸ Social construction is recast as mundane and even sluggishly slow. Finally, she drives home the idea that there was nothing inherently subversive about her presentation, pointing out that she had first articulated the ideas at prior conferences, where the audience reception had been 'polite' and 'unremarkable'.²⁹ Confronted with this list of what the conference wasn't, it becomes increasingly difficult to imagine what the conference was – if, that is, we still want to retain the idea that it has *some* historical significance. Rubin offers little help to this flailing reader, offering her eye-witness account: 'the common denominator of the workshop was in fact people reading academic papers'.³⁰

Ground-clearing and critique

In this section, I provide my own reading of 'Thinking Sex' to gain a firmer understanding of what Butler and Rubin are reacting *against* in their re-mooding of inaugurating queer theory. This will have two purposes. Firstly, it will help to establish the mood of early queer theory and, secondly, it will help us understand late queer theory which operates as a response to the ongoing effects of the mood-generating capacity of a former period of production. I practice an intimate reading; Jane Gallop claims this approach can defeat preconceived notions of what a text 'will probably say' (enabling me to contrate on mood in addition to propositional content). However, contrary to Gallop, I am

²⁶ Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler, 'Sexual Traffic. Interview', in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. by Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 68–108 (p. 78).

²⁷ Rubin, p. 18.

²⁸ Rubin, p. 18.

²⁹ Rubin, p. 16.

³⁰ Rubin, p. 23.

less interested in ‘short-circuiting preconceived expectations’, than in understanding how Rubin’s paper uses but works in excess of the ground-clearing conventions that professional readers expect critical theory to use in the pursuit of social justice.³¹ Presuming a feminist audience, Rubin could draw on a full range of argumentative strategies, in the hope at least some of them would stick. However, she reflects that, as texts travel to new audiences, time erodes the contextualising detail that shaped the original problem-space and these strategies are taken up in unexpected ways by new readers. Working from the assumption that mood is generated in the interface between author, reader and text, I also make reference to the reception of ‘Thinking Sex’, as articulated by the other special issue essay contributors which are published alongside Rubin’s belated intervention. Rubin’s introduction seeks to loosen the mood of early queer theory, but the other contributors have their own ideas.

‘Thinking Sex’ postulates that feminism’s primary concern with gender oppression means it systematically overlooks the subjugation of those with non-normative sexual preferences, and it calls for a distinct body of knowledge that prioritises sex as its object of analysis. In what follows I consider ground-clearing as a hinge point for mood, which works on well-practiced readers to extend a lens through which to see the world that differs from what is already there. Rubin opens with a historical overview of the lived experience of “sexual perverts”, providing a sweeping hundred-year summary but spotlighting the 1880s, 1950s and the present (1980s) as moments of exacerbated moral panic and state violence.³² This overview guides the reader through the effects of what has been said and done by others and, in reference to their oversights, mounts its own argument, carving out a position from which an original contribution to knowledge can be made. In other words, Rubin’s clears the conceptual ground, making her call for a shift in methodology feel urgent. We are told that ‘all the signs indicated that the present era is another one of those watersheds in the politics of sex’; however, we might have failed to notice what is in front of our noses because it is difficult to understand what is happening in the ‘absence of a coherent and intelligent body of radical thought about sex’ and when our current feminist tools have ‘simply added to the mystification that shrouds the subject’.³³ Swathes of reality are getting overlooked, with the implication that well informed analyses that enhance social justice are being circumvented. As we know from Wiegman, the intended audience for such a paper holds social justice dear and the notion that

³¹ Jane Gallop, ‘Close Reading in 2009’, *ADE Bulletin*, 149 (2010), 5–19 (p. 16).

³² Gayle Rubin, *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 137–45.

³³ Rubin, *Deviations*, pp. 144–45.

feminism might be obfuscating rather than delivering on it creates a collision that might destroy feminism as the esteemed object. As Davis Murray writes in an analysis of what makes a theory successful, interventions which resonate are able to ‘convince [an audience] that the irresistible force of [a] fundamental factor is about to destroy their ideally immovable valued object; in these cases, they will find it ‘far more than interesting – indeed imperative – to understand the fundamental factor in order to control its ramifications’.³⁴

The figure/ground relationship is clearly a metaphor but in the case of ‘Thinking Sex’ there is also a literal dimension also at play. As Rubin gives the overview of the overlooked material out of which her analysis emerges, we might imagine the urban landscape being richly described – populated by shadowy erotic communities that exist in excess of the dominant discourse and in whom we might as feminists find sympathy and solidarity. This population momentarily flashes into view in the essay’s opening, as Rubin performatively adopts a new theoretical lens and, as evidence of ‘witch hunts and purges’ amass which are harming these fragile communities, it quickly becomes obvious that indeed, ‘the time has come to think about sex’.³⁵ Rubin shows us that it is possible to see but also desire a different set of things by adopting a different angle of vision. This accords with Lloyd Pratt’s assessment that queer theory’s ‘most significant offering to date’ might not be its visions of utopian transformation but its aptitude for ‘gaining access to and working on the present’.³⁶ He notes the importance of close reading for queer theory and argues that this practice ‘dilates’ the contemporary and so ‘permits a different future – a liveable future – to come into focus as already with us’.³⁷ Rubin is not a literary scholar, but we can see a similar commitment in her loud promotion of empiricism as a method for what Pratt calls, ‘growing the present and then objectifying the possibilities that make that world legible to us as a possibility in the now’.³⁸

The granular detail with which ‘Thinking Sex’ opens makes other moments stand out by virtue of their scalar expansion. Rubin moves from the empirical-scale detail of her opening to a grander scale of analysis in a moment which is eminently citable and generative of mood because of its sudden cool distance and analytic clarity:

I want to challenge the assumption that feminism is or should be the privileged site of a theory of sexuality. Feminism is the theory of gender oppression. To automatically

³⁴ Murray Davis, “‘That’s Classic!’ The Phenomenology and Rhetoric of Successful Social Theories’, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 16.3 (1986), 285–301 (p. 290).

³⁵ Rubin, *Devotions*, p. 140; 137.

³⁶ Lloyd Pratt, ‘Close Reading the Present’, in *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, ed. by E. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (Albany: Suny Press, 2011), pp. 183–204 (p. 183).

³⁷ Pratt, p. 185.

³⁸ Pratt, p. 202.

assume that this makes it the theory of sexual oppression is to fail to distinguish between gender, on the one hand, and erotic desire, on the other.³⁹

The mood lifts: we are no longer in the weeds, overwhelmed by descriptions of all that has been missed and the violence let to pass as a result. There is a performative common-sense to Rubin's expression here, with its short clauses and sub-clauses, that makes it seem as though it were virtually impossible to have ever thought otherwise. Moments like this represent the exhilaration of high theory, with its capacity to lift us from our inchoate experiences of social hurt to a place where apparently 'we are no longer bogged down by the animations of history, where our subjectivities are not thick with the contradictions, we discern everywhere else'.⁴⁰ The essay begins by declaring that, 'the time has come to think about sex' and ends almost by repetition in its closing assertion that 'it is time to recognise the political dimensions of erotic life'.⁴¹ However, the slight shift here is indicative of the change that the audience should have gone through in their encounter with the paper – things should not look quite the same because, by the essay's end we should *already* be in the process of recognising the erotic dimensions of life and the terms of our reality should have jolted in the process.

My analysis has allowed itself to be swept up in the essay's mood (to be more accurate, it has tried to recapture my first reading experience). But what of the statement that directly precedes the above comment about the division of sex and gender, the one which states: 'the feminist movement will always be a source of interesting thought about sex'?⁴² In 'Against Proper Objects', Butler homes in on this statement, to insist that the more controversial moves of Rubin's essay have been overinterpreted. She asserts: '*According to the logic* of Rubin's argument, sexuality is not more likely to receive a thorough analysis under the rubric of lesbian and gay studies than it is under feminist studies'.⁴³ The accuracy of this statement is complex and in its own way provocative. It is undeniably true that Rubin says that feminism will continue to have things to say about sex; however, Butler's reading can also be considered part of her wider experiment with re-mooding canonical queer texts. As with *Gender Trouble*, she deliberately overrides the mood-marker of an inaugurating text to offer different possibilities for reception, including the kind of reception that would read for logic only. Butler deliberately reads against the affective

³⁹ Rubin, *Deviations*, pp. 177-78.

⁴⁰ Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 122.

⁴¹ Rubin, *Deviations*, p. 181.

⁴² Rubin, *Deviations*, p. 177.

⁴³ Butler, *Against Proper Objects*, p. 13. Emphasis mine.

grain.⁴⁴ This has the effect of showing that the meaning of this now iconic text is not settled just because certain lines of interpretation have become entrenched. I suggest that reading for the text's logic will produce different results than if we allow ourselves to be lifted into the whirlwind of its affect. In the context of critical writing which mandates, as Butler describes so well, divergence to secure legitimacy, some statements come to feel more affectively generative than others. We can of course deliberately read against this grain and for ethical reasons we may want to. However, 'Thinking Sex' does seem to deliberately engage critical conventions, and anticipate audience responsiveness to them, as a means of gaining leverage on a new set of questions. Clare Hemmings describes how training allows us to read certain moves as mattering within academic writing: 'as an editor [...] my reading practices are shaped by the knowledge community within which I operate. When I review articles, my eye alights on certain aspects and not others; some parts of the article stick out, and there is a lot that passes my notice'.⁴⁵ For similar reasons, Rubin's assertion that feminism is a theory of gender oppression rather than sexual oppression stands out and the sentence before is rendered a caveat to what will be the major intervention – the statement which counts. Rubin's crafted language helps the eyes to alight on this moment, helps us see it as a move that could really matter. I would suggest then, that Butler's problem seems to be not so much with "bad" readers but with hypersensitive ones, who take the essay's argumentative rhetoric literally and fail to account for the conditions of production that circumscribe expression. In this regard, as the belated essays more broadly explore, genre can produce unanticipated consequences by amplifying argument in a way that exceeds authorial intent.

My reading of 'Thinking Sex' could be interpreted as a claim (different to Butler's position), that Rubin practices relatively banal moves of institutionalised critique: she finds a "gap in the literature", she uses technologies of affect to make sure that her original contribution to knowledge is recognised as prescient. Such a position might accord with McLaughlin's warning with regards to 'Thinking Sex', which is that 'when whole bodies of work get mislaid or stereotyped there is a danger of forgetting that [...] there are ideas of merit amongst rejected works and that such works influence those texts that present

⁴⁴ Interestingly, Butler speaks of having been trained in a philosophical disciplinary tradition but being more often read in interdisciplinary contexts of cultural studies. It would presumably be less unusual to read strictly for logic in the philosophy than in other locations. See Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 233.

⁴⁵ Hemmings speaks in these terms, with regards to her method for concentrating on commonly held knowledge and points of community agreement, which are established by narrative affect. She writes that 'anyone who has ever published a piece of writing knows that which aspects of an article that are assumed to need referencing, which way ways of telling stories need further explanation or argumentation, are never individual decisions alone. See Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 21.

themselves as their replacement'.⁴⁶ In a sense, I *do* want to suggest that the essay can be read in these terms. However, I maintain that this can be true without that invalidating the work's position as an artefact of a lived frustration with a version of feminist activism that overlooks difference. In other words, I do not think that its legibility as academic discourse precludes it from being an impassioned and performative attempt to bring what is not yet visible into the realm of possibility. I do think that the text enacts splitting and I do think that this matters for any reading of mood. However, accepting that the essay makes sense in these terms need not mean that it is wholly reducible to a performance of disciplinary legitimisation. Janet Halley writes of the stakes of this energising moment of divergence: 'of course these splits have been highly controversial, painful and life-changing for those involved in making them [but] they should be remembered for the sheer joy that they made possible'.⁴⁷

Evidence from the special issue essay contributors helps us to see and theorise how the mood of inaugurating queer texts may be the product of a sudden *overlap* between institutional and minoritarian discourses, with one-dimension authorising and validating the insights of the other. Of the contributions, Lisa Duggan speaks most directly to this because her essay is specifically concerned with the affect of 'Thinking Sex' and its afterlife. Duggan argues that what differentiates Rubin as a scholar is the extent to which anger and love permeate her writing: 'passionate engagements, the working out of problems that matter in the political world, can infuse scholarly work with a connected presence that energizes as well as enlightens readers'.⁴⁸ This is suggestive of an unusual degree of overlap between institutional and minoritarian discourses, with scholarly work getting infused with what are ostensibly non-scholarly affects. Extrapolating, we might say that on the one hand, 'Thinking Sex' is legible as a conventional conference paper, providing a defence of a non-obvious position, but *in excess* of this it provides a jolt that energises readers into entertaining new forms of embodied identification. I would suggest that this quality is characteristic of, though not necessarily limited to, "the queer moment", when minoritarian love and anger is infused with the authorising qualities of critical scholarship in a way that energises readers.⁴⁹ This can be life affirming for those "in the know" but, because of its

⁴⁶ McLaughlin, p. 68.

⁴⁷ Janet Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 5-6.

⁴⁸ Lisa Duggan, 'Love and Anger: Scenes from a Passionate Career', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 17.1 (2011), 145-53 (p. 145) <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2010-025>>.

⁴⁹ Sedgwick seems to refer to this amplification and legitimisation of the personal in the opening of *Tendencies*. She describes the prevalence of cross-gender dressing and the scrambling of gender labels at a 1992 New York Gay Parade: 'It was a QUEER time. It feels queer, and good – I'm sure I wasn't the only one at the march to have this sensation – when the wave of a broadly-based public movement somehow takes over and seems to amplify (amplifies by drowning it out?) the

legibility as academic discourse in the narrower sense, may go over the heads of those more interested in judging its contribution to the existing pool of knowledge. It can operate either way, and both ways at the same time.

It therefore seems to me that Wiegman and McLaughlin are accurate in their descriptions of queer theory as it intersects and draws its power from institutional structures, but their argument underemphasises a complicating factor: the energy and righteousness of early queer critique depends on an accumulation of anger derived from working within movements of the 1970s and early 1980s with which their descriptions of institutionalisation overlap. I want briefly to suggest that overlooking this overlap might help us to understand the impasse that characterises ‘recent controversies over the institutional future of literary studies’ in the ‘reading wars’, which can in turn provide some context for the mood of late queer theory.⁵⁰ Postcritique tends to understand the practice of scrutinising the grounds of knowledge as a cynical practice which has been ritualised by the institution. Critique is deemed highly teachable and also useful for field legitimisation. Those who defend critique, by contrast, seek to recall its roots in a minoritarian response to exclusions and injustice. These conflicting positions tend to end up speaking past one another. Rita Felski’s *The Limits of Critique* is perhaps the most notorious articulation of a post-critical position.⁵¹ In a *PMLA* forum on its reception, Felski reflects on the polarised responses which her book has engendered: ‘I’ve received quite a few e-mails from readers expressing their relief at finding long-simmering frustrations addressed [...]. Yet others do not see what I see. It is not that they disagree about details or take issue with certain points; rather, the picture I draw makes no sense to them’.⁵² She hypothesises that this may be an issue of attunement; critique may constitute a ‘stylistics of existence’ for some, while others consider it one method amongst many possible others.

We can see this talking past one another in Wiegman’s *Object Lessons* and the exchange that it stages with its antagonist and interlocutor Janet Halley, whose book *Split Decisions: How to Take a Break from Feminism* argues for the historical importance of divergence from feminism for many leftist bodies of thought. Though Wiegman is wary of the term postcritique, her assessments map onto some of its basic assumptions. Specifically, she points out how routine argumentative strategies cannot but fail to bring

little, stubborn current of individual narrative obsession, an individual wellspring of narrow, desiring, cathexis and cognition. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. xii.

⁵⁰ Nathan Hensley, ‘Novel Violence: A Narratography of Victorian Fiction by Garrett Stewart’, *Criticism*, 54.2 (2012), 329–42 (p. 340).

⁵¹ Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

⁵² Rita Felski, ‘Response’, *PMLA*, 132.2 (2017), 384–91 (p. 385).

about the changes they promise.⁵³ As explored in the Prelude, Wiegman insists that ‘queer theory is not the agency of sexuality’s transformation from one kind of movement to another; it is the effect of that transformation’.⁵⁴ She views early queer theory less in terms of overcoming exclusions within feminism than as an effect of disciplinary legitimation; disciplinary regeneration is, according to Wiegman, dependent on the elaboration of distinctions between different schools of thought.⁵⁵ She warns that we should not be fooled by the fact that identity knowledges so regularly claim their interventions are on the behalf of social justice. In this sub-domain, such claims are necessary for making an argument that counts. Halley provides the book’s key interlocutor when it comes to understanding how early queer theory staged itself as a break-away project. Wiegman says that, though she is not against divergence per se, Halley’s feminism and queer theory are not equivalent terms; feminism is an activist, pre-institutional knowledge formation but queer theory constitutes the critique of identity from within the university. Wiegman argues that, for all critique’s claims otherwise, as knowledge departs movements and is absorbed into universities, it makes less and less sense to see it as part of a struggle for grass-roots change.

However, Halley’s version of queer critique as articulated in *Split Decisions* is barely recognisable in Wiegman’s terms. Firstly, Halley’s queer theory does not seem especially distanced from activist cultures. In a chapter titled ‘My Complete and Total Lack of Objectivity’, she describes having ‘held every position I describe in this book’ and how shifting between them has been painful and exhilarating because such theories concern ‘relaxing and intensifying forms of life that give us much pleasure and much shame’.⁵⁶ Halley argues that we can develop a politics of divergence as a ‘posture, an attitude, a practice’.⁵⁷ This seems to resonate with a Foucauldian notion of critique as a virtue. He describes the “critical attitude” as ‘the art of not being governed quite so much’ or at least ‘not like that’.⁵⁸ Jennifer Terry, writing in 1991, articulates the excitement that was generated by Foucault’s historical methods because of the activist potential inscribed in the critical attitude or posture. His methods seemed to suggest that marginalised researchers can possess, ‘a strategic awareness of points of emergence or “possibilities” existing at

⁵³ Wiegman has clarified that though she recognises and feels the exhaustion with critique this does not mean that she is convinced by our need or ability to be beyond it. She says that she cannot claim to be beyond it having written a full-length monograph on how it functions. See Tim Dean and Robyn Wiegman, ‘What Does Critique Want? A Critical Exchange’, *English Language Notes*, 51.2 (2013), 107–22 (p. 107).

⁵⁴ Wiegman, p. 121.

⁵⁵ Wiegman, p. 121.

⁵⁶ Halley, p. 12.

⁵⁷ Halley, p. 7.

⁵⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth* (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2007), p. 28; 44.

particular historical moments'.⁵⁹ They may, as a result of their positioning within discourses that exclude them, cultivate a sensitivity to alternative possibilities for expression in a field of contest.

I want to bring this notion of the "critical attitude" into the context of Fleski's comment that for some critique may constitute a, 'stylistics of existence', a deeply etched groove of response that feels essential, indispensable, inevitable'.⁶⁰ This phrasing might be a little spiky for some; widening rather than narrowing the polarisation that she seeks to analyse. However, I want to read her comment in a non-paranoid fashion; what interests me about her turn of phrase is the way that, apparently speaking from one side of the divide, what she says actually maps rather well onto the notion of the critical attitude on which those who defend critique draw. The 'deeply etched groove' of response accords with the idea that the queer subject might possess an intuition, key to their ability to thrive, about the non-inevitability of the reigning discourses and by implication this intuition would be 'indispensable'. This can help us understand *why* Rubin and Butler passionately argue for a change in approach but why the stakes of successfully doing so are highly ambivalent and potentially paradoxical. The critical attitude is amenable, though not fully reducible, to the discourses of disciplinarily institutionalisation.

The reading wars tend to divide people according to camps but this amenability is reflected in the fact that, while 'Against Proper Objects' seems to fit well with the postcritical approach of demystifying routine habits of critical work, elsewhere Butler defends critique as vital for minoritarian survival and an inevitable consequence of discursive formations as mechanisms of exclusion. Following Foucault in defining critique in terms of a virtuous relationship against power, she explains that the critic, 'does not drive to the limits for a thrill experience, or because the limits are dangerous or sexy'; she does so as a consequence of the fact that she 'has already run up against a crisis within the epistemological field in which one lives'.⁶¹ She is describing here what we might recognise as a groove of response, one which is fortunately available to those whose identities fall on the margins, even if the questions that follow risk *deformation* as the subject begins to wonder about that which remains foreclosed and unspeakable. This overlap helps clarify the stakes of late queer methods. Late queer theory constitutes the moment in which the overlap ceases to appear seamless and begins to require reckoning with. Rubin and Butler

⁵⁹ Jennifer Terry, 'Theorizing Deviant Historiography', *Differences*, 3.2 (1999), 53–71 (p. 56).

⁶⁰ Felski, *Response*, p. 385.

⁶¹ Judith Butler, 'What Is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue', *Eipcp*, (2001) <<http://eipcp.net/transversal/0806/butler/en/>> [accessed 11 April 2019].

both want a new kind of writing, but risk throwing out the critical attitude with the bathwater of institutionalised critique.

To return to ‘Thinking Sex’, I want to suggest that it feels inaugurating for the reason that it provides a synchronic image of this overlap at its most seamless: minoritarian attitude and institutionalised discourse are suddenly braided, with one authorising the other to startling effect. Duggan recalls the uncanny effect of witnessing Rubin reading the conference paper on a panel at New York University, analysing dynamics to which she was in the process of being subject. Against the background of rumours about its author’s involvement in lesbian S&M politics in San Francisco, to Duggan’s mind, Rubin physically embodied an experience that her voice simultaneously rendered visible in the process of practicing immanent critique. This gave the presentation a ‘strong affective surround’, only heightened by her iconic visual presence. Duggan remembers looking up at ‘an openly butch dyke in leather’, which ‘was not exactly a professorial look in 1979’ and feeling immediately ‘smitten’ by ‘the electric impact’ generated through the clash of her leather-clad dyke presence and her collaborative mode of panel engagement. Wiegman’s argument is that critique marks the transition of grassroots activism into disciplinary discourse. However, Duggan seems to be describing the reading of the paper as the *moment* of overlap – as opposed to the finished product of a transmutation. She describes the uncanniness of how Rubin, ‘proceeded methodically to lay out and pick apart the assumptions governing the very stigma that would soon wash over her career like a tsunami’. She condenses this crossover through her embodied position, which wrenches the boundaries of the existing discourse by speaking from a position that should not be possible within their terms: ‘There stood Gayle Rubin, in that place of intersecting personal shaming and political attack’.⁶²

I have suggested that ‘Thinking Sex’ can feel like such a crystallisation of “the queer moment” because it spectacularly compresses an overlap between two kinds of discourse. However, I do not want to suggest that this particular mood palate is strictly limited to that text or even that historical moment of late 1980s cultural production. The combination of love, anger and analytic rigor is tonally axiomatic for much of what travels under the sign of identity knowledge in general and “high” queer theory in particular. Another example can be seen in Judith Halberstam’s 1998 *Female Masculinity*.⁶³ Halberstam’s book explores

⁶² Duggan, p. 147.

⁶³ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). Interestingly, Halberstam makes a point of valorising the “low” – especially in later work. Nevertheless, I am drawn to analyse this book for the reason that my women’s studies course introduced queer theory by pairing extracts from Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* with

the gendered and sexual identifications of stone butches, arguing for an analytic that could acknowledge masculinity as experienced in non-male bodies. The book opens by establishing the current grounds of knowledge: lesbian feminist identification is defined against masculinity; masculinity studies' consistently foregrounds the white male. Like Rubin's argument, this piece works from the premise that lived experience is being systematically overlooked because of the foreclosures of the reigning discourses; the author speaks from a discursive location that would not be possible if these discourses were totalising – Halberstam's introduction states: 'although I make my own masculinity the topic of my last chapter, it seems important to state that this book is an attempt to make my own female masculinity possible, credible and real'.⁶⁴ Halberstam shows that it is possible to dilate the present by moving outside of feminist studies and masculinity studies to find that female masculinity is flourishing in popular culture despite its systematic exclusion from "official" knowledge.

Having cleared conceptual ground, Halberstam pinpoints the book's original contribution by smuggling in an affective register of punk rebellion, which is ostensibly improper to an academic writing but actually proves amenable to its underlying grammar. Halberstam has discussed how tomboy Frankie Addams, pictured in the film *The Member of the Wedding*, is subject to a mundane form of violence. Halberstam's book will refuse the logic that female masculinity has no longevity into adulthood, by recognising and ratifying differently gendered bodies missed by both feminism and masculinity studies.⁶⁵ Halberstam's own project will chart its own path by affirming alternative subjectivities:

not by subverting masculine power or taking up a position against masculine power but by turning a blind eye to conventional masculinities and refusing to engage. Frankie Addams, for example, constitutes her rebellion not in opposition to the law but through indifference to the law: she recognises that it may be against the law to change one's name but she also has a simple response to such illegal activity: "Well, I don't care". I am not suggesting in this book that we follow the futile path of what Foucault calls "saying no to power", but I am asserting that power many inhere within different forms of refusal: "Well, I don't care."⁶⁶

This passage is legible as traditional academic discourse – with its conventional language of bringing the overlooked to light – while also evoking a female-bodied but masculine person who is *literally* turning their gaze and refusing the existing terms of identification to clear some breathing space. Halberstam shrewdly channels the voice of a film character to

Halberstam's *Female Masculinity*. My first reading was therefore hyperaware of what a queer heuristic might enable as a style of response.

⁶⁴ Halberstam, p. 19.

⁶⁵ Halberstam, p. 8.

⁶⁶ Halberstam, p. 9.

smuggle in this note of rebellion: “Well, I don’t care” technically belongs to the film character, but the author partakes by association. This moment of ground-clearing implies rebellion from feminist mothers and patriarchal fathers both, who are aligned with the ordinary and the routine by contrast to the punk defiance of youth. There is, I would argue, something distinctively queer about the effect of this passage, with its faith that, by refusing to sit silent in the face of a dominant political programme, we might dilate the present to find a wealth of already existing but obscured possibilities.

A point of articulation

If the mood of early queer texts results from a productive overlap of discourses, *late* queer theory can be thought of as the process of needing to reckon with the effects of this strategic braiding; a reckoning with the unintended consequences of the fact that ‘our expertise, embodied in the representational value of our embodiment, is inseparable from the very instrumentalization of identity we critique’.⁶⁷ The special issue introductions authored by Rubin and Butler explore the unintended consequences of genre, experimenting with how they might formally reduce some of the ongoing effects of the strong affective surround previously produced. However, this final section finds that the retroactive framing is not necessarily felicitous because of the position of the minor in relation to the major text on which it comments. As Highmore specifies, as politically and ethically urgent as re-mooding might be, it is also ‘a hugely difficult task’ when events have become saturated by collective common-sense or desire.⁶⁸ Furthermore, it is important to Rubin and Butler’s ethical project not to provide a replacement in the form of a competingly compelling image.

As explored, Butler and Rubin advocate for writing that would not leave behind the tangle of the everyday in an act of artificial separation, which focuses our attention on one area of concern at the expense of another. Rubin calls this being ‘a foot soldier in the fight against forgetting’.⁶⁹ In the face of time that erodes context, they add back material to reanimate the muddle of disparate material that constitutes experience *before* it has been reconciled in discrete synthesis through critical thinking. Highmore explains that the everyday has a distinctive grammar whereby one experience does not work to block another: ‘the ordinary is characterised as much by confusion as clarity, as much by simultaneity and complexity as discreet separable motifs’.⁷⁰ In the context of late queer

⁶⁷ Wiegman, p. 126.

⁶⁸ Highmore, p. 12.

⁶⁹ Rubin, *Blood Under the Bridge*, p. 17.

⁷⁰ Ben Highmore, *Ordinary Lives* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 2.

studies, it is ethically important to access this obscure temporality because, to borrow Annamarie Jagoses's words, the queer project 'failed to be scrupulous about its messy, flexible and multiple relationships to its past, the critical and activist traditions from which it emerged that continue to develop alongside [it] in mutually informing ways'.⁷¹ However, the methodological problems which ensue in attempts to retroactively install the kind of complexity whereby 'nothing is really in the foreground of experience' is a notorious one for everyday life studies.⁷² Maurice Blanchot stresses that when we try to call attention to non-events, we end up turning them into events by the very act of focusing on them; the everyday 'escapes' when we look at it too closely, 'it allows no hold'.⁷³ This can be seen when Rubin details her regrets about the specificity of 'Thinking Sex's focus. She explains that if given the opportunity she would now include inconvenient facts; details that would have complicated the grounds of the argument set out. For example, she would have stressed the importance of gender over sex for understanding trans lives. However, critique is so compelling precisely because its painstaking differentiation between positions promises to transcend the fusion of the everyday to offer a more rigorous focus. It provides clarity by allowing the blocking of one thing by another, even if this is necessarily artificial. It would have been a challenge to establish a common ground from which to detect a problem, while at the same time giving proper and thorough consideration to the myriad inconvenient facts characteristic of everyday temporalities; Rubin acknowledges that these inconvenient facts, if given proper attention, would have 'exceeded the parameters the essay was so careful to construct' and 'unduly complicated other agendas of the essay'.⁷⁴ These brief and sinking comments capture the difficulty at hand: how to hang on to the exhilarating affordances of critique, while also practicing inquiry that is careful to not enact violence through the exclusions of framing.

Usefully in this context, Wiegman's *Object Lessons* provides an image of what such a venture might actually look like. In her final chapter, she shows us a critique which rifts its own grounds not in retrospect but at the point of composition, taking this far beyond the nods to naysayers that are conventional in critical theory. Wiegman's final chapter performatively narrates the process by which a conference paper that she was in the middle of writing began to fall apart once she allowed the fantasy of closure, enabled by its tight framing, to fail. Wiegman narrates how her argument unravelled as she questioned the

⁷¹ Annamarie Jagose, 'Feminism's Queer Theory', *Feminism & Psychology*, 19.2 (2009), 157–74 (p. 159).

⁷² Highmore, *Ordinary Lives*, p. 2.

⁷³ Maurice Blanchot, 'Everyday Speech', *Yale French Studies*, 73, (1987), 12–20 (p. 14)

<<https://doi.org/10.2307/2930194>>.

⁷⁴ Rubin, *Blood Under the Bridge*, p. 36.

grounds on which her animating questions relied (she had assumed as given that queer theory's object of interest was heteronormativity, but found that this would not stand up to scrutiny once she fully engaged with inconvenient facts). She goes where most of us would not dare. This is a wry chapter, which deliberately provokes the anxieties of her readers so that they can better grasp the "critical sensibility" which she seeks to analyse. She illustrates how, if we were to seriously entertain all inconvenient facts, it would severely damage our capacity to arrive at answers that could satisfy our desires as identity knowledge workers, coming to the insight that her conference paper failed when she allowed herself to acknowledge that she, 'enjoyed the fact that the value of the question lied in what it allowed me to ignore'.⁷⁵ Wiegman's experiment with allowing her paper to fail helps bring out the stakes of Rubin and Butler's reflexive essays; though both are ostensibly acts of retroactive repair which make more durable relations between activist traditions possible, they inadvertently show us what is valuable about critique by refusing to play by its rules and letting us in on what that feels like.

Moreover, another difficulty, in addition to the loss and gain of ground-clearing, is the problem of trying to retroactively rework the major through the minor mode. These special issues, and the tensions that run through them, suggest the difficulty of adopting a minor position within a genre whose purpose and reason for existence is the celebration and articulation of the major contribution. Gerard Genette, for example, writes of belated essays and interviews:

the paratext in all its forms is a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its *raison d'être*. This something is the text. Whatever aesthetic or ideological investment the author makes in a paratextual element [...] whatever coquettishness or paradoxical reversal he [sic] puts into it, the paratextual element is always subordinate to "its" text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence.⁷⁶

In this particular context, without the continued success of the major work, a memorial special would not have been worth commissioning – would not have had much interest and appeal. This paradox is especially evident in the way that 'Against Proper Objects' draws to a conclusion. Butler's essay uses 'Thinking Sex' as a case study for whether we might read and write differently. However, she does not finally forego polemics of the new. To drive home the urgency of her argument, she appropriates some of the *most* polemical moments of Rubin's essay, utilising residual mood but reversing original content. For example, the conclusion to 'Against Proper Objects' echoes Rubin's call that 'the time has come to think

⁷⁵ Wiegman, p. 314.

⁷⁶ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 12.

about sex', but Butler changes it to: 'perhaps the time has arrived to encourage the kinds of conversations that resist the urge to stake territorial claims through the reduction or caricature of the positions from which they are differentiated'.⁷⁷ At another key moment of her argument, Butler appropriates Rubin's iconic: 'to automatically assume that this makes it the theory of sexual oppression is to fail to distinguish between gender, on the one hand, and erotic desire on the other' but she reverses its content: 'politically the costs are too great to choose between feminism, on the one hand, and radical sexual theory, on the other'.⁷⁸ These alterations are funny because they accord with Butler's interest in practices of subversive recitation; however, they are also a tongue-in-cheek way of nevertheless arriving at a firm position that is both rhetorically startling and innovative (i.e. worthy of publication).

Therefore, while the *argument* of 'Against Proper Objects' is that we need a new mode of inquiry, the mood underpinning the arguments tell a less decisive story about the possibility of achieving this aim. I do not think that the matter of its possibility is finally settled, and I want to think about the stakes of its success by drawing on a minor scuffle which finds its way into the editor's introduction to the 'Rethinking Sex' special issue. As mentioned above, the genre brings together a discursive community to take the pulse of the field; Rubin wants, however, to disrupt the premise of a celebratory special issue by practicing intellectual modesty. Other contributors have other ideas. *GLQ* editor Heather Love fronts the memorial issue with her editor's introduction. In it, she recalls the details of the conference for which the articles were originally written. As proper to the professional role of conference organiser (and editor), Love emphasises the significance of the text which is being collectively commemorated. She writes of opening the conference by stressing 'Thinking Sex's role in creating new disciplinary avenues. She recalls her delight at being in the presence of Carole Vance and Gayle Rubin, which was mirrored by an audience of 'nearly eight hundred people' also showing signs of 'palpable excitement'. However, she writes that opening the conference with an assertion that '[Thinking Sex] inaugurated the contemporary field of sexuality studies' proved to be 'not the kind of thing that Rubin could allow'.⁷⁹ Love explains that:

[Rubin] has insisted that the history of the discipline is marked by amnesia and neglect; by emphasizing this point, she demonstrates not only her commitment to the archive but also her remarkable intellectual humility. So while, out of respect, I must withdraw this earlier statement, it still seems to me that "Thinking Sex" must be understood as a

⁷⁷ Butler, *Against Proper Objects*, pp. 24–25.

⁷⁸ Butler, *Against Proper Objects*, p. 18.

⁷⁹ Love, p. 10.

point of articulation for the emergence of sexuality studies. That is to say, the conceptual elegance and forcefulness of Rubin's call for a distinct focus on sexuality crystallized an intellectual and political moment, and so made sexuality studies in the form that we recognize it possible.⁸⁰

This is an amusing and affectively complex exchange; the editor obviously has a responsibility to signal the importance of the text and the authority of its author in the field. However, ironically, Rubin's formidable clout, which partially derives from the success of that text, is deployed to bar just this move – this was 'not the kind of thing that Rubin could allow'. Therefore, while Rubin might 'insist' on humility, Love finds that, even if she 'must' withdraw the statement, the text nevertheless 'must' still be understood as 'crystalliz[ation of] an intellectual and political moment' which made 'sexuality studies in the form that we recognize it possible'. This compromise is one that ironically continues to emphasise the figure/ground relationship which enabled 'a distinct focus' that Rubin is at pains to nuance.

I do not want to overemphasise the significance of this microdisagreement between scholars mostly engaged in the same enterprise. But it might nonetheless tell us something significant about the temporality of book writing. As Gallop theorises, there can be something excruciating about the anachronistic temporality of the printed word, which cannot easily be updated.⁸¹ 'Blood Under the Bridge' points out that 'Thinking Sex' was an occasional piece, not really conceived of in terms of the "once and for all" temporality of the published book. The devices it deploys are on the contrary in service of convincing a specific audience: feminists who come to it with a conviction that they are automatically on the side of progressive politics. Rubin describes in an interview with Butler that she knew she would be up against it when it came to creating the right conditions for mutual understanding.⁸² She explains that, prior to writing 'Thinking Sex', her own commitment to feminism caused her to overlook her growing discomfort with the movement's scapegoating of prostitutes, transgender people and gay men in what was an increasingly conservative political climate. Rubin explains that the tendency to see these groups as handmaidens of the patriarchy made her uncomfortable but it took ten years of counterevidence before this 'started to eat away at some of my preconceptions about how to think about power and sex, and the politics of sex'.⁸³ We can surmise that 'Thinking Sex' will therefore need to simulate what had been for its author a ten-year process of evolving

⁸⁰ Love, p. 10.

⁸¹ Jane Gallop, *The Deaths of the Author: Reading and Writing in Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 13.

⁸² Rubin and Butler, p. 97.

⁸³ Rubin and Butler, p. 80.

understanding – condensing this into a standard-length conference paper. To create ‘some leverage’, she will presumably have to use all of the rhetorical devices at her disposal.⁸⁴ One of the ways she does this is through provocative comparisons. For example: ‘the women’s movement ‘may have produced some of the most retrogressive sexual thinking this side of the Vatican’.⁸⁵ McLaughlin points to this statement as exemplary of the violence of divergence, explaining that it ‘slips between being specific about particular feminists and feminist ideas, and broader generalisations’ and, given the historical context this is ‘a serious and ultimately offensive accusation, with little substance or attempt at grounding in specific analysis or evidence’.⁸⁶ McLaughlin approaches the essay as if it were an attempt to secure the final word about feminism and sexuality. However, if we read it as a situational response which pre-empts a particular audience’s political horizons, we might understand Rubin’s comparison differently. We might see that the Vatican comparison holds *some* truth, but it can also be considered a device which is calculated to force a process of reconsideration: is feminism always *the* site of progressive politics? As Clare Hemmings argues, the narrative constructions that underpin feminist arguments often function by securing a centre and a margin, with nobody wanting to own the centrality; to occupy centrality would make you the antiheroine of the story.⁸⁷ We see this at work in the final two sentences of ‘Thinking Sex’ where Rubin writes: ‘Those who consider themselves progressives need to examine their preconceptions, update their sexual educations, and acquaint themselves with the existence and operation of sexual hierarchy. It is time to recognise the political dimensions of erotic life’.⁸⁸ The essay assumes that its audience’s identification with feminism is strong but that their desire to stay on the side of progressive politics is stronger.

This approach aspires to material but local effects; a crisis in self-understanding and identification that might provide the space necessary for self-interrogation. Another powerful example is Rubin’s declaration that she has a newfound identification with ‘unapologetic heterosexuals’.⁸⁹ This is a startling divergence considering the symbolic function of the lesbian within the women’s movement. As Victoria Hesford argues, the “woman-identified-woman” enabled the movement to take shape, providing a new fantasy

⁸⁴ Rubin and Butler, p. 97.

⁸⁵ Rubin, *Deviations*, p. 173.

⁸⁶ McLaughlin, p. 68.

⁸⁷ Hemmings is cornered with generational narratives of progress and loss which structure the field imaginary and she argues that these narratives work by rendering certain academic subjects the heroine and others the antiheroine who ruin the feminist future. See Hemmings, pp. 78–83.

⁸⁸ Rubin, *Deviations*, p. 181.

⁸⁹ Rubin, *Deviations*, p. 174.

of identification. In this context, political lesbianism represented a new horizon of autonomy and non-complicity; heterosexuality became synonymous with patriarchy.⁹⁰ Though there was debate about whether to extend solidarity to “political-lesbians”, this still maintained a hierarchy – with those more successful in aligning politics and desire afforded greater prestige. Rubin makes what would have been in that context a highly provocative statement, risking her exclusion: she reasons that, in context of a McKinnon-like feminist agenda, from which she finds herself increasingly alienated, she can finally declare that she has more in common with people that might not even be women: male sadomasochists, public sex enthusiasts, drag queens, women working in prostitution and not just heterosexuals but ‘*unapologetic* heterosexuals’.⁹¹ These tactics might be enough to create a crisis in pathways of identification and solidarity; perhaps Rubin presumes that a less startling confrontation might result in no change at all. Indeed, using herself as an example, she shows us that nothing short of a total turnaround is possible. Rubin’s reputation had been built on ‘The Traffic in Women’ – a text notorious for having ‘set the methodology for feminist theory’.⁹² Seemingly without shame, Rubin states, ‘in contrast to my perspective in ‘The Traffic in Women’, I am now arguing that it is essential to separate gender and sexuality analytically to reflect more accurately their separate social existence’.⁹³ Here she favours the temporality of persistent revision, and shows that changing one’s mind can be as much a pleasure as a humiliation; it not only possible but sometimes preferable to dispense with a former position – irrespective of how deeply we suppose our affiliations run.

This contextualises the comments that Love makes when celebrating the essay as a ‘point of articulation’ for a new set of analytic possibilities. Responding to the contingencies of her local situation, Rubin’s paper solves an interesting theoretical conundrum (how to gain some leverage on questions of sex) but it needs in the process to create an audience who is interested in the problem she wants to solve. Instead of wanting to update the text again, in line with this temporality of persistent revision, Love prefers to hold onto the text as a continuing moment which can be reanimated across many times. As Sedgwick writes in a different context, ‘That’s the wonderful thing about the printed word – it can’t be updated instantly. It is allowed to remain anachronistic to the culture of the

⁹⁰ Hesford explains that it had not previously been obvious that there was a connection lesbianism and feminism. This was one of the movements most significant interventions but it was highly contented. See Victoria Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), pp. 81–144.

⁹¹ Rubin, *Deviations*, p. 174.

⁹² Rubin and Butler, p. 68.

⁹³ Rubin, *Deviations*, p. 179.

moment'.⁹⁴ The remnants of the minor skirmish between Love and Rubin, with its banterous self-deprecation, captures how the productive overlap between professional and minoritarian reading has been and continues to be, with regards to organising embodied identification. It proves not only surprisingly productive in its original context but also in contexts quite different those intended. A theorist of historiography and shame, Love does not hold back about her passionate identification with 'Thinking Sex', which relates to 'in the mode of hero worship, archival fetishism, and lesbian, feminist, and queer nostalgia'.⁹⁵ Love concludes her introduction on a determined note, and one which does little to underplay the essay's world-building capacity:

In honouring "Thinking Sex" and the contributions of Rubin and others during the sex wars, we thank them for the work they did in building the world we now live in. This world is a lot different from and better than any world I could have imagined when I was growing up, or even when I was reading those dirty lesbian novels in Paris or poring over records of the Barnard conference in the library. I look to Rubin's writing to imagine what this world might look like ten, twenty, thirty years from now. In this sense, the first words of "Thinking Sex" still sound as urgent to me as ever: "The time has come to think about sex." The time has come; it is coming; it will come again.⁹⁶

Conclusion

In *Gut Feminism*, Elizabeth Wilson draws on the work of Melanie Klein to make a case for 'the necessary place of aggression (bile) in feminist theory'.⁹⁷ She argues that, 'feminist politics are most effective [...] not when they transform the destructive into the productive, but when they are able to tolerate their own capacity for harm'.⁹⁸ I have considered how these special issue introductions explore the (non)necessity of bile, specifically with regards to figure/ground relationships. This is fraught in the case of *Gender Trouble* and 'Thinking Sex', where the splitting used to gain analytic leverage in context of accumulated frustration with feminist activism proved far more effective than either author anticipated at the point of writing. From an object relations perspective, there is relief to be had when we learn that our objects are more than capable of tolerating the aggression we unleash upon them.⁹⁹ However, these ground-clearing works proved surprisingly amenable to technologies of institutionalisation and, resultingly, feminism *was* changed in the process of this encounter. As I explore in the next chapter, whether or not feminism *could*

⁹⁴ Stephen Barber and David Clark, *Regarding Sedgwick: Essays on Queer Culture and Critical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 253.

⁹⁵ Love, p. 11.

⁹⁶ Love, p. 11.

⁹⁷ Wilson, p. 5.

⁹⁸ Wilson, p. 6.

⁹⁹ Donald Winnicott, 'Hate in the Countertransference', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 30.2 (1949), 69–74.

withstand immanent critique would become a topic of serious debate in the wake of such publications. For this reason, it is understandable that Rubin and Butler would be motivated to use the authority they have gained in order to shift the established temporality of the event into something much more ongoing and ambivalent, and, therefore, retroactively reparative. However, as a result these introductions tarry with a ‘buzzing confusion that makes thought impossible’ and ‘a paralyzing apprehension of the inexorable laws of unintended consequences’.¹⁰⁰

I have wanted to explore the paradoxical positioning of the special issue genre within the particular context of late queer production. The genre is able to afford *and* curtail the kind of experimentation that renders the figure/ground relationship fluid. On the one hand, the hyper-reflexivity of the anniversary retrospective gives permission for a different relationship to our objects of analysis: rather than relentlessly producing new knowledge – a dynamic to which, as I explored in the Prelude, we are all subject as academic workers – these authors get diverted from research questions of their choosing to consider afterlives of their former work, the intricacies of which might otherwise have passed beneath conscious awareness. On the other hand, these interventions are held in tension with the affections and identifications of the other special issue contributors; testifying to the fact that, above all, the genre is still an adumbration of potential new directions of inquiry for a growing field, even if it seems to invite a relaxation from this kind of productivity.

Rubin and Butler’s essays both operate within this tension and Love’s insistence that ‘Thinking Sex’ surely needs to be celebrated as a world-building project finally suggests that it may not always be possible nor within the author’s control to repurpose the destructive aspects of our politics to purer ends. In their broader context, these special issues give ample evidence of why this is the case: though divergence maps onto problematic rituals of institutionalised critique, it also maps onto the ‘virtues’ of the minoritarian subject who dares to stand back from coercive discourse to ask whether we might be governed differently. At times, both Butler and Rubin’s essays do forego polemics of the new and find ways of inhabiting a myriad of unprocessed perception, a tangled fusion of material before it is perceivable as something to know. However, this happens in pockets of sinking affect; they do not finally forgo that at which critical theory best excels because, arguing against splitting, they instantiate splitting in the act of arguing for a new

¹⁰⁰ E. K. Sedgwick, J. Halley, and A. Parker, ‘Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 106.3 (2007), 625–42 (p. 637).

kind of practice that diverges from usual practice. The paradoxical nature of this stance means that the basic structure of academic inquiry remains intact and therefore, ultimately, the expertise that derives from embodied experience of oppression stays intimately braided with the discourses of the disciplinary legitimation being critiqued.

I have focused on these special issue introductions because they exemplify the process of re-mooding, thus providing insight into both the mood of *early* queer theory and an emergent “late mood” which deliberately takes up a contrary orientation towards this prior moment. However, I am finally most interested in a mood that does *not* map onto authorial intent but is produced when this ambition to generate new disciplinary moods intersects with the constraints imposed by genre. Though Rubin and Butler both intervene at the level of mood, when read in context of the wider issue of which they are a part, these reflective introductions generate their own mood palate in excess of explicit intervention: intent on repair, they grapple with and express frustration at how to articulate late queer style in a genre that mandates but also celebrates the frighteningly successful but unpredictable impact that splitting dynamics can have on collective embodiment and desire.

Chapter 2: anecdote in the genre of critique

Joel Fineman suggests that anecdote is generically definable as ‘the narration of a singular event’; embedded in overarching historical narratives, it is also ‘the literary form or genre that uniquely refers to the real’.¹ Anecdote characteristically punctures grander narrative meaning. It is not therefore difficult to see why anecdote is seen to fall on the side of the radical and the overlooked. However, this chapter examines anecdotal moments where this order is reversed: queer theory *precedes* subjects,² making it permissible to live a life that inhabits and interrogates the subversive potential of giving up on the claim to a coherent identity, in an embrace of sexed alterity. Made evident by its application in unanticipated contexts, anecdote invites reflection on that which has been neglected in the existing programme of queer studies and incites questions over whether it should therefore shift in response – in ways that do not guarantee to be more subversive than that which is already in place. These anecdotal moments occur at the juncture when an established discourse runs into conflict with other possibilities, creating in the process a crisis for the “queer sensibility”.

For the purpose of this chapter, anecdote will be considered a genre sheltering within the wider genre of cultural criticism – it constitutes its own literary genre, which represents ‘the smallest minimal unit of historiographic fact’.³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s ‘Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading’ notoriously ventures that the reading practices dominating the humanities ‘represent *a* way, among other ways, of seeking, finding and organising knowledge’ [...]. Paranoia knows some things well and others poorly’.⁴ Sedgwick asserts that strong theory – the main argument and central idea which is most amenable to citation – is wide and general. It proves the assumptions that it sets at its outset. Anecdote, by contrast, would seem to come under her umbrella of weak theory because it is primarily concerned with local responses and restricted domains. However, despite this ostensible division, Sedgwick insists that in practice academic writing comingles strong and weak theories; however, the relationship is unarticulated because strong theory is comparatively citable and teachable, and therefore dominates how we understand the significance of our work.⁵ She argues that, despite being systematically misrecognised, strong theory is actually only part of criticism’s appeal: the very ‘breadth and reach’ of strong theory ‘offers the

¹ Joel Fineman, *The Subjectivity Effect in Western Literary Tradition: Essays Toward the Release of Shakespeare’s Will* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p. 67.

² Jane Gallop, *Anecdotal Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 22.

³ Fineman, p. 67.

⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 130.

⁵ Sedgwick, p. 136.

space for a wealth of tonal nuance, attitude, worldly observations, performative paradox, aggression, tenderness, wit, inventive reading, obiter dicta, and writerly panache'.⁶ In other words, weak theory is dependent on the space which strong theory provides; the 'rewards' of weak theory are 'so local and frequent that we might want to say that a plethora of only loosely related weak theories have been invited to shelter in the hypertrophied embrace of the book's overarching strong theory'.⁷ In this chapter, I argue that critical theory can be a useful starting point for accessing the sinking feeling of a queer moment of lateness, even as the teleology of the theoretical narrative is finally structured to squeeze out these moodful moments from the discursive framework.

Drawing on the work of Elizabeth Freeman, Tim Dean and Judith Butler, I look at anecdotes which produce a moment of sudden uncertainty, as living subjects encounter contradictory discourses which offer multiple ways of making sense of and practicing queer thinking. Through illustrative examples, I show that rich discursive contexts force a re-examination of what it would mean to be a 'loyal' queer subject, in light of the paradoxical nature of such a designation. This in turn raises questions regarding whether the broader project of queer studies should alter to 'resolve' or at least address the uncertainty thrown up by the local instance. In each of these texts, local responses *could* inspire new versions of strong theory that might be more adept at handling contingencies – weak and strong theory are thus thoroughly intertwined even if strong theory tends to finally provide some corrective or resolution to the anecdotal material which momentarily enters the discursive framework. This chapter works with Sedgwick's assertion that *critique knows some things well and others poorly*, but brackets the more pejorative connotations of 'poorly' to ask in earnest what the genre of critique might know obliquely, in its anecdotes and asides which appear for the purpose that they will then disappear, as the local contingencies are sublated or incorporated in strong theory's overarching embrace.

Affordances of Anecdote

In context of the history of literary theory, it would be negligent to look at how anecdote functions without considering its notorious use in New Historicism, where the signature practice was to open an essay with an obscure sketch that provided an opening onto history that amplified the argument.⁸ Stephen Greenblatt recalls how only certain anecdotes would produce the desired effect; calculated to 'surprise and baffle', these

⁶ Sedgwick, p. 130.

⁷ Sedgwick, p. 136.

⁸ Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 35–48.

anomalies ‘rel[ie]d] as much on their offbeat content as their formal incisiveness’.⁹ In other words, anecdotal material was selected partially for its anticipated effect on readers – anecdote provided an injection of energy, which could be returned to later in the essay to animate the broader stakes of the argument.¹⁰ For New Historicists, anecdote challenged complacent narratives about the past, plunging the reader into an encounter with strange alterity.

To some degree, texts I here consider likewise use anecdote as a means of accessing an emergent structure of feeling in the present tense. However, part of the appeal of new historicism as an emergent approach in literary criticism was its ambition to undercut the success of high theory of the 1980s and 1990s. Early new historicism tends to be infused with a tone of one-upmanship, promising to shake off stultifying abstractions and return us to the real. Fineman recalls that for this reason new historicism, with its gusty puncturing of the teleological, was received with intense irritation and a ‘yet more eager impulse to reject it in the name of a more secure and ideologically closing approach’.¹¹ This intellectual history means that, when a self-defined theorist undercuts early theory of the 1980s and 1990s, while at the same time showing that they are implicated within it, there tends to be a slightly different affective resonance. This is not to deny that queer theorists have practiced historicist work. For the most part, however, queer scholars have retained deconstructive and psychoanalytic readings to argue that the past is neither wholly other nor wholly assimilable within the complex paths of identification that constitute queer reading.¹² In this disciplinary context, there is strong precedent of anecdote inspiring the pathos of longing and desire across impossible distance. Michel Foucault describes his own thrill and shock at uncovering queer figures in the archives. These obscure persons only become legible in records that detail their annihilation for what to contemporary eyes seem like petty crimes.¹³ Foucault feels overcome by a ‘vibration’ which extends across history in the moment that by chance we learn of a person with whom we might identify, but only as they come into collision with a power that seeks their destruction. Carolyn Dinshaw writes with regards to this essay that ‘even Foucault, the inspiration of social constructionists,

⁹ Gallagher and Greenblatt, p. 51.

¹⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, ‘Writing as Performance’, *Harvard Magazine*, (2007) <<https://harvardmagazine.com/2007/09/writing-as-performance.html>> [accessed 6 March 2019].

¹¹ Fineman, p. 75.

¹² For a summary of queer studies complex relationship with new historicism see Valerie Traub, ‘The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies’, *PMLA*, 128.1 (2013), 21–39 <<https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2013.128.1.21>>. For an explication of a distinctively queer approach to historiography, see Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 21–34.

¹³ Michel Foucault, ‘The Life of Infamous Men’, in *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*, ed. by Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton (Sydney: Feral Publications, 1979), pp. 76–91 (p. 77).

connected affectively with the past [...] collapsing time through affective contact between marginalised people now and then'.¹⁴ I argue that, though the texts I work with indeed partake in the ethical tipping point akin to the new historicist rupture to theoretical coherence, the tone borrows from a drama of specifically queer reader-response. These passages deflate high theory, but author (and perhaps reader, if that way inclined) are implicated in the deflation because the system of knowledge undercut is intertwined in the creation of speaking-acting subjects.¹⁵

I would hypothesise that the small number of anecdotes I look at here, with their sinking affects, are indicative of a wider structure of feeling; an emergent moment in late queer studies when increasingly, to borrow Jane Gallop's words, 'theory finds itself compelled – against its will, against its projects – to think where it has been forced to think'.¹⁶ In order to do justice to this hypothesis, however, it would require the consideration of many more authors. Inspired by new work in literary studies on large datasets, a fantasy version of this chapter would use social science methods to determine the frequency and location of anecdotal material in queer production. However, ironically, the recent turn to big data may derive from the same impulse as does its turn to anecdote; both capturing a collective and widely experienced exhaustion at generalising ambitions, which instigates a turn to the 'concrete'.¹⁷ Ultimately, for this reason but also, admittedly, for reasons of practicality, I am more concerned with reading closely for how anecdotes are formally and affectively positioned within the wider ecology of an overarching argument. I have therefore picked a small number of examples,¹⁸ which I consider especially expressive of the tension between codified queer theory and that which interrupts and threatens to divert its established projects.

¹⁴ Carolyn Dinshaw et al., 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 13.2–3 (2007), 177–95 (178).

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1974), p. 47.

¹⁶ Gallop, p. 15.

¹⁷ This is complicated, however, by the fact that the turn to data is positioned in such a way that its insights are deemed paradoxically more concrete and modest while paradoxically even *more* overarching and complete than theory could manage. For example, see Chris Anderson, 'The End of Theory: The Data Deluge Makes the Scientific Method Obsolete', *Wired*, 23 June 2008 <<https://www.wired.com/2008/06/pb-theory/>> [accessed 7 March 2019].

¹⁸ Other texts considered for inclusion were the changing attitude towards anecdote in the work of D. A. Miller, teaching anecdotes in David Halperin's *How To Be Gay*, and the wealth of anecdotal material produced in relation to the "Gay Shame" conference at the University of Michigan, 27–29 March 2003. I also considered an examination of Sara Ahmed's *Living a Feminist Life*. Some of the millennial special issues are ripe for consideration and would have made a convenient corpus; for example: *After Sex* and 'What is Queer About Queer Studies Now?'.

Superimposed discourse

In its broader argument, Elizabeth Freeman's 2000 essay 'Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations' explores how identity formations can unexpectedly persist across time and reappear in anachronistic ways for which social justice movements should account.¹⁹ I am specifically interested, however, in its opening anecdote: an awkward teaching moment that highlights an incongruity with one of queer studies' supposedly most teachable concepts: drag. In Freeman's article, an unexpected classroom interaction provokes a new avenue for potential investigation, moving away from the iconic association of drag as a tactic of parody and pastiche. Upending associations with progressiveness, it argues that we might think instead of, 'all the associations that the word has with regression, delay and the pull of the past on the present'.²⁰ I want to suggest that, in addition to how the anecdote contributes to the article's top argument, it provides an opening onto a structure of feeling which we might call late queer theory. Despite its temporal index of 1993, a date which we might intuitively associate with high queer theory, lived experience is shown to already impel a contradictory relationship to the discipline's key concepts – even if this interruption will only be publicly articulated a number of years later.

Freeman's anecdotal opening narrates from the grain of the situated, first-person perspective. The author remembers a moment seven years prior, when teaching her first course in Lesbian and Gay Studies. She decides to teach the present as a 'rapidly morphing' moment of 'cross-gender identification'. In illustration both of cross-identification and its relevance to "now", the teacher wears a 'Big Fag' t-shirt and discloses to the class that the choice feels right because she feels at home neither in the lesbians who give potlucks category nor with the dykes who fix cars. Freeman tells us that her younger self was unprepared for the fallout:

A student came to see me in office hours, quite upset. She was in her early twenties, a few years younger than I, but she dressed like my feminist teachers had in college. She stood before me in Birkenstocks, wool socks, jeans, and a women's music T-shirt, and declared that she felt dismissed and marginalized by my comment, that lesbians-who-give potlucks described her exactly, and that I had clearly fashioned a more interesting identity with her own as a foil. I had thought I was telling a story about being inadequate to prevailing lesbian identity-forms, or about allying with gay men, or perhaps even about the lack of representational choices for signalling *femme*. But it turned out that I was telling a story about anachronism, with "lesbian" as the sign of times gone by and her body as an implicit teaching text.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Freeman, 'Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations', *New Literary History*, 31.4 (2000), 727–44 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2000.0046>>.

²⁰ Freeman, p. 728.

Momentarily displaced into my own history of feeling chastised by feminisms that preceded me, yet aware that this student had felt disciplined by my joke in much the same way, I apologized, and a long conversation about identification between students and teachers followed. But what interests me now is the way that student's self-presentation ruptured any easy assumptions about lesbian generations and registered the failure of the "generational" model to capture political differences between two women who had race, class, nationality, and sexual preference in common.²¹

In this instance, this classroom seems to provide a kind of barometer for understanding the contemporary mood, as well as providing the experimental conditions to work out how new cohorts will inhabit theories that were created in different historical circumstances. In this case, the affective intensity of the classroom amplifies dynamics of transmission, misrecognition and unintended consequences and therefore foregrounds an emergent gap between the official discourse (queer theory as drag and cross-identification) and the complex power dynamics of the everyday. It can be surmised that the young teacher had not anticipated that it would be difficult to communicate the energy of queer as a theory of the present. It can even tell us why this particular person would choose this particular shirt; the continuum between theory and experience is almost self-evident. Ironically, however, the instance that was supposed to theorise lived experience is derailed by an unexpected and uncontrollable intrusion of lived experience. This disjunction creates a 'palpable pressure' that sets effective limits on what appears to be sensible, thinkable and politically tenable.²² The gap is dramatized and rendered startlingly clear by the way it maps onto the disparity between intention and effect, that is exaggerated by the confined conditions of the classroom: '*I had thought I was telling a story about*'.... '*But it turned out that...*'.

Staying with the local moment, resisting being swept up by that narrative drive which takes us beyond it, I want to remain focused on this as a discursively rich moment. It presents and represents multiple choices for how to practice queer theory in the present, one more associated with the traversive nature of identity and one more connected to an analysis of embodied intersections of identity. In this scene, one kind of queer theory is in the process of being superimposed upon the other. The passage is deprecatingly amusing, showing us the teacher's own investments in what could happen at such a juncture. The passage dryly implies that disengaging from the student is a tempting way to stay connected to the plan and the structure of feeling to which it seeks to do justice. There is a momentary surfacing of visceral aversion: 'she stood before me in Birkenstocks, wool socks, jeans and a woman's music t-shirt and declared that she felt dismissed and

²¹ Freeman, p. 727.

²² Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 132.

marginalized by my comment, that lesbians-who-give-potlucks described her exactly...'. There is a moment, but just a moment, when it looks as if disconnecting from the student might be an effective way of sticking to the plan.²³ However, this is quickly abandoned: 'I apologised, and a long conversation about identification between students and teachers followed'. The path taken has a certain advantage in the context of student-centred learning and Foucauldian understandings of pedagogy and discipline. The anecdote indicates an intuitive local awareness that within the pedagogic relation it would be improper to disregard the student's complaint and insist on the fluid nature of identity (because of the structural relations, not because of the argument itself). However, the long conversation has the effect of screening out other interpretative possibilities which compete within this scene. The passage highlights that the conversation which took place obscured other possibilities – many years later another investigation takes place which finally uncovers that there is something *else* which interests the teacher/author about this altercation.

This anecdote introduces an affective present tense, in which different discourse formations of queer theory vie. As Barbara Grant writes, 'competition is an effect of the intensely political character of discourse [...], so when some discourses establish themselves as dominant, as natural and commonsense, the marginal others appear as more or less ridiculous, outrageous, unethical, improper or unspeakable'.²⁴ Here, a change in circumstances makes a discourse of fluid identity less ready to hand, less speakable. This is not to suggest that a queer theory which centres practices and one which centres identity need be mutually exclusive; and yet, in this local scene the conflict between these formations seems more terminal than it otherwise might. Grant writes that pedagogy is a highly moralised scene and this means that when student and teacher 'understand self and other through different discourses, they may simply 'talk past' each other' and consequentially 'not recognise each other as 'serious' about their role to the point of finding the other unacceptable'.²⁵ Erica Williams similarly describes how teaching expectations have changed over time, but contemporary times place high expectations on a practitioner's ability to connect self, student and subject matter; contemporary formations require that the teacher has a love of the subject they teach, respects and likes their pupils and, 'is committed and skilled at connecting the two things they care deeply about – their

²³ David Palmer describes how the public exposure of pedagogy means that teachers often find ourselves torn, disconnecting from our students, our subjects or ourselves. See Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Guide for Reflection and Renewal* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017), p. 167.

²⁴ Barbara Grant, 'Fighting for Space in Supervision: Fantasies, Fairytales, Fictions and Fallacies', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 18.3 (2005), 337–54 (p. 350) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390500082483>>.

²⁵ Grant, p. 351.

subject matter and their students'.²⁶ Freeman's anecdote represents a moment where it is difficult to be loyal to subject and student at the same time; however, out of this impasse comes an investigation of new possibilities for how to do queer theory in a way that would not mean disconnecting from this particular student and that which she represents.

Grant argues, drawing on Foucault, that we are all to a degree 'loyal' to particular discursive formations, even if these are necessarily multiple. Discourses objectify certain forms of subjectivity, allowing us to take up speaking/acting positions.²⁷ I want to briefly extend out to consider the paradox of the "loyal queer subject", indexed ironically in the above anecdote, by looking at some further anecdotal evidence which surfaces in Dean's *Unlimited Intimacy*. The book is a 2009 ethnographic study of U.S. barebacking cultural practices.²⁸ I use this to further probe the challenge of keeping inaugural commitments of queer theory going in circumstances where, for multiple reasons, the payoff is less immediate. The thesis of *Unlimited Intimacy* is guided by Gayle Rubin's landmark theory of benign sexual variation – the idea that sex practices should be approached non-hierarchically, with no one practice lauded as more ethical and complex than any other. Dean applies this to the urban sex cultures of gay men but argues for a universal significance of these practices: '[barebacking] exemplifies a distinctive ethos of openness to alterity' and 'we all, gay and nongay have something to learn from this relational ethic'.²⁹ In other words, Dean's book is an argument for the continuing importance of core queer methods for addressing new cultural phenomena – like barebacking, a term which he notes 'barely existed prior to 1997'.³⁰ The book is thus testament to the way that, though alignment with discursive locations are always provisional, the queer itinerary nevertheless was able to and can continue to objectify certain speaking positions; as with the anecdote above, there continues to be something at stake in holding open these discursive locations.

Unlimited Intimacy is an ethnography and so anecdotes, or things that look like anecdotes, figure within it for disciplinary reasons. Indeed, anecdotal material about the author's experiences in sex cultures of San Francisco provide vivid and substantial evidence of how urban encounters can afford pleasure in openness to difference. 1980s queer methods are shown to be both appropriate for bringing out the rich complexity of the present and helpful for cherishing fragile subcultures. However, I am interested in how ethnographic material is interwoven with other anecdotes; those which produce friction

²⁶ Erica McWilliams, *Pedagogical Pleasures* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 49.

²⁷ Grant, 340.

²⁸ Tim Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

²⁹ Dean, p. 176.

³⁰ Dean, pp. 1–2.

with this project of theorising from the ground up. In the introductory chapter, Dean narrates that, when presenting his research, he is interrupted by ‘insistent questions [concerning] the subculture’s racial dynamics’.³¹ He suspects that ‘other questions lurk behind the ostensibly innocent request for more information about subcultural demographics’. His audience, he suspects, is asking for a moral framework. They are really asking whether barebacking is symptomatic of privilege and can be dismissed on these terms; or is sympathy in order, for a disenfranchised group who clearly have nothing to live for. He refuses the implicit terms of the question. Whereas most of the anecdotal evidence shows the spinning up from minoritarian practices to universalising relevance, these anecdotal passages show a clash of discursive frameworks, with inaugural queer positions suddenly feeling less speakable in the present. More broadly, the book indexes what should not need repeating in light of prior queer interventions but apparently does: identity is different from desire, desire is concerned with part objects rather than whole persons, the unconscious is uneducable and always refuses attempts to make it socially responsible. He expresses incredulity about what he sees as a more moralising framework about identity and the limitations of identification around lines of privilege. ‘Sexual minorities’, he writes, have faced such a dispiriting history of demands to make their erotic fantasies and desires conform to more socially appropriate, responsible, or realistic criteria’, and it is therefore, ‘particularly troubling when the same demand comes from someone cognizant of that history’.³²

There is a moment in the book which stands out as tonally similar to the classroom scene analysed above. Though given only the briefest of space, Dean introduces an affectively rich teaching moment. Arguing for the universal relevance of the subcultural sex practices that he analyses, he mentions that, teaching about these urban cruising cultures: ‘*Repeatedly my straight female students assure me* that the kind of contact with strangers advocated by both Jacobs and Delany is too dangerous for women. Yet here is Jacobs, in 1961, arguing the contrary [...]’.³³ As with the above, this shadowy classroom stages competing, and potentially contradictory queer itineraries; one version that centres identity and intersectional approaches; the other foregrounds erotic practices and transgressive identification across boundaries. As minor as this moment is, the instance picks up affective intensity because of the background explicated in the Prelude of this thesis, whereby queer studies has had its objects roundly critiqued and has at the same time faced

³¹ Dean, p. 40.

³² Dean, p. 160.

³³ Dean, p. 182.

a right-wing backlash. Though the students may indeed be drawing on a stereotypical version of liberal feminism encountered in their secondary education or searching for what they guess is the “right” answer, their statements become more loaded in light of this background. This is signalled by the text’s specification that these are not just students but *straight* students; in the world of the text they represent the self-interested ignorance of straight culture, with their ‘repeated’ assurances. This mini-scene is interesting because it is difficult to tell what is informing the students’ ‘repeated’ assurances: perhaps they have a basic idea of liberal feminism and therefore well-worn debates need to be rehearsed in the classroom because for the students they are new. Perhaps, though, these students are like those that interrupt the lectures; perhaps these students are woke millennials who see queer theory as hopelessly out of date.

This classroom foregrounds an affective distance from a “previous” moment of production, during the AIDS crisis, in which traversing identity; the exploration of collectivity *across* difference seemed obviously politically transgressive if the choice were between that and pointing to the boundaries between identities. We might think of this moment as one in which the non-inclusion of women in a scene of analysis need not *automatically* be considered invidious. Speaking of what it felt like to be working in, and contributing to, that moment of change, Sedgwick recalls that the alliance between feminism and antihomophobia suddenly became an active question, one which was ‘most fruitful [when] analytic and unpresuming’.³⁴ In a way that now perhaps smacks all over again of the unspeakable but for different reasons, Sedgwick writes: ‘I know some people have problems with scenes that don’t include them, or that don’t include women [but] I don’t mind them – in fact, some are among my favourite scenes’. The minor moments of anecdotal interruption in Dean’s text indicate that critique of anti-identitarian queer theory has not supplanted these itineraries but has nevertheless shifted the collective sense of what kinds of methods feel intuitive and readily available under the sign of “queer”.

However, though different discourses compete in the present tense of both of these teaching anecdotes, in neither case does one formation fully supplant other relational possibilities. Instead, multiple prospects present themselves in these affectively dense scenes of potential miscommunication, where actors drawing on different discourses may simply ‘talk past’ each other’ and consequentially ‘not recognise each other as ‘serious’ about their role to the point of finding the other unacceptable’.³⁵ I have in mind Michel

³⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, ed. by Jonathan Goldberg and Michael Moon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 172; pp. 196–97.

³⁵ Grant, p. 351.

Foucault's description of how discourse formations become superimposed. He considers how sexuality, once concerned primarily with family alliance, came in the nineteenth century to refer to regulation of bodily practice. However, he stresses that both discourses remained in circulation, even as one established itself as the more intuitive and immediate:

Western societies created and deployed a new apparatus which was superimposed on the previous one, and which, *without completely supplanting the latter, helped to reduce its importance* [...]. One can imagine that one day it will have replaced it, but as things stand at present, while it has tended to cover up the deployment of alliance, it has neither obliterated the latter, nor rendered it useless.³⁶

In both the anecdotal scenes above, we see that one discursive apparatus 'tend[s] to cover up' an alternate mode, pushing the queer teacher in directions other than designed. For example, in Freeman's anecdote, we are shown how the conversation about power-dynamics quite literally blocks consideration of how the queer other is always getting chastised for troublemaking by the woman-identified-woman. Though less explicit in *Unlimited Intimacy*, I can trace a similar overlaying of different interpretative possibilities when I pay reflexive attention to the feeling generated between the text and myself as its reader.³⁷ As a "latecomer" to queer theory, identified at least to some extent with the terms "female" and "student", it would be tempting for me to point out the glaring disparity between the anecdotal evidence that Dean affords himself and the half sentence given to the students (whose experiences are swiftly dismissed with reference to a weighty tome that trumps those experiences). Indeed, this jumped out at me on my first reading. However, I can also step back from this immediate response, to consider how my intuitive line of thought might be operating through the hyperstimulation of one-directional capillaries of interpretation.³⁸ If, for example, I am too quick to point out how this is outrageous, it will cover over other alternative interpretative possibilities, of the kind which Dean is arguing have gone missing. As José Esteban Muñoz points out, for example, though cross-gender coalitions feel urgent and ethically necessary, it is important to keep in mind that when gender inclusivity becomes an imperative it is liable to coincide with heterosexism because such imperatives carry an unchecked assumption that 'a person is understood as incomplete because he or she decides to deal with the specificities of gender and race coordinates without involving the opposite sex', which re-inscribes a 'heterosexist fantasy

³⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. 3 vols (London: Penguin, 1988-1998), i, pp. 106–7.

³⁷ On this method of paying reflexive attention to transference, see Adam Frank, *Transferrential Poetics, from Poe to Warhol* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), p. 2 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctt9qds3q>> [accessed 23 June 2019].

³⁸ This phrasing is borrowed from Sedgwick's description of the consolidation of interpretative pathways, which make alternatives feel dangerous or unethical. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) p. 216.

that the fulfilling of a normative male and female dyad would flesh out the incompleteness of [a project]'.³⁹ Such a reading would require a non-paranoid stance toward the designation 'straight students'. This is not a position which is immediately forthcoming to me in the present but it is one with which is nevertheless not impossible for me to align.

The distinctive mood of these anecdotal moments is generated from the fact that the figures are shown to be implicated in the discursive shifts being described. Lauren Berlant summarises Sedgwick's argument that a specifically queer use of anecdote would refuse pseudo-distancing (which Sedgwick attributes to new historicism) and unapologetically claim its own historicity and erotic investments in its own forwarding of representations.⁴⁰ In the texts I have looked at, a former self is narrativized, who "came up" in a previous context and in alignment with certain methods and orientations, but suddenly finds that what had so recently had such electrifying effects is now having quite different ones. For example, Freeman's anecdote is ostensibly about a student who embodies anachronism. However, the implicit affective power of the anecdote relies on the suggestion that the teacher is *also* anachronistic, having apparently missed the moment when queer theory and queer lived experience seamlessly overlapped. These anecdotal moments signal a parting of the ways between minoritarian experience and academic discourses, a parting which produces a sinking feeling and an excruciating sense of individuation. These anecdotes highlight that, in the moment at least, the crossover between political ambitions and vectors of human desire are not necessarily automatic or always easily harnessed. And of course, the reader is implicated in this sinking too, because if, as it is implied, a historically contingent discursive formation has provided the conditions for the author to speak, then the reader is in the moment of reading the beneficiary of a process which is shown to be highly contingent.

However, as I will explore further in the next section, it is important not to overlook that the pathos of these figures is held in check by an ironic awareness. This irony seems especially key to the affective transition of 'Packing History' as it moves into its main argument. Though the article opens amidst local confusion, the weather quickly clears and by the time we get to the fourth paragraph things are pulled back together and the article begins to explore new avenues for investigation that could incorporate the incongruity. This shift is characteristic of critique's delightful ability to use the concrete moment to

³⁹ José Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers Of Color And The Performance Of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 56.

⁴⁰ Lauren Berlant, 'Evidences of Masturbation', in *Questions of Evidence*, ed. by James Chandler, Arnold Davidson, and Harry Harootyan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 125-131 (p. 128).

illuminate something more generally applicable and therefore useful. Fineman writes that anecdote often has this function in critical writing, it ‘introduces an opening into the teleological’, presenting a rupture to notions of beginning, middle, and end, but the opening ‘is characteristically [...] plugged up by a teleological narration’.⁴¹ The fourth paragraph marks a moment of transition, as we move from the realm of local, weak theory which characterises the kind of thinking on one’s feet that is necessary in the classroom. The tone shifts as the essay moves to label and theorise from the opening anecdote: ‘Let us call this temporal drag, with all the associations that the word has with regression, delay and the pull of the past on the present’.⁴² With this movement we attain analytic clarity and this allows the article to make broader connections, the relevance of which extend out beyond the self and the local instance. Therefore, possessed by the necessary inclination, the essay ends at a point where the disorientation produced by the uncanny detail has been more or less overcome. The relief effect in this case is expressive of the wider affordance of theorising. Drag continues to have political purchase, but it has been modified to better integrate feminism; in turn, queer theory is rendered less exclusionary and therefore is more robust in dealing with a wider terrain.

Convergence and its limits

I have emphasised the commonalities between Freeman’s article and Dean’s book; however, they do ultimately move in different directions in response to the disruptive moment – with, to simplify, Freeman adapting queer methods in the face of contingency and Dean maintaining that established heuristics are as vital as they ever were for analysing new phenomena. I am not arguing in favour of either continuity or change in this instance. I am instead interested in how anecdote represents continuity or change precisely as a *dilemma* unfolding in the present tense; one characteristic of late queer style. To explore this further, I now turn to Judith Butler’s 2004 *Undoing Gender*, which is a prolonged examination of the stakes of incorporation of critique from queer’s alterities.⁴³ Also commenting from/about the year of 1993, Judith Butler asserts: ‘it is necessary to affirm the contingency of the term [queer], to let it be vanquished by those who are excluded by the term but justifiably expect representation by it, to let it take on meanings that cannot

⁴¹ Fineman, p. 72.

⁴² Freeman, p. 728.

⁴³ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004). Butler defines the tradition of immanent critique as the practice of showing how, ‘the presuppositions of one critical enterprise can operate to forestall the work of another’ and she argues that the practice works under the assumption that ‘a movement depends precisely on its ability to incorporate, without domesticating, challenges from its own alterities’. See Judith Butler, ‘Against Proper Objects’, in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. by Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 1–30 (pp. 1–2).

now be anticipated by a younger generation whose political vocabulary may well carry a very different set of investments'.⁴⁴ This comment is a prediction about what may need to happen at some point. *Undoing Gender*, by contrast, self-consciously adopts and writes from a position *within* that moment. However, from within the fabric of that moment, the necessity of that affirmation, of that vanquishing, is far from straightforward. This book, like those considered so far, writes out of a position in which, in response to immanent critique, multiple possibilities present themselves for how to practice queer theory in the present. However, this book is unusual for the genre of critical theory – I look specifically at an anecdotal moment that seems as though it might thwart the book's closure, and the relief effect produced by it. This thwarting leaves the necessity and extent of this vanquishing an open question and, in the process, invites unresolved uncertainty about whether it is possible to have a theory that spoke faithfully to queer experiences while not in the process producing unintended consequences.

If we want to think of anecdote as not only preceding theory but mutually informing it in a dialectical fashion, then *Undoing Gender* provides a good case study. The book demands to be understood in reference to the remarkable (and remarkedly) critical reception of *Gender Trouble* – a reception which informs its argument both implicitly and explicitly. Whereas *Gender Trouble* was concerned with life on the margin of gender and aimed to give dignity to those who draw attention to the artificiality of norms, *Undoing Gender* reverses emphasis to consider how marginalised subjects might *want* to embody the norm when social recognition is a pre-requisite for survival. Donald Hall writes that Butler's later work is a sustained attempt to 'temper [...] the implicit optimism of *Gender Trouble*' and, reacting to the confusions surrounding performativity, her subsequent work, 'repeatedly emphasises constraints on agency'.⁴⁵ Hall argues that Butler's focus is reversed to such an extent that constraint and melancholy are if anything over-emphasised. Janet Halley recognises a similar shift; she too notes Butler's high valuation of immanent critique.⁴⁶ She argues that Butler is concerned with the perfectibility of theory in light of critique, and contrasts this to her own preference whereby theories are hypotheses that manage problems – because there are many problems, there will have to be many theories to move between, depending on our changing needs.

⁴⁴ Judith Butler, 'Critically Queer', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1.1 (1993), 17–32 (p. 21) <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-1-17>>.

⁴⁵ Donald Hall, *Queer Theories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 180–81.

⁴⁶ Janet Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 273–79.

Undoing Gender aims to incorporate critique into queer theory, learning from what others have said to be its exclusions. However, at the same time, it is also concerned that queer theory retain at least some ability to recognise and cherish those who *do* find themselves creating a life on the margins of the prevailing norms of sex and gender. The need to retain this distinguishing feature is mirrored in Stuart Hall's concerns about the institutionalisation of cultural studies. Hall acknowledges that the discipline has multiple histories; however, though it would by definition want to refuse a master-discourse, he says that it must nevertheless retain some specifically with regards to its critical endeavours:

Although cultural studies as a project is open-ended, it can't be simply pluralist [...]. Yes, it refuses to be a master discourse or a meta-discourse of any kind. Yes, it is a project that is always open to that which it doesn't yet know, to that which it can't yet name. But it does have some will to connect; it does have some stake in the choices it makes. It does matter whether cultural studies is this or that [...]. Not that there's one politics already inscribed in it. But there is something *at stake* in cultural studies, in a way that I think, and hope, is not exactly true of many other very important intellectual and critical practices. Here one registers the tension between a refusal to close the field, to police it and, at the same time, a determination to stake out some positions within it and argue for them [...]. That is to say, I don't understand a practice which aims to make a difference in the world, which doesn't have some points of difference or distinction which it has to stake out, which really matter.⁴⁷

Butler's *Undoing Gender* is located in precisely this tension between 'a refusal to close the field' of queer theory and, 'at the same time, a determination to stake out some positions within it and argue for them'. The question is one of how to do political work responsibly, while remembering why one is doing it in the first place. Restlessly seeking out the location of compromise, *Undoing Gender* evidences that getting this balance right requires endurance because there are points where a resolution between agendas will not be forthcoming and it is not always possible to know in advance what will prove enabling and what will harm.

This insistence on the unanswerable, on compromise, can make reading *Undoing Gender* a bit of an ordeal for those accustomed to the unique capacity of critical writing to stake out a position in response to the shortcomings of others and argue for it. The unusual nature of this book is perhaps most evident in its refusal to stake out a thesis in its opening paragraph, which understatedly claims that sometimes the undoing of an identity undermines a person's capacity to 'preserve a liveable life' but other times it creates conditions that have 'greater liveability as its aim'.⁴⁸ As *Undoing Gender* unfolds, it becomes

⁴⁷ Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies', in *Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 277–94 (p. 278).

⁴⁸ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 1.

increasingly apparent that this will not constitute a philosophical exposition with a tight syllogism from premises to its conclusion. To a certain extent this is true of all Butler's works, which tend not to progress logically from one concept to another but instead 'stylistically enact the deconstruction that it names'.⁴⁹ However, *Undoing Gender* endlessly multiplies complexity in a way that suggests that analytic closure might never be arrived at, irrespective of the precision of our tools. This is because, as Butler states in the opening, that the task of social justice movements will now distinguish norms that 'permit people to breathe, to desire, to love and to live' and those that 'restrict or eviscerate the conditions of life itself'. However, the task is complicated because, 'sometimes norms function both ways at once, and sometimes they function in one way for a given group, and another way for another group'.⁵⁰ *Undoing Gender* sorts through which critiques of *Gender Trouble* are valid and which would, if they were to be accommodated into her version of queer theory, prove too detrimental to its commitment to confer dignity on subjects who dare to refuse the prevailing norms. The author painstakingly progresses through one instance of immanent critique after another and these sites of difficulty accumulate. She warns that we will have to be ready to be uncomfortable; she encourages us to cultivate an appetite for 'living with unknowingness in the face of the Other', which is 'finally more valuable than knowing in advance what holds us in common'.⁵¹

If an interrogation of the possibility for convergence is the global strategy of *Undoing Gender*, then there is a striking moment which provides an exception to this rule. In the ninth (one of the final chapters), this policy of responsive elasticity is stretched to snapping point and the author momentarily emerges as an embodied yet unstable figure, whose very embodied fragility is a source of resistance to desired convergence. Having travailed with remarkable endurance through multiple sites of conflict, Butler arrives on the topic of the current state of feminism: 'It seems that feminism is a mess, unable to stabilize the terms that facilitate a meaningful agenda'.⁵² This assertion takes on additional ironies for at least some readers, who will feel how it is electrified by the discursive flows of gossip.⁵³ They will know how thoroughly Butler's name has been blended into the debate described; indeed many a critic has cited Butler as having single-handedly masterminded this mess and we may know that a whole turn in feminism, new materialism, has been

⁴⁹ Salih Sara, *Judith Butler* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 14.

⁵⁰ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 8.

⁵¹ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 35.

⁵² Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 175.

⁵³ Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 20 <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/suss/detail.action?docID=1168382>> [accessed 6 March 2019].

launched off the back of the idea that poststructuralist feminism, attributed to Butler's person, has done much to harm feminism's ability to meaningfully cohere.⁵⁴ However, these details remain implicit, an open secret. Butler begins the chapter with a seemingly impartial recap of feminism's recent history, observing the state of the field with the cool clear-sightedness of an interested outsider: it is 'a sad time for feminism', she observes, 'perhaps even a defeated time'.⁵⁵

Having established the state of the field but observed that such feelings of paralysis need not necessarily be terminal to feminism's aims, she turns to a specific consideration of Rosi Braidotti's call for a politics of feminist affirmation than might repair some of the overreaches of poststructuralism. By this point, we can anticipate what will happen next: coolly, slowly, Butler will sort through which criticisms are justified and which cannot ultimately be sustained because they are too damaging to the project of lending dignity to those living on the edge of gender norms. We expect synthesis because we have already seen this happen in what is amounting to be a dizzying range of examples. However, what we actually get is an unexpected departure from the established approach and, contrary to established expectations, we stumble upon the following anecdotal rejoinder:

My sense is that it would be right to say, as Braidotti does, that I sometimes stay with the theology of lack, that I sometimes focus on the labour of the negative in the Hegelian sense, and that this involves me in considerations of melancholy, mourning, conscience, guilt, terror, and the like. I tend to think that this is simply what happens when a Jewish girl with a Holocaustal psychic inheritance sits down to read philosophy at an early age, especially when she turns to philosophy from violent circumstances. It may also be that I am concerned with survival since I wasn't sure that either my own gender or my own sexuality – whatever those terms finally mean – were going to allow me to be immune from social violence of various forms [...].⁵⁶

In context of that which has preceded, reading this passage for the first time was like walking barefoot onto a shard of glass. Difficult to capture outside of the original context, and hard to re-experience after one's first encounter, this passage nonetheless can be understood to be producing a 'tear' in the broader narrative that the book has been keen to impart. In the eleventh and final chapter, Butler returns to provide a few more coordinates, and in ways that accord with Greenblatt's understanding that anecdote represents that which is, 'incompletely digested by the larger narrative, divulges a different reality, which is behind or beside the narrative surface', Butler locates this scene in a spatially "lower"

⁵⁴ Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 163–80.

⁵⁵ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 175.

⁵⁶ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 195.

plane.⁵⁷ She describes how her education ‘might best be summed up by the picture of the young teenager hiding out from painful family dynamics in the basement of the house where her mother’s college books were stored. [This education] was a radically deinstitutionalised one, autodidactic and premature [...] My emotions were surely rioting, and I turned to Spinoza to find out whether knowing what they were would help me to live them in some more manageable way’.⁵⁸ Coming across this a second time, but now fleshed out with details, helps to give a sense that this “really” happened, in concrete time and space.

There could be a number of reasons for this sudden narrative tear and I don’t want to override its mysteriousness through explication, which would diminish a large part of how it functions affectively. Nevertheless, I want to offer a few suggestions, without implying that the incongruity can be resolved. Throughout her career, Butler has argued for the importance of immanent critique. However, as Annamarie Jagose points out in a different context, though convergence can seem to represent the obvious high ground, it requires both vigilance and sustained self-awareness if we are not to slip into ‘recuperative attempts to rescue and restabilise the favoured term through an incorporation of the once excluded’.⁵⁹ In other words, if not careful, under the guise of inclusivity we can inadvertently install dynamics of primacy, imperialism and false universalisation. Butler’s anecdotal moment could represent exhaustion in the face of the required vigilance: apparently the energy cannot be mustered to argue anything other than the most intuitively obvious: ‘my sense is that it would be right to say...’. Something has been, or is being, set down in childhood, something that cannot be retroactively dislodged through discursive intervention. Butler concedes that ‘this is simply what happens’. Though the author is hardly emphatic; perhaps it is just too much to argue otherwise – this is what she ‘tends to think’.

Another reason, aside from the vigilance required in separating convergence from appropriation, may be that here the text reaches the point at which queer theory has some ‘points of difference or distinction which it has to stake out, which really matter’.⁶⁰ It might be that here she reaches the non-negotiable bedrock to which queer theory must remain accountable and which cannot be addressed discursively. The author gives us the point of

⁵⁷ Gallagher and Greenblatt, p. 51.

⁵⁸ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 235.

⁵⁹ Annamarie Jagose, *Lesbian Utopics* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 16. See also Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ‘Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses’, *Boundary 2*, 12/13.3 (1984), 333–58 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/302821>>.

⁶⁰ Stuart Hall, p. 278.

view of Butler who had not yet become Butler, who is in the middle of the process of trying to discover what she had to do and wanted to do in a world not yet transformed by what she in fact did.⁶¹ Indeed, it is difficult to even address this moment discursively because, as Adale Sholock writes in a broader context, even if the personal ‘not only interest[s] us but also very much influence[s] both knowledge production and reception’, talking about a moment when the author puts his or her body on display can feel like social impropriety or an attack on the person.⁶² However, Butler’s anecdote is highly significant for mood because it ruptures the discursive and the analytically sharable. As mentioned, Butler’s intention is mysterious, but, for me at least, encountering this moment, I am suddenly made aware of the stakes of critique, in ways that shape my encounter with the rest of the book and reshapes what I have already read.

As can be seen through my own melodrama of longing, though Butler’s anecdote works in the new historicist sense of puncturing the narrative (of what is already a structurally disorienting book), in affective terms, my encounter resonates with the queer tradition of Foucault’s writing, such as his description of his own thrill at uncovering queer voices in the archive. He is moved by and implicated in these encounters across impossible distance, noting the irony that we learn of a queer subject’s existence only when they happen to come into collision with a power that seeks their annihilation:

In order that something of this should come across even to us, it was necessary that a beam of light should, at least for a moment illuminate them. A light which comes from somewhere else. What rescues them from the darkness of night where they would, and still should perhaps, have been able to remain, is an encounter with power: without this collision, doubtless there would no longer be a single word to recall their fleeting passage [...]. All these lives, which were destined to pass beneath all discourse and to disappear without ever being spoken, have only been able to leave behind traces – brief, incisive, and often enigmatic – at the point of their instantaneous contact with power.⁶³

In the anecdote from *Undoing Gender*, technologies of the presumed are reversed and “Butler” is momentarily aligned with this history of obscure figures who are confronted by their own annihilation. To my mind, the implication of this anecdote is that to ask this author to further unravel the grounds of her former work would be to pull at the thread of that child’s existence, disbaring the girl from going on to do the work necessary to be

⁶¹ This phrasing is borrowed from Bourdieu, who proposes approaching Flaubert not from the knowing position of today’s literary field, but in terms of the historical conditions so that we can understand what he had to overcome, externally but also within himself, to shape things that we now take for granted because of his interventions. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 205.

⁶² Adale Sholock, ‘Queer Theory in the First Person Academic Autobiography and the Authoritative Contingencies of Visibility’, *Cultural Critique*, 66 (2007), 127–52 (p. 130).

⁶³ Foucault, *The Life of Infamous Men*, p. 79.

legible to herself and those that her work will allow her to find. Perhaps we find ourselves feeling protective of this 'Jewish girl with a Holocaustal psychic inheritance', who is avoiding painful family dynamics by immersing herself in solitary reading for which she could hardly yet be equipped to handle. However, out of context, it is too easy to overemphasise the pathos in this little girl at the expense of the tight construction which gives the passage ironic self-awareness. Butler of course is not really one of the obscure figures which Foucault describes, who are by definition disposed neither to fame nor brilliance and reach us by sheer bad luck. We don't really stumble across the girl by accident; this a crafted and edited passage from a contemporary book rather than the accidental discovery of a voice from the long-lost past. We may be momentarily disarmed, but we are quickly ejected back into a familiar landscape, to tackle 'some unsettled questions between Braidotti's position and mine'.⁶⁴ The chapter then proceeds to dispassionately work through seven conceptual disagreements between these two philosophers. The shift in tone is dramatic: there is an abrupt cut from the image of the young girl reading Spinoza in the basement to the dispassionate authority of the philosopher-with-counterargument. The narrative recovers, proceeding in a highly controlled way, which takes us beyond the tragic myopia of queer childhood, to arrive at some synthesis with Braidotti's argument. This perhaps indexes an ongoing faith in the capacity of critique to, against all odds, allow us to imagine an outside to circumstances that feel set down, given, irrevocable.

However, in other ways, this shift only heightens the pathos of this scene because we abandon the figure in the lower regions as the narrative presses onward. As with the flashing moments that Foucault describes, we are unable to get a full sense of the shadowy scene, which plays out in the present tense, before the text moves abruptly onward. This does not seem like the comically resilient figures of the Hegelian dialectic, of which Butler says she is fond, who encounter obstacles and reversals but 'always resemble themselves, prepare a new scene, enter the stage armed with a new set of ontological insights – and fail again'.⁶⁵ Having momentarily witnessed this opening onto a different reality, we move on, with little evidence that the girl and what she represents have been incorporated back into the forward moving argument. Instead we leave her beneath the narrative surface, in a state of obscurity and without self-recognition.

⁶⁴ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 196.

⁶⁵ Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 22.

The discursive rupture therefore functions as just a passing reminder, temporarily borrowing from this lineage of queer historiography. The anecdote might then be seen as pointing to a limited ability to harness selfhood for our political projects in light of the fact that, as Diana Fuss puts it, ‘the unconscious plays a formative role in the production of identifications, and it is [therefore] a formidable (not to say impossible) task for the political subject to exert any steady or lasting control over them’.⁶⁶ We see the difficulty of stitching political projects to obstinate tendencies over which it is not always possible to maintain steady control. However, the transition at least to a certain extent suggests otherwise; or, at least, it suggests that we might proceed *as if* it were possible to have this steady control. The glitch remains as the briefest of reminders that politically motivated affiliations may, to borrow phrasing, ‘provide finally a very murky relationship to the actual vectors of one’s bodily desires and physiological responses’.⁶⁷

Conclusion

Centring local moments of critical theory text, I have argued that anecdote can provide an opening onto the mood of late queer theory; a moment when codified knowledge is forced to think against its projects in context of unexpected contingencies. The anecdotes which I looked at are concerned with structures of feeling; specifically, they show at least two competing structures of feeling interacting in the present tense of experience. An emergent structure of queer discourse, associated with the intersection of identities and which is agnostic about traversing embodied knowledge is shown to be superimposed on an existing formation – without fully supplanting the former’s importance. This discursive richness of these moments introduces multiple possibilities for queer practice but it also has the potential for creating miscommunications, exerting a palpable pressure on what feels speakable, ethical and intuitively reasonable under the sign of queer.

To an extent the anecdotes examined share qualities with how new historicists famously used this literary convention; to represent an ethical tipping point where the abstractly theoretical is ruptured by a “return to the real”. However, here the author, and the reader by extension, are implicated in the theoretical formation being undercut; there is a dramatization of the critic’s personal implication in discourses and we are shown vivid reconstructions of former selves whose speaking-agency is implicated in their entwinement with these theory-formations. Therefore, though I have considered mood in terms of

⁶⁶ Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 9.

⁶⁷ Donald Hall, p. 179.

structures of feeling represented, I am also interested in a specific mood generated at the level of the text. I would call this mood a sinking feeling, as a gap emerges between experience and codified discourse. The texts which I have looked at show that, though there may be the will to identify new projects in light of palpable pressure, this does not automatically and immediately transpose onto the mysterious vectors of desire that can belie such efforts to harness our epistemic locations to our political ambitions.

This chapter has bracketed the pejorative connotations of Sedgwick's assessment that criticism 'knows some things well and other things poorly',⁶⁸ to focus on what it knows obliquely through its anecdotal, local and weak theory. As Fineman makes clear, in critical theory contexts the rupture introduced by the anecdote is mostly fleeting, foreshadowing a conclusion which has already been written.⁶⁹ Reading against the grain of the texts, I have allowed myself to be swamped by the anecdotal moment, at the expense of conclusion, as a means of accessing immanent mood. H. Aram Vesser acknowledges that the autobiographical can often have these effects in critical contexts, creating a 'startle reflex' because it contrasts with more abstract discourse. He wryly remarks that: 'granted, the autobiographical segment may occupy no more than forty seconds of a forty-minute talk. But the audience will ask questions only about the forty seconds'.⁷⁰ This phenomenon is well known in policy contexts, where it is recognised that a vivid and well-documented case can easily divert attention away from statistical data, however broad-based and logically convincing.⁷¹ Anxiously disregarding the well-rehearsed advice that we 'need to develop the necessary discipline to be intelligent consumers of anecdote',⁷² I have used my own startle reflex as a radar for picking up mood; that which might, if it were not for the permission granted by strong theory, have remained unarticulated – after all, as Fineman tells us, etymologically, anecdote means 'that which is unpublished'.⁷³

However, my approach has admittedly been anxiety inducing, because it reads against one of the key affordances of the genre. For example, Toril Moi argues that the key affordance and appeal of theorizing lies in its capacity to include but finally take us beyond the individual perspective: '[in critical writing] at some point there will have to be some widening of perspective, attempts to universalise' because without this we have 'raw,

⁶⁸ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 130.

⁶⁹ Fineman, p. 68.

⁷⁰ H. Aram Vesser, ed., *Confessions of the Critics* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. x.

⁷¹ John McDonough, 'Using and Misusing Anecdote in Policy Making', *Health Affairs*, 20.1 (2001), 207–12 (pp. 208–11) <<https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.20.1.207>>.

⁷² McDonough, p. 212.

⁷³ Fineman, p. 78, n. 24.

courageous autobiography' but the 'experiences described will not be theory'.⁷⁴ Moi states that within academic writing 'the turn to the personal needs to be justified by showing what problem it solves' and it is 'only when the personal is in service of original thought [that] we experience it as illuminating rather than embarrassing'.⁷⁵ All of the writing which I looked at produces this line of movement towards original thought; though I was interested in *Undoing Gender* as an edge case, where the sublation of the personal remains very much an open question – producing strong affects as a result. As I move into the second part of the thesis, I will expand out from critique to consider genres that do not require that I read against the grain in order to access a structure of feeling that is indicative of queer theory in a moment of lateness. These are genres which do not place such emphasis on this widening of perspective followed by closure which is linked to the arrival of social justice. I thus turn in the rest of the thesis to look at prefaces, critical memoirs and autotheory to examine how these genres lend duration to the shift in mood that I have called queer's late style.

⁷⁴ Toril Moi, *Sex, Gender, and the Body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 165–66.

⁷⁵ Moi, p. 167.

PART 2: PARA-ACADEMIC TEXTS

Part 2 moves out from official academic publications to consider the paratexts of late queer theory that constitute access points to temporalities such as daily, generational and larger scales of time.

Chapter 3: large-scale time in the prefaces of the queer canon

Camp humor is a system of laughing at one's incongruous position instead of crying. [...] I saw the reverse transformation—from laughter to pathos—often enough, and it is axiomatic among the impersonators that when the camp cannot laugh, he dissolves into a maudlin bundle of self-pity.¹

This chapter looks at the delayed prefaces retroactively appended or bearing some relationship to Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*.² Sharing a publication date of 1990, *Gender Trouble* and *Epistemology* belong to queer studies' *annus mirabilis* – they are frequently cited, among a number of other works, as having set the direction or tonalities of an emergent discipline.³ I argue that the later preface has the potential to reconfigure the temporality of the project, opening into longer durations, including the unpredictable reabsorption of “the moment of queer” into more ambivalent and ongoing temporalities.

Writing with a candour perhaps only possible for a text predating the theory wars, Joan Cocks' 1989 book is a reflection on the relationship between political theory and practical life, and the ways in which theory might inform feminist projects. She writes that critical theory tends to work off everyday scenes and becomes a search for categories through which problems can be understood in a 'line of movement from the concrete to the abstract, and the illumination of the concrete by the abstract'.⁴ Theory, she explains, characteristically makes the step of 'detach[ing] itself from the concrete world to determine where the key to that world can be found, and it must sustain the detachment to fathom aspects of the world to which its own participants are blind'.⁵ This motivated detachment is 'the hallmark and condition of its achievement'.⁶ However, having achieved this abstraction, it then has to make contact with the world once again to engage readers.⁷ This broader life of theory can get overlooked because our systems of knowledge are concerned

¹ Ester Newton, 'Role Models', in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject—a Reader*, ed. by Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 96–109 (p. 106).

² I look at the 2008 delayed preface to *Epistemology of the Closet* but also the 1992 preface to *Between Men* which reflects on the author's broader career. Similarly, I look at Butler's delayed 1999 preface to *Gender Trouble* and compare it to the original 1990 preface, but I also include the preface to her 1993 *Bodies that Matter* which can be thought of as a new preface to that book but also a delayed preface to *Gender Trouble* on whose reception it passes comment.

³ In a search for alternative genealogies, Love points out that 1990 is the year that Butler published *Gender Trouble*, David Halperin published *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick published *Epistemology of the Closet*, and Teresa de Lauretis coined the term *queer theory*. See Heather Love, 'Introduction', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 17.1 (2011), 1–14 (p. 2).

⁴ Joan Cocks, *The Oppositional Imagination: Feminism, Critique and Political Theory* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 2.

⁵ Cocks, p. 104.

⁶ Cocks, p. 94.

⁷ Cocks, p. 107.

with the articulatable, demonstrable and useful.⁸ Furthermore, the questions themselves can feel difficult, deadening perhaps, because of the rhetoric which contains our relationship to “impact”, whether that be from the theory wars or the bureaucracy of the institution.⁹ I argue that the delayed preface is attuned to the life of theory in the broader senses – this line of movement between concrete and abstract, and then back again – while also attuned to the difficulties, contingencies and ambivalences of these topics in light of their overdetermination. The delayed preface thus allows us to newly account for the difficulties of thwarted realisation and change that occurs only in the *very* long term.

To provide an illustration of the minor temporalities which interest me here, it is worth referring to Heather Love’s essay contribution to *After Sex*, in particular a casual reference she makes to a synchronous model of time and its influence on the affect of queer theory.¹⁰ Love recalls queer theory’s early ambition to abstract from minoritarian subjectivity, to develop an understanding of sexuality that could concern anyone; an intervention that enabled it to ‘outperform’ lesbian and gay studies. Tacitly drawing on a synchronous model of time, Love recognises that, however successful and important this venture has been, those ‘accreted, embarrassing social categories that may not be real but feel like it’ have continued to represent a ‘gravitational pull’.¹¹ In her anecdote about the diverse and disjunctive experience of lived time, and its role in mediating identity knowledges, queer theory arrives as an event which is profound but not totalising in its effects:

You Can’t Take This Away From Me

No, I don’t mean sex. I can do without it if I have to. It’s identity that I won’t let go of. And in particular – lesbian identity. I have been loving it too long. The wide stance, the longing, the social work, the sluttish classism, the frumpishness, the bad relationships – it’s all too perfect in my eyes. In graduate school, I learnt to distance myself from these experiences, to see them as part of a general history of sexuality. This process of self-abstraction allowed me to go from writing about my problems in my journal to writing about my problems in journals. From a certain angle it can look, even to me, like the theory in my work is professional overlay – a way of dressing up activities and preoccupations that are at heart, extracurricular. My love of queer theory is no less authentic than my love of lesbianism. It is just that it is hard for me to imagine a form of queerness that does not maintain its ties to a

⁸ Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), pp. 20–23.

⁹ Jennifer Doyle writes in similar terms about the topic of abortion. She describes how discussion is easily subsumed by the ‘well-worn grooves of discourse on the subject’, making it necessary not just to analyse works but pay attention to the difficulty of the writing about them. See Jennifer Doyle, *Hold It Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 28.

¹⁰ Heather Love, ‘Queer -- This’, in *After Sex?: On Writing since Queer Theory*, ed. by Janet Halley and Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 180–91.

¹¹ Love, *Queer -- This*, p. 186.

specific experience of sexual identity. Behind my work on affect, historiography, and the social, there is a lesbian lying in bed crying.¹²

As with Bechdel's cartoon from the Introduction, the social subject exists in a kind of "time-knot".¹³ There is a dimension which fits with theory production; here the line of movement is from the concrete to the abstract, with the former illuminating the latter. However, what might seem like the whole story tends to screen-out a lower level of slow change; despite outward evidence of professional clout, there remains, relatively unchanged, the embodied, stubbornly persistent teen-like figure of 'a lesbian lying in bed crying'. Though less gargantuan in scale, Love's imagery is reminiscent of the *Annales school* and their hypothesis that, in shifting our focus to longer durations, 'we find all the heavy thickness of social reality, resistant to all inclemency, to crises and sudden shocks; it is strong in its slowness and its powerful inertia'.¹⁴ This in turn, 'yields a different archive, data of a different nature and scope', which throws into relief 'trajectories and connections that might otherwise have been missed'.¹⁵ And yet, despite how useful this is as a tool for thinking with, Love's anecdote is ultimately also using the concrete to make more abstract points about historiography and queer studies (even if the anecdote is precisely *about* that line of movement). I turn to the preface because it has the formal qualities which can make this line of movement reversible, a sliding scale. The late preface, which is situated 'both inside and outside, both before and after the "book" whose "book-ness" it both promotes and transgresses' is able to index polytemporality by virtue of 'always [inscribing] itself in a strange warp of both time and space'.¹⁶ When it comes to the later preface, the lesbian lying on the bed crying is both continually backgrounded but also continually felt as something which sits "behind" for the duration of the book. And it can be disorienting to be pulled back into these more ambivalent and affective zones; *Gender Trouble* and *Epistemology of the Closet* are both notorious for having *already* been remarkably successful at changing the world in some way, having moved beyond the minoritarian perspective, holding universalizing/minoritizing dimensions in high-wire tension. I argue that the delayed preface enacts a collapse back into undialectical identity politics, which represents a letting down, a deflation but perhaps also a relief which, however momentary, can extend in the background for the duration of the book that the preface sets out ahead.

¹² Love, *Queer -- This*, p. 180.

¹³ Victoria Browne, *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 42.

¹⁴ Fernand Braudel, *On History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 130.

¹⁵ Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 4.

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (London: Athlone, 1981), p. xxxii.

The delayed preface has a number of distinctive generic affordances. I argue that some of these affordances emerge as useful for thinking with, in the context of late queer theory. I think of the preface genre and late queer theory as sharing certain concerns, thus making “preface-thinking” unexpectedly worthwhile.¹⁷ I draw on two preface conventions in particular, both derived from Gérard Genette’s historically broad typology of the genre. The first is his most well-known argument that prefaces represent a ‘threshold’ between text and outside world, a pragmatic zone which is used to guide the reading public towards ‘a better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading’.¹⁸ I then look at his lesser known claim that the ‘the preface is perhaps, of all literary practices, the one that is most typically literary, sometimes in the best sense, sometimes in the worst, and usually in both senses at once’.¹⁹ The preface is, according to Genette, a space for origin stories, self-conscious autobiographical narration, and retrospective reconstruction of a book’s composition. These two affordances – addressing the public and literary narration – are treated separately in Genette’s study but I argue that, in the context of late queer theory, the preface is a useful tool for thinking about how these areas interlink in the aftermath of the project’s ostensible closure. But first, I want to think about how the very act of using a preface in relatively conventional ways, and then belatedly attaching it to the major work can, in and of itself, represent a startling choice because so many features of the preface come in at an odd angle to the concerns of queer foundational work, such as the preface’s naturalisation of origin stories, embodiment and courting of public favour. Though Butler and Sedgwick’s delayed prefaces engage with all of these themes, their prefaces nevertheless explore the ambivalence of their continued significance in the aftermath of apparently successful critiques.

A shift in accent

I want to use the Routledge edition of *Gender Trouble* as a launchpad for thinking about the affordance of the preface in the context of queer studies.²⁰ The 2006 edition contains two prefaces, an original dated 1990, and a delayed one dated 1999. The two prefaces index different historical moments but sit in physical proximity to one another, inviting the reader to notice changes through time. The 1990 text does come with a preface;

¹⁷ I borrow this from Levine’s notion of “verse-thinking”. She is concerned with how available genres or forms are graspable for articulating experience. This is not a case of matching experience to form but rather theorising through available forms. See Caroline Levine, ‘Revaluing Repetition: John Clare’s Verse-Thinking’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 77.1 (2016), 65–80 (p. 78) <<https://doi.org/10.1215/00267929-3331595>>.

¹⁸ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 2.

¹⁹ Genette, p. 293.

²⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

however, it playfully undercuts the genre conventions. Judith Butler introduces herself as a very young and proto-queer girl who is negotiating the opacity of childhood. Butler, narrating from the present, tells us that this girl began to notice that something was awry with the reigning discourses which advise ‘not to make trouble so as to avoid getting into trouble’. This leads that girl to an early and highly fortuitous epiphany: ‘trouble was inevitable and the task, how best to make it, what best way to be in it’.²¹ At first, then, this preface appears conventional. This anecdote is delightfully neat: the origin scene is seamlessly linked to the book’s title, *Gender Trouble*, of many years later. It is as if this had always been the tale that Butler was bound to tell.

However, all is not what it seems. As we read on it turns out that what we actually have is a preface which is deeply inspired by the high-deconstruction of its moment: having detailed the origin story, Butler abruptly dismantles the account, describing how: ‘every text has more sources than it can reconstruct within its own terms’ and to attempt to accurately disclose them would ‘unravel the text’ with ‘no guarantee that unravelling would ever stop’.²² Pressing the point, she explains that ‘although I have offered a childhood story to begin this preface, it is a fable irreducible to fact’. Evidently, the book searches not for origins but ‘the way in which gender fables establish and circulate the misnomer of natural facts’.²³ Readers have been taught important lessons. Firstly, it is possible to side-step obsessive concerns with origins in favour of other questions.²⁴ Secondly, certain writerly conventions, in this case those of the preface, interpellate this particular author in ways that are at odds with the kind of work that she is trying to do. As Jacques Derrida notes of his cultural milieu, in the context of deconstruction it is no longer possible to believe in a book where expectation and recapitulation can merge; ‘it would be ludicrous today to attempt a preface that was really a preface’.²⁵

In 1990 it was ‘clearly impossible to recover the origins of these essays, to locate the various moments that have enabled this text’, but we find a shift in emphasis within the 1999 preface. When the author of the first preface states that it is ‘clearly impossible’ to provide an origin story, this is the equivalent to saying that she will not be giving us one (at

²¹ Butler, p. xxix.

²² Butler, p. xxxiv.

²³ Butler, p. xxxiv.

²⁴ Kevin Ohi notes that queer theorists have tended to be ‘reluctant to touch etiological questions, except to warn of its risks’ because it is ‘perhaps impossible to insulate from the fantasy of homosexual extirpation’. See Kevin Ohi, ‘Revision, Origin and the Courage of Truth: Henry James’s New York Edition Prefaces’ in *After Queer Studies: Literature, Theory and Sexuality in the 21st Century*, ed. by Tyler Bradway and E. McCallum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 102–21 (p. 102) <<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108627832>> [accessed 10 April 2019].

²⁵ Derrida, p. 20. On the influence of Derrida on Butler’s work, see Judith Butler, ‘On Never Having Learned How to Live’, *Differences*, 16.3 (2005), 27–34.

least not one we can finally believe in). In the 1999 preface we get a similar account of the impossibility of origin stories with the important difference that she gives a comparatively earnest account about the book's genesis despite these problems. She writes using what she elsewhere labels the 'embodiment effect': a 'certain kind of writing practice' which 'leads audiences to conclude that they are somehow in the presence of a body in a text' even it is 'unclear [...] that any reader is actually closer to the body of the author by virtue of that kind of writing, though many become convinced that they are'.²⁶ The later preface narrates how Butler, now a young adult, withdraws from the bars and lecture halls to sit on a beach where she engages in the lengthy process of 'wondering whether I could link the different sides of my life'.²⁷ I will analyse this affectively dense scene in further detail below. For now, though, I want to note that here the genre is used against itself not to nearly the same extent. Butler no longer refuses the implicit imperative of the embodiment effect, though she does pluralise the story (this is not the origin narrative given, and then taken away, in the first preface). In the following section, I want to situate this shift in terms of the public-facing nature of the preface.

The field of reception

To preface, in ordinary language use, means to say or do one thing before going on to broach the more important part, to better guarantee that the matter of most consequence will find acceptance. I want to begin an examination of late queer prefaces by considering Genette's influential argument that it is a zone in which the author pragmatically addresses his or her public. The paratext, he writes, is a 'privileged space of pragmatics and strategy', which acts as a 'vestibule' or 'a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (tuned towards the text) or the outward side (turned towards the world's discourse about the text)' and which 'controls one's whole reading of the text'.²⁸ It hardly seems like *Gender Trouble* and *Epistemology of the Closet* need such scaffolding; they are consistently cited as 'providing "the first" feminist critique of sex/gender from a *queer* perspective' as if enacting a decisive break which forever changed how we think about gender and the body.²⁹ However, as Sedgwick writes, it is easy to be tricked by the fantasy of closure necessary to reach an endpoint: 'anyone who's quick at all – verbally and conceptually – is liable to develop grandiose delusions of magical omnipotence in relation

²⁶ Judith Butler and Bronwyn Davies, *Judith Butler in Conversation: Analyzing the Texts and Talk of Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 16-17.

²⁷ Butler, p. xvii.

²⁸ Genette, p. 2.

²⁹ Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 107.

to language', she writes, because 'speech and writing and conceptual thought impose no material obstacles to a fantasy of instant, limitless efficacy'.³⁰ The later preface can, I want to suggest, provide a different story, an opening up of 'the process of realisation in all its real, obscure temporality'.³¹

Sedgwick contrasts the efficacy of propositional knowledge against other materials, textiles in particular, which regularly frustrate by 'press[ing] back so reliably, so palpably, against [the thinker's] efforts to shape them according to the models [which have been] conceived'.³² I want to think of the language of the preface as in some ways similarly attuned to palpable push-back, specifically with regards to the reading public whose felt-presence it brings in proximity to the text. As Genette writes, the author of a delayed preface 'never approaches a new public without having more or less strongly felt the reaction of the first one'.³³ He notes that the later preface is typically a response to having 'felt in particular the reaction of the kind of reader who is hardly likely to take another look and correct himself on the occasion of a new edition' and observes that therefore the tone is often reminiscent of the public trial.³⁴ Authors who face 'inquisitorial or persecutorial' criticism tend, according to Genette, to be 'constrained to base their [preface] pleas more often than not on what is likely to gain acquittal than on what they really think'.³⁵ We can see this dynamic through the tonal contrast between the later preface and the main texts of *Gender Trouble* and *Epistemology of the Closet*, specifically with regards to the way that the preface's language seems to incorporate and be transmuted by the response of imagined readers whose presence shapes the texture of the writing.

For example, the 2008 preface to *Epistemology of the Closet* expresses a changed relationship with an anticipated reader. Sedgwick recalls her original decision not to identify herself as either heterosexual or lesbian, describing this as 'a refusal to pretend to make sense within a bifurcated discourse that did not make any sense of me'.³⁶ She explains that this decision to remain "closeted" was also a curiosity-driven experiment: 'I thought some readers would join me in finding the working-out of the experiment educative and oddly funny. And I pictured making a few heads explode'.³⁷ Whereas this is left unsaid in the

³⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, ed. by Jonathan Goldberg and Michael Moon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 79.

³¹ Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, p. 210.

³² Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, p. 83.

³³ Genette, p. 239.

³⁴ Genette discusses authors that were subject to actual trials because of obscenity laws, such as Flaubert and Nabokov. This has interesting implications in terms the queerness of prefaces. See Genette, p. 246.

³⁵ Genette, pp. 241–42.

³⁶ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. xvii.

³⁷ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. xviii.

original, here we have a retroactive clarification of intent, which is funny in itself but it does make it impossible to inhabit the position of the desired reader who could *intuitively* join her in this gleeful experiment that divides along the lines of those who can get it and those whose heads explode. She provides instead the sinking comment: ‘I’m willing to say nowadays that when I’ve had sex with another person, it has been with a man. (Climatic revelation)’.³⁸ She follows the revelation with the wistful note: ‘yet there still seems to me something telling in the different choice the book made in its time’.³⁹ This might be the difference between desired reader and having actually felt in particular the reaction of many non-ideal readers. According to Sedgwick’s own formulation, it is rare to get this sense of palpable pushback in the written form where, unlike textiles or verbal conversations, the relationship between intention and effect is mostly chronically delayed and therefore often invisible in the composition; the belated preface may be something of an exception to this rule.

In comparison to the texts to which they are attached, the language of the delayed prefaces are shot through with dialogic reverberations in the form of quick-fire rebuffs to anticipated false readings. We might think of these reverberations in terms of the re-entry of a polyphony of ideologically diverse voices.⁴⁰ This is an infiltration from the public facing side which the preface brings into proximity by virtue of being ‘a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (tuned towards the text) or the outward side (turned towards the world’s discourse about the text)’.⁴¹ For example, Sedgwick is proud to assert that *Epistemology of the Closet* anticipated queer theory by rejecting the premature fixing of hetero/homo categorisations. However, as if instantaneously anticipating reader response, the text directly follows with: ‘this resistance is not a matter of airily wanting to ignore the “facts of life” in their materiality’.⁴² It is as if an alien language, a language from the public/Other, has infiltrated the text to mix with the author’s own voice. It is easy to pass over such a minor remark, but such asides take on affective heaviness, making them less easy to pass over, in context of what we (may) know about the reception of these books. They are reminders that despite the critique of identity politics which the works perform, both authors have been held up for public scrutiny in ways that

³⁸ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. xvi.

³⁹ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. xvi.

⁴⁰ Bakhtin says that some genres are attuned towards formal unity, whereas others absorb languages from multiple points of view. His contrast between the language of the novel and language of epic poetry shares some coordinates with the comparison I want to make here between the literary language of the preface and theory. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 293.

⁴¹ Genette, p. 2.

⁴² Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. xvi.

are uncharacteristically personal in academic contexts.⁴³ A comparable heaviness can be found in a statement from Butler's preface: '[the style of the book] was not done simply out of a desire to play with language or prescribe theatrical antics in the place of "real" politics, as some critics have conjectured'.⁴⁴ Words like *play*, *theatrical* and *real* politics, and even *some critics*, are shot through with dialogic reverberations, which is especially obvious when they come packed together in a single sentence. The sentence has an affective heaviness, anchoring author and the text firmly back into a particular historical epoch, the transformation of which the major work implicitly took as the medium and measure of its success.

The presence of the public can also be felt through the comparative clarity of tone used in the delayed prefaces. These retroactive clarifications could be considered, as generically conventional for the delayed preface, dispassionate second-thoughts, 'after an interval of detachment and separation that transforms the author into an (almost) ordinary and (almost) impartial reader'.⁴⁵ However, excessive clarity evokes additional resonances in this disciplinary context. Indeed, the tone perhaps accords with another comment from Genette on clarity in the delayed preface. He notes that the tone is often guided by the following undercurrent:

"I was simple enough to suppose that this novel [sic] could do without a preface", for I found its lesson clear enough. I was no doubt mistaken, for the critics have accused me of immorality. So here, for the use of imbeciles, I must "light a lamp in broad daylight" and set forth my intentions.⁴⁶

This speaks to the tone of the ice-clear clarifications which run through the later preface of *Gender Trouble*; perhaps this tone works in *combination* with Genette's idea of the second-thought. Indeed, Butler addresses lucidity of style directly in the 1999 preface, explaining that "difficult style" can be politically necessary; the accurate expression of queer experiences may require disruption to grammar and engagement with the excessively long or indirect.⁴⁷ She tells us that there is 'nothing radical about common sense' and the 'demand for lucidity forgets the ruses that motor the ostensibly "clear" view'.⁴⁸ However, ironically, this passage about the ruses of clarity is expressed in direct and lucid language,

⁴³ For details of these occasions see Robyn Wiegman, 'Eve's Triangles, or Queer Studies Beside Itself', *Differences*, 26.1 (2015), 48–73 (p. 48) <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2880600>>. Perhaps the most notorious example is M. Nussbaum, 'Professor of Parody', *The New Republic*, (1999) <<http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Nussbaum-Butler-Critique-NR-2-99.pdf>> [accessed 17 June 2018].

⁴⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xxi.

⁴⁵ Genette, p. 253.

⁴⁶ Genette, p. 245.

⁴⁷ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xix. See also Judith Butler, 'Values of Difficulty', in *Just Being Difficult?: Academic Writing in the Public Arena*, ed. by Jonathan Culler and Kevin Lamb (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 199–215.

⁴⁸ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. xix–xx.

made painfully obvious by the its stylistic contrast to the main text which the preface keeps in near proximity. In this context, excessive clarity does not communicate authorial ease and is more likely to suggest coerced and therefore reductive straightforwardness.

The dialogic texture of the delayed preface is perhaps best understood in terms of ingrained misogyny which plays out over and over in public reception of the works of minority thinkers, who consistently find the meaning of their work reduced to their literal bodies. Toril Moi argues in favour of theorising for this reason: theory should be able to offer respite from this reduction, this barring from the language of the objective and the universal; when we write theory, we make our pitch for being able to provide generally valid statements, requiring ‘an ambitious wish to make [others] agree with [us], regardless of our own specific position in the world’.⁴⁹ She argues that feminists should be careful not to reject objectivity in favour of the ostensibly less masculinist personal writing, warning that ‘one of the major tactics of sexism is to confine women in their subjectivity [...] a prison house from which a few moments of impersonality could offer a delightful respite’.⁵⁰ She argues that the arrogation of voice required to speak in the language of philosophy entails the risk of appealing to the other’s judgement but the rewards can be fantastic for those who are systematically barred from access to the universal. Similarly, speaking in terms of both gay and female subjectivity, D. A. Miller writes of the historical and ongoing importance of ‘the wishfully reparative key of abstraction’ which represents an ‘alternative to gender specification’ for ‘those malformed subjects who have been, for whatever reason, thrown out of sex’.⁵¹

This helps to explain why such a sinking feeling is generated in Butler’s late return to the embodiment effect. Having written autobiographically of sitting on Rehoboth Beach, Butler follows on directly with the comment: ‘That I can write in the autobiographical mode does not, I think, relocate the subject that I am, but perhaps it gives the reader a sense of solace that there is someone here (I am willing to suspend for the moment the problem that this someone is given in language)’.⁵² There seems to be a quality of mortification in this suspension of what is in fact the point of the project. Miller’s work can provide context to this distinctive affective key. Taking Jane Austen as his beloved object, he notes that the more the stylothete refuses to be a Person, the more this tends to stoke the public’s desire for a confession of what they claim to be self-evident. He asks:

⁴⁹ Toril Moi, *Sex, Gender, And The Body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 234.

⁵⁰ Moi, p. 155.

⁵¹ D. A. Miller, *Jane Austen, or The Secret of Style* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 35.

⁵² Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xvii.

what chance does Style ever have of keeping the would-be secret that is the damaged social identity from which it originates, and to which, like an imposter who must be stripped of his false beard, it is forever being routinely reduced? In fact, however, it stands an excellent chance, since this reduction *can never be sure of itself*; quintessentially exasperated, even a bit panicked, it grows in vehemence with its increasing sense that it is never done for good.⁵³

He claims that the public feel exasperation in the face of the stylothete who will never argue back about contingences but will just carry on enjoying its freedom; 'Jane Austen's novels will never state what is widely supposed, or at least widely required, to be obvious: that their author is a woman, and an old maid'.⁵⁴ He reasons that this refusal is what gives her works their enduring 'cultural *valance*'. This makes sense in the context of queer theory's cultural success too. And yet, the preface *does* suddenly state what is widely supposed; it does draw a link between text and abject source, giving into the reader who demands to know that there 'is someone here'. Butler engages the embodiment effect even though, as she describes, 'if I treat [the grammar used to represent the "I"] as pellucid, then I fail to call attention precisely to that sphere of language that establishes and disestablishes intelligibility, and that would be precisely to thwart my own project'.⁵⁵ If we find this moving, then we get entangled in that cultural phenomenon, the cruelty of which Miller so precisely describes: 'under the guise of compassion for the stylothete's incipient slide into personification, we vent our furious resentment against whoever dares to imagine standing outside the social conditions that we have resigned ourselves to suffer'.⁵⁶ And even if we are not that way inclined, the preface interpellates all readers into the position of the one needing to know and have it explicitly said. The sinking feeling is perhaps only emphasised by the fact that the preface is delayed – Genette writes that one of the key features of the later preface is that it offers the chance for the author to 'tell the tale that for one reason or another he [sic] had originally thought could be dispensed with'.⁵⁷

I want to think briefly about how this interpellates the new reader. We can see that the freedom required for an intellectual exchange works both ways; if the author needs a reader who is prepared to give her the freedom to speak in the language of the universal, the reader too needs the author to have this freedom so that we can make what we will with the text. The preface anticipates reader response and pre-emptively overrides it, to activate readerly expectations by creating new affects for them. Almost the whole of Butler's delayed preface is consumed by the task of refuting the false positions which she

⁵³ Miller, p. 39.

⁵⁴ Miller, p. 39.

⁵⁵ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xxvi.

⁵⁶ Miller, p. 75.

⁵⁷ Genette, p. 239.

anticipates she will be placed in. Many readers do come to *Gender Trouble* with prior expectations about what the book probably says but the preface “rewrites” the text for us, overriding “bad” but also “good” associations. The preface tells us that *Gender Trouble* is *not* prescribing a new way of life;⁵⁸ it is *not* a celebration of specific minority practices;⁵⁹ it is *not* an application of poststructuralist theory to feminism;⁶⁰ it is *not* an exhibition of play with language.⁶¹ Butler also advises that she is now no longer sure about performativity or drag, her thoughts having now developed, and we are to approach these iconic concepts with caution. The effect can be dizzying; if this is a first encounter it can be difficult to keep a sense of what in fact the book *does* do while keeping track of all that it doesn’t. I can imagine this only exacerbating the frustration of a certain kind of reader, hurriedly thumbing the pages in search for the bit where the book finally starts talking about drag queens. And these retroactive clarifications can presumably redirect new readers away from *positive* expectations, picked up from the culture at large, about a book which – accurately or inaccurately, rightly or wrongly – represents a landmark academic achievement and ‘a bible for [gender play and the queer movement] even and perhaps especially “on the street”’.⁶²

In other words, the preface’s anticipated scene of address, the ‘guiding ideas, theories or phantasies of how writing [...] may touch or make contact with an audience’, can impact on the way that I as a reader can move into and make what I want out of the text.⁶³ If I take the preface seriously, the text is no longer available to me in the same unmediated way. This effect does not depend solely on content; it is secured through the interaction between content and form. As I will more fully consider in the following section, theorists of the preface have drawn attention to the form’s strange temporal lodging: it is neither anterior nor interior to the text; it resides neither before nor after; its location therefore seems to extend for the duration of the whole book. Derrida writes, ‘the *pre* of the preface makes the future present, represents it, draws it closer, breathes it in, and in going ahead of it puts it ahead. The *pre* reduces the future to the form of manifest presence’.⁶⁴ I find that this respiratory image, the sense of the preface breathing in the future that is the main book, connects productively with Genette’s image of the preface as

⁵⁸ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xx.

⁵⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. viii.

⁶⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. ix.

⁶¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xx.

⁶² Janet Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 143.

⁶³ Adam Frank, *Transferential Poetics, from Poe to Warhol* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), p. 2

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctt9qds3q>> [accessed 23 June 2019].

⁶⁴ Derrida, p. 7.

a vestibule with no hard boundary on the inward nor the outward side. The porousness of boundaries between world and text helps clarify the role that the genre can have in retroactively mediating and interfering with the mood of the landmark text; open on both sides, the delayed preface seems to inhale the insalubrious atmosphere from the surroundings, breathing it onto the text and impacting how it can function and what it can be.

The embodiment effect

Chapter 1 addressed the ways in which “the queer moment” derived from an overlap between minoritarian discourse and universalising critique to produce a distinctive cultural/textual mood. However, as *Epistemology of the Closet* notes about the way this relationship structured the work, even if minoritarian thought gave ‘the space of permission’, the externalised result nevertheless seems to ‘privilege constructivist over essentialist, universalising over minoritizing, and gender-transitive over separatist understandings’.⁶⁵ Minoritarian motivations are implicit; it is the overt ‘process of abstraction’ that ‘allowed [queer] to “outperform” gay and lesbian studies’.⁶⁶ However, as Butler’s two prefaces show, this genre pushes the author in the direction of autobiographical narration and, when this is combined with a public reception pushing in the same direction, there arises an pressure or perhaps an opportunity to flip this emphasis. As Miller writes with regards to Austen’s own late experimentation with a fall into personification, if it ‘isn’t working [...] then why not drop the tense [...] mode of abjection that is style in favour of the simpler mode of abjection that is the self?’.⁶⁷ I now turn to a fuller consideration of the role of the embodiment effect and the more affective modes of narration of the delayed prefaces, which I argue represent switchpoints between the temporality of the project and the return to more ongoing and unfinished durations.

In a lesser known claim, Genette specifies that the preface is typically an excuse for literary narration – whether that be origin stories or reconstructions of the work’s scene of composition.⁶⁸ In the context of late queer studies, this affordance is tightly linked with the prefaces’ role in addressing a reading public. Let’s circle back to Butler’s 1999 preface and her reconstruction of the scene of composition. Her descriptions represent a “return to the

⁶⁵ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 13.

⁶⁶ Love, *Queer – This*, p. 181.

⁶⁷ Miller, p. 49.

⁶⁸ Genette, p. 291. On a similar note, with reference to Henry James’ New York Prefaces, Sedgwick has argued that, far from straightforwardly or transparently autobiographical, later prefaces allow for literary, experimental and ironic consideration of an author’s various forms of connection with a younger self. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, ‘Queer Performativity: Henry James’s The Art of the Novel’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1.1 (1993), 1–16 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-1-1>>.

self” but also a turn to affective or literary narration; a point of view which hugs the contours of experience. Indeed, I want to think of this return as a disentanglement from the temporality of the project; ‘a lowering of tone, as it were, a decompression, a return to the flatlands of everyday life’.⁶⁹ Butler introduces a younger self, who must theorise from a restricted point of view. The narrator (Butler in the present), has the epistemological advantage over Judith the character. The character is confined to the present moment where she tries to ‘find [her] way’ amidst the onslaught of perceptual stimuli of the ‘lesbian and gay community on the east coast of the United States’. The preface states:

There is one aspect of the conditions of its production that is not always understood about [*Gender Trouble*]: it was produced not merely from the academy, but from convergent social movements of which I had been a part, and within the context of lesbian and gay community on the east coast of the United States in which I lived for fourteen years prior to the writing of this book. Despite the dislocation of the subject that the text performs, there is a person here: I went to many meetings, bars, and marches and saw many kinds of genders, understood myself to be at the crossroads of some of them, and encountered sexuality at several of its cultural edges. I knew many people who were trying to find their way in the midst of a significant movement for sexual recognition and freedom, and felt the exhilaration and frustration that goes along with being part of a movement both in its hopefulness and internal dissension. At the same time that I was ensconced in the academy, I was also living outside of those walls, and though *Gender Trouble* is an academic book, it began, for me, with a crossing-over, sitting on Rehoboth Beach, wondering whether I could link the different sides of my life.⁷⁰

We might imagine how difficult it would be for the human subject to gain critical distance while immersed in this dense network of affect. This difficulty is suggested by the colon that links the long clause, with that string of verbs, with the assertion that ‘there is a person here’. The person could be considered the sum of that which happens to be most immediately available to her while situated squarely within the social scene. Lauren Berlant’s theorisation of “intuition” may help us approach the realist texture of this passage. Berlant describes how subjects tend to function pragmatically in the realm of everyday life, practising ‘dynamic sensual data gathering’ and training their intuition in ways that allow them to make the most of constraining situations: ‘the ordinary is, after all, a porous zone that absorbs lots of incoherence and contradiction, and people make their ways through it at once tipped over awkwardly, half-conscious and confident about common sense’.⁷¹ The passage is structured by a succession of dynamic verbs, packed into a complex sentence – I ‘went’, ‘saw’, ‘understood’, ‘encountered’, ‘knew’ – which suggests

⁶⁹ Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (London: Verso, 2013), p. 26.

⁷⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xvii.

⁷¹ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 53.

that this character is continually shifting perspective in an attempt to sensitise herself to the historical sensorium and its residual possibilities.

The passage constitutes a return to an affective primal scene, the previously effaced melancholic prequel to the canonical queer text which arguably the project's aim was to get beyond. It is a story about the development of queer subjectivity which, alienated from its first culture, must search out 'discursive possibilities that are already present in the larger culture' from a position of 'distinctive situatedness within an entire field of discourses and social practices'.⁷² Eventually, overwhelmed by the passions, affects and atmospheres of the present, "Butler" withdraws from the crowded social scene: 'sitting on Rehoboth Beach, wondering whether I could link the different sides of my life'.⁷³ We might see this withdrawal as an attempt to get some distance from the coercions of the given world. Sedgwick's preface to *Between Men* represents a similar scene of withdrawal, which she links explicitly with queer subjectification. She writes that remembering back to provincial childhood scenes prior to writing feels like remembering a distant country. She remembers the peculiar disorientation of counter-acculturation from within the deadening heterosexual first context of knowing only one openly gay man; her contemporaries of the gay liberation 'function in the book as objects of an almost theologically speculative meditation, rather than as evidence of lives and communities actually, presently inhabited'.⁷⁴ She suggests that the book is, apart from anything else, the externalised product of deliberately cultivated evasive strategies, ways of resisting interpellation when 'we compulsorily and excruciatingly misrecognize ourselves in the available mirror of the atomized, procreative, so-called heterosexual pre- or ex-urban nuclear family of origin, whose bruisingly inappropriate interpellations may wound us'.⁷⁵ We have, even if not obvious from the finished book, critique lived out in the contingent and ongoingly traumatic present, an attempt to think beyond the social forms that are immediately available to imagine how the given world could be otherwise; as she puts it, 'there's a way in which the author of this book seems not quite to have been able to believe in the reality of the gay male communities toward whose readership the book so palpably yearns'.⁷⁶

This theme is developed in the 2008 preface to *Epistemology of the Closet*, which locates the book's genesis in several critical moments. Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot

⁷² David Halperin, *How to Be Gay* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2012), pp. 337–38. On the mystery of early gay counter-cultural initiation more generally, see pp. 322–54.

⁷³ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xvii.

⁷⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. ix.

⁷⁵ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. ix.

⁷⁶ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. ix.

define the ‘critical moment’ as a crisis in action; ‘in the process of realising that something is going wrong one has to take distance from the present moment and turn back to the past’ in a ‘retrospective turn’ that tries to construct a story in order to make sense of what has happened and how it has led to the present.⁷⁷ Boltanski and Thévenot claim that ‘critical moments’ often see us declare that we ‘cannot bear this state of things any more’; from this point we are ‘subject to the imperative of justification’ to avoid ‘a scene’ or a ‘dispute’.⁷⁸ Sedgwick describes feeling happy and relieved to have found the women’s movement but nevertheless experienced an ongoing, inchoate sense of dissatisfaction. The first critical moment is dated at 1985, with Sedgwick teaching lesbian content in a women’s studies class at Amherst College. She tells us how in class she did the “right thing” by foregrounding her own epistemic limitations in relation to the content:

Introducing a section on lesbian issues, I apologized that as a non-lesbian I felt somewhat at a disadvantage in understanding this material. A trio of students turned up at my next office hour – they were on the women’s basketball team, and I remember the gangling, grave effect the three of them had approaching together – and told me, firmly but in this case kindly, that whatever I did I must not do *that* again. By their account, however carefully I may have chosen my words, the meaning that came through to them as gay women was the clangorously phobic (in effect) disavowal of being one.⁷⁹

Sedgwick shows herself demurring in face of the interruption that the trio represent. Taking the complaint seriously would puncture the lessons hard-learned from the women’s movement. Moreover, it would require the production of justifications which could follow the rules of argumentative acceptability.⁸⁰ Sara Ahmed argues that feminism and queer politics are often ‘sensational’ in this way. ‘[It] often begins with an intensity: you are aroused by what you come up against. You register something in the sharpness of an impression. Over time, with experience you sense that something is wrong’.⁸¹ Sedgwick’s preface says that it was at an event ‘shortly afterward’, that she was finally able to commit to divergence: attending a pro-gay rally, a group of men, ‘spoke up as if for the purpose of announcing that however sensitive they were, they themselves did just happen to be heterosexual’.⁸² The convergence allows her to get to the realisation that she’d rather affirm transitive identity than be in the ‘hectoring and abject position’.⁸³ *Epistemology* is reframed as

⁷⁷ Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, ‘The Sociology of Critical Capacity’, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2 (1999), 359–77 (p. 360) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/136843199002003010>>

⁷⁸ Boltanski and Thévenot, p. 360.

⁷⁹ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. xvi.

⁸⁰ Boltanski and Thévenot, p. 360.

⁸¹ Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 22.

⁸² Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, pp. xvi–xvii.

⁸³ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. xvii.

the product of this imperative of justification, even if this story is effaced in the actual book which places its intervention on a grander scale. The preface, by contrast undercuts the broader purchase of the book, stressing the project's roots in blocked cognition, improvisation and adaptation to contingency. *Epistemology of the Closet* is the delayed response which allows its author to finally be able to say that an axiom for queer would be 'never to claim, never to disavow'. In retrospect, but only in retrospect, is she able to break from former epistemologies to claim with assurance that 'queerness and disavowal don't belong in the same grammar. [...] What's important about the concept of queer is that it repel disavowal and disavowal repel it'.⁸⁴

One way of thinking about these present tense elaborations is to see them as an embrace of the minoritarian perspective that is implicit in the universal tending discourse which secured these texts their academic status. They make explicit that, contrary to what is widely assumed, the books work off concrete life as their original ground. The prefaces provide a more literal account of the way that minoritized experience was spun up into the minoritizing-universalizing dialectical, explicitly performing the line of movement from concrete to abstract. However, this is complicated by the fact that the preface material does not simply represent the "before". This is an effaced prequel, but it also represents that which could only have been written *after* the fact.⁸⁵ This "coming after" might help us see the shift as the reverse transformation, from universalising abstraction back to personhood. As Ester Newton's work on drag queens points out, these affective positions can in practice be fluid within queer subcultural practice. 'Camp humor is a system of laughing at one's incongruous position instead of crying', she writes regarding her study of drag queens, '[but] I saw the reverse transformation—from laughter to pathos—often enough, and it is axiomatic among the impersonators that when the camp cannot laugh, he dissolves into a maudlin bundle of self-pity'.⁸⁶ These preface scenes undercut closure, making this line of movement temporary, a sliding scale which can and will continue to go in either direction.

The sinking feeling of these passages share similarities with the anecdotes of the previous chapter. However, the preface form creates an obscure temporality which is almost impossible to match within the main text. Derrida explains that the preface exists in a strange temporal warp in relation of to "the book". In relation to philosophy in

⁸⁴ Kristen O'Rourke and Mark Kerr, 'Sedgwick Sense and Sensibility: An Interview with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick', *Nideffer*, (1995) <<http://nideffer.net/proj/Tvc/interviews/20.Tvc.v9.intrvws.Sedg.html>> [accessed 30 March 2020].

⁸⁵ Derrida, p. 14.

⁸⁶ Newton, p. 106.

particular, he points out that the science of logic would disqualify and make impossible the preface because the work should *contain* the particular within the universal: if the prologue material is anterior to the book it is not relevant; if it is internal then it should be expressed within the work itself. Therefore, ‘prefaces [...] have always been written, it seems, in view of their own self-effacement. Upon reaching the end [...] the route which has been covered must cancel itself out’. The successful work will render the prologue material ‘both negated and internalised’ and thus it ‘falls like an empty husk, a piece of formal refuse, a moment of dryness or loquacity’.⁸⁷ He points out that the fact that the preface obviously does exist, despite its impossibility, has much to tell us about the uncontrollably open system of language and the unpredictability of its dissemination.

Extrapolating from Derrida’s point, perhaps differently to anecdote, the preface draws formal attention to the impossibility of subsuming the local within the universal. In illustration, it is worth borrowing Derrida’s comparison between the preface and an Etch-A-Sketch, a toy which allows the child to leave marks on the surface and then erase them by exerting pressure. He says that the preface works similarly; it leaves an imprint, strangely remembered even as its marks ostensibly disappear to make way for new ones.⁸⁸ The effect is that the preface material occupies neither the “before” nor “after” but seems rather to ‘occupy the entire *location* and *duration* of the book’.⁸⁹ Indeed, in our specific context, we might think of the preface as affording an ongoing duration to the lesbian lying on the bed crying, who remains ‘behind’ the work and thus inhabits a different temporal frame.⁹⁰ Whether we keep the lesbian in mind as we cross the threshold will depend on how seriously we want to take the minor work. As Genette writes, ‘just as the presence of the paratextual element is not uniformly obligatory, so, too, the public and the reader are not unvaryingly and uniformly obligated: no one is required to read a preface (even if such a freedom is not always opportune for the author)’.⁹¹ However, if the sinking affects *do* carry over, they may lend an irony to the arrogation of voice so typical of introductory paragraphs and a book like *Epistemology of the Closet* in particular, which opens with that most audacious and universalising of statements that any aspect of Western culture that does not ‘incorporate a critical analysis of the homo/heterosexual definition’ is ‘not merely incomplete, but damaged’.⁹² This affordance of the preface, its capacity to hold material in

⁸⁷ Derrida, p. 9.

⁸⁸ Derrida, p. 9.

⁸⁹ Derrida, p. 13.

⁹⁰ Love, *Queer – This*, p. 180.

⁹¹ Genette, p. 4.

⁹² Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 1.

suspension for the duration of a book, is surely applicable across different contexts. However, it is especially loaded in this particular disciplinary location. Queer theory sets itself apart as a project and set of interpretative possibilities through its deft ability to maintain a *tension* between lived particularity and universalizing abstraction. Kevin Ohi writes that, for him, it is this that differentiates queer methods and constitutes their attraction: ‘the term queer appeals to me because it embodies an *unresolved tension* between sexual specificity and a possibly desexualising abstraction’.⁹³ Carla Freccero writes of queer methods in similar terms, arguing that we must resist the ossification of queer into a noun because it can only be kept vital through ‘*the productive tension* that queer maintains between materiality and immateriality, resisting the urge to turn queer into a substantive category’.⁹⁴ This gives context to what I think of as these preface’s very disciplinary specific affects. If queer theory’s early and ongoing success inheres to its deft ability to sustain minoritarian/universalizing tension, producing a “heightened” mood which is both exhilarating and a tricky high-wire act, the preface tentatively suggests the possibility of a subsequent deflation as this tension collapses back into undialectical identity politics.

The minor advantages of duration

If the delayed prefaces of queer theory exhibit the continuity of painful individuation, there is nevertheless a silver lining. If the conditions prior and post to the project are continuous, then, by implication, so too is that distinctively queer resistance to discipline resulting from a felt sense of bodily alienation. For instance, for all that Butler’s 1999 preface says it would qualify about *Gender Trouble*, it maintains that there was nevertheless *something* right, at the level of base intuition, about its author’s discomfort with the feminist movement:

In 1989 I was most concerned to criticize a pervasive heterosexual assumption in feminist literary theory. [...] It *was and remains my view* that any feminist theory that restricts the meaning of gender in the presuppositions of its own practice sets up exclusionary gender norms within feminism, often with homophobic consequences. *It seemed to me, and continues to seem*, that feminism ought to be careful not to idealize certain expressions of gender that, in turn, produce new forms of hierarchy and exclusion.⁹⁵

Butler brings home a continuity between past and present self, emphasised by the repetition in the structure of this paragraph. Genette says that the idea of permanence is

⁹³ Kevin Ohi, *Dead Letters Sent: Queer Literary Transmission* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), p. 7. Emphasis mine.

⁹⁴ Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 17. Emphasis mine.

⁹⁵ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. viii.

typical in the genre; ‘the theme most strongly distinguishing the retrospective [...] discourse of the delayed preface is doubtless the theme of “I have not changed”, [...] this theme appears, particularly, of course, when an author most strongly feels the need for it’.⁹⁶ I would agree that this seems to be conventional to the genre, but would want to draw out the specific affective resonances of such assertions for queer intellectual history in particular.

In the popular imagination, queer thought concerns the ever fluid possibilities of identification. However, Rei Terada helps us to see another tradition. She writes of a felt alienation derived from a sense of bodily difference, claiming that it has been ‘in the *persistence* of the queer mind and body that dissatisfaction “against nature” discerns its durability and its legitimacy’. She notes that, ‘historically, it is queer consciousness that has sensed most keenly the moments when fact is ambiguously social or natural, and has had motive and energy to examine and re-examine even those pervasive conditions that seem most natural’.⁹⁷ The delayed prefaces afford a consideration of this source of continuing motivation and energy. In the preface to *Between Men*, Sedgwick describes the book as an externalisation of her learnt ability to ‘keep faith, as best I could, with an obstinate intuition that the loose ends and crossed ends of identity are more fecund than the places where identity, desire, analysis, and need can all be aligned and centred’.⁹⁸ She details how she too had an active and enthusiastic relationship with feminism during the 1980s – which she could easily have interpreted as having been ‘lucky and resilient’ enough to have made it ‘into life, life of a different kind’.⁹⁹ Any yet, perhaps impudently: ‘I also wanted – needed – feminist scholarship to be different’.¹⁰⁰ The correction, from wanting to needing, seems to indicate that taking the obstinance of intuition of queer intuition seriously requires a little technique.

I turn now to a final preface scene, which expresses the value of this technique for inhabiting queer theory in the aftermath of the project. The scene comes from the preface to Butler’s *Bodies that Matter*, which narrates the texture of life in the aftermath of *Gender Trouble*’s reception. Butler describes how the forthcoming text is ‘offered, then, in part as a rethinking of some parts of *Gender Trouble* which have caused confusion’. However, there is not much hope for any final arrival at closure: ‘And yet, as an attempt to clarify my

⁹⁶ Genette, p. 256.

⁹⁷ Rei Terada, *Looking Away: Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction, Kant to Adorno* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 9.

⁹⁸ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, pp. vii–viii.

⁹⁹ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. ix.

¹⁰⁰ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. vii.

“intentions”, [the book] appears destined to produce a new set of misapprehensions’.¹⁰¹ As Jay Prosser writes, Butler’s argument about recitation invites recitations that refuse to adhere to the letter of her argument, meaning that ‘the original underwent a certain overreading, playful exaggeration, a mischievous adding of emphasis’.¹⁰² Butler nods to the ethical potential of an elasticity which *Gender Trouble* itself argues in favour of, writing that if a new set of misapprehensions is inevitable then ‘I hope, at least, they prove to be productive ones’.¹⁰³ However, elsewhere Butler has spoken of mixed feelings regarding this self-perpetuating spiral of self-reflexivity. Acknowledging that accounting for one’s practices can be necessary, she writes that: ‘my doing it actually demands a certain kind of forgetfulness about the reflexive dimension in order to allow it to move forward’ and therefore reflexivity can become ‘the moment in which I’m simply thumbing through my old texts trying to figure out what I might have meant, and whether what I now say is consistent with what I have said. I do not like doing that, and usually refuse to do it. I suspect that it is finally an anti-intellectual activity’.¹⁰⁴ The preface to *Bodies That Matter* illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of inhabitation; it can shape unexpected research directions but can just as easily represent a ‘stymie a certain kind of innovation’.¹⁰⁵

In this preface we return, again, to an ambivalently narrated origin story of inchoate dissatisfaction with the social world but this time in the aftermath of *Gender Trouble*. We are presented with a conference event, though it is highly stylised and therefore gives the impression that many occasions have been combined. Using free indirect discourse, Butler narrates the necessity of detaching from the social scene in order to understand how it operates and what it obscures:

Theorizing from the ruins of the Logos invites the following question: “What about the materiality of the body?” Actually, in the recent past, the question was repeatedly formulated to me in this way: “What about the materiality of the body, *Judy*?” I took it that the addition of “Judy” was an effort to dislodge me from the more formal “Judith” and to recall me to a bodily life that could not be theorised away. There was a certain exasperation in the delivery of the final diminutive, a certain patronising quality which (re)constituted me as an unruly child, one that needed to be brought to task, restored to that bodily being which is, after all, considered to be most real, most pressing, most undeniable. Perhaps this was an effort to recall me to apparently evacuated femininity, the one that was constituted in that moment in the mid-50s when the figure of Judy Garland inadvertently produced a string of “Judys” whose later appropriations and derailments could not have been predicted. Or perhaps someone forgot to teach me “the facts of life”? Was I lost in my own

¹⁰¹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. x.

¹⁰² Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 24.

¹⁰³ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. x.

¹⁰⁴ Butler and Davies, p. 136.

¹⁰⁵ Butler and Davies, p. 13.

imaginary musings as that vital conversation was taking place? And if I persisted in this notion that bodies were in some way *constructed*, perhaps I really thought that words alone had the power to craft bodies from their own linguistic substance?

Could someone not simply take me aside?¹⁰⁶

Notably, this sardonic scene indicates that many of the factors which we were told motivated *Gender Trouble* continue in its wake; we have a temporality of duration, continuity and change that happens only in the very long term. Moreover, the scene affectively echoes *Gender Trouble*'s preface, which recreates a scene of childhood, where the wilful girl is threatened with punishment for causing trouble – we have further threats levelled at the person who dares to remain lost in ‘imaginary musings’ as a way of refusing to share a world of commonly held “facts”.

However, the text suggests that, in the face of this continuity, the adult has accrued some skill at recognising disciplinary logic and maintaining a secret separation from its coercions. Indeed, the preface opens with the following assertion: ‘I began writing this book by trying to consider the materiality of the body only to find that the thought of materiality inevitably moved me into other domains. I tried to discipline myself to stay on the subject, [but] I kept losing track of the subject. I proved resistant to discipline’. Inevitably, I began to consider that perhaps this resistance was essential to the matter at hand.¹⁰⁷ The word ‘inevitably’ seems to speak of a training in the pedagogy of queer dissatisfaction; it resonates with Sedgwick’s qualification, from wanting to needing. Again we have a social withdrawal which works to create a separation, a ‘distance [which] reads as a failure to endorse the given world’ and ‘registers a wish to be relieved for a moment of the coercion to accept whatever one does not dispute’.¹⁰⁸ There is a tone of disgust which is detectable in this passage; the attribution of words like “really”, “could” and “certainly” suggest that the advice is detected and immediately categorised as the faulty-logic and gossipy chit chat.¹⁰⁹ Disgust seems to establish a barrier of separation, providing enough distance to make cool-headed decisions about the actual legitimacy of comments which are immediately sensed as patronising and disciplinary. In this scene, the queer figure becomes a connoisseur of that which is not yet sharable because it cannot yet be theorised.

This preface captures the work involved in holding enough space to resist immediate interpellation while at the same time remaining open to what could turn out to

¹⁰⁶ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, pp. iix–ix.

¹⁰⁷ Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. iix.

¹⁰⁸ Terada, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ On disgust as distancing see Silvan Tomkins, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, ed. by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 135.

be genuine critique. There is a prolonged pause. This suggests that, even if felt dissatisfaction is still a good indicator that some discipline is at work, in the context of institutionalisation heightened powers of critique need to be combined with powers of *self*-critique. As Ahmed notes, because assuming our own oppositionality can be a form of protection, we might at times need to lose confidence in ourselves; ‘that is hard if we have a lifetime of being the problem’.¹¹⁰ The preface indicates that the labour involved in this form of knowledge generation is both intellectual and affective: the management of affect allows the institutionalization of the text to be processed as further intellectual output. We are shown how the rhetorical Q&A questions that only pretended to require serious response are not rejected out of hand but are transformed into *research questions* of the kind that necessitate book-length answer. This method is captured in a transition between paragraphs. For example, in the first we have a fatuous accusation that the author believes that gender can be taken on and off like a garment. This question’s content is mirrored in the following paragraph, but is transformed into the following research question: ‘if gender is not an artifice to be taken on and off at will and, hence, not an effect of choice, how are we to understand the constituted and compelling status of gender norms without falling into the trap of gender determinism?’.¹¹¹ Now the question seems objective and crafted and the line of interpretative force has been reversed; if encountered outside of this context, there would be little indication that in the world of the preface this was once a hostile exchange.

However, despite the continuity, the duress to acknowledge a common world seems lighter here than the scenes represented in the second *Gender Trouble* preface (which retroactively narrate scenes of the 1980s). It is as if a technique has been developed for dwelling in the world before the endorsement of perceived fact, and there is confidence in this *as* a technique, even when it is not yet clear where and when such demurrals will end. Terada writes that in philosophy there is often a sense of guilt which is associated with any withdrawal from the world, which reflects ‘both the sense that recession of this kind *is* an insult to the given world shared with society and the related suspicion that there is no end to it’.¹¹² However, the comparative lightness of this preface is suggestive that its author, and perhaps we readers, have learnt that there is value in the obstinance of queer consciousness as an effective barometer for social harms; even if this resource proves imperfect at delineating the precise details of these harms. The preface dilates this secret

¹¹⁰ Ahmed, pp. 174–75.

¹¹¹ Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. ix.

¹¹² Terada, p. 203.

space of the not-yet-speakable and we see a glimmer of the hidden labour, and by now grace, with which queer consciousness is able to work through this extensive string of non-recognition, which is held in suspension, barred from immediate introjection, before being categorised and then transmuted to become the premise of a new book, *Bodies that Matter*. In other words, the delayed preface at once registers the duration of reader reception and counters it with the authority of a punctual scene of ongoing authorial experience.

Conclusion / Inhabitation

I have argued that the preface genre proves well suited for thinking through and theorising late queer theory because of its ability to address duration, ‘a certain spacing between concept and being-there, between concept and existence, between thought and time’.¹¹³ Through its various conventions, and the ways these work in combination, the delayed preface makes it more possible to train one’s focus on this gap between project and realisation; the gap between interpretation and the arrival of social justice.¹¹⁴ In addition to its strange temporal lodging, the preface conventionally engages themes of embodied thinking and public reception. I have looked at examples where queer theory, in a moment of lateness, turns to the affordances of the preface to theorise the intersection of embodiment and public reception, as a sinking return which acts as an index of the affective quality of unevenly institutionalised queer theory. This chapter therefore suggests that there is a relationship between temporality and genre with regards to late queer theory: the later preface becomes unexpectedly useful for expressing ongoing durations in the aftermath of the book. Indeed, we might productively think of the updated editions of *Epistemology of the Closet* and *Gender Trouble* as containing multiple versions. Respectively, we have an unadorned text which can stand alone as an artefact of its moment and the problem-spaces which animated that moment’s most urgent questions. We also have a second version, where the temporality of the book is continually mediated by the preface which thwarts its closure by providing a continual gravitational pull back into the ongoing force-field of affect generated from little narratives, intuition, minor affronts, specific histories, and chit chat which reverberates on the border of the text and from which, obvious in retrospect, the project cannot quite free itself.

These features of the preface are both conventional and yet specific to the discipline of queer theory. Though the prefaces of late queer theory use many of the

¹¹³ Derrida, p. 12.

¹¹⁴ Robyn Wiegman, ‘Wishful Thinking’, *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 202–13 (p. 203) <<https://doi.org/doi:10.1353/ff.2013.0038>>.

conventions which Genette details, the decision to deploy them in this particular disciplinary location can create very specific affective resonances which are suggestive of late queer style. Firstly, the divergence created is striking because themes of public assimilation, origin stories and identity are systematically critiqued within the works themselves and so their belated return constitutes a strange disjuncture which draws attention to itself as a different decision from that made at a prior time. Furthermore, queer theory sets itself apart by its deft ability to maintain a *tension* between lived particularity and universalizing abstraction. If queer theory's early and ongoing success inheres to its deft ability to sustain minoritarian/universalizing tension, the preface's subsequent deflation lends irony to this achievement by suggesting a possible collapse back into undialectical personification; the preface's warped temporal logic means that this possibility can end up hanging over the whole duration of book.

However, as suggested in Chapter 1, the paratext necessarily stands in a position of formal subordination to the text on which it comments. As a final note, I want to suggest that the minor status of the later preface might be yet another relatively unique affordance of using the preface to think with. It can be challenging to express two things at once in linear writing, but the preface makes this feat more possible by virtue of its ability to stay in the background but at the same time 'occupy the entire *location* and *duration* of the book'.¹¹⁵ The preface, then, can give simultaneous access to the minor idea without that having to topple the bigger and more widely relevant one. Afterall, it is not the body or experience at which queer theory baulks but rather the assumption that a person's epistemic position is essential, static and always the key to meaning. The preface, ephemeral and anterior by definition, is apt for addressing how the subject's location might *bear* on meaning without that necessarily being the determining factor in what is meant. It can, then, be consistent with what Moi says is the appeal of writing theory in the first place: here we claim particularity and subjectivity but without abdicating an ability to speak in more abstract and generally applicable terms.¹¹⁶ And therefore, though the embodied figures of the later prefaces seem to have a stubborn duration, a feeling of heaviness which testifies to the difficulties of inhabiting the continuing present, the occasional mode of the preface paradoxically lends them a quality of impermanence – producing the implicit possibility that, if conditions were to prove propitious, the prologue material might, at some future point, fall away of its own accord.

¹¹⁵ Derrida, p. 13.

¹¹⁶ Moi, p. 218.

Chapter 4: critical memoir, everyday time and the queer classroom

This chapter is a companion to the one on anecdotes. It too is interested in texts which capture the “queer sensibility” which changes in the present tense under the pressure of context. However, unlike texts of Chapter 2, those I now turn to – Sarah Schulman’s *Gentrification of the Mind* and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Touching Feeling* and *A Dialogue on Love* – blend critical writing with memoir, probing subjective experiences in relation to wider historical turning points and making this the centre of the text’s focus.¹ Whether these works then “count” as critical theory remains an open question – both describe a need to move away from critical writing as a means of accessing more nebulous structures of feeling within which they remain implicated and from within which it is difficult to gain the perspective of a metalanguage. To borrow phrasing from Victoria Hesford, this kind of writing can produce a ‘documentary of the present tense’ of social movements, by communicating an ‘assemblage of present tense impressions of immediate experiences, memories, free-association thought rifts, and anxious or boasting asides to the reader’.² This is not autobiographical writing as developmental narrative so much as a document of events from the experiential middle. Though retrospectively edited, the point is to simulate an inchoate, heterogeneous time of the present.

Both Schulman’s *Gentrification* and Sedgwick’s *Touching Feeling* define themselves as related but adjacent to critique. The introduction to *Gentrification* defines the project against ‘the-one-long-slow-idea-book’, favouring instead ‘personal intellectual memoir’ where ideas are not laid out but are ‘revealed by the reader taking in graphs, interviews, affidavits, dispersed anecdotes, profound shifts in place – by letting it all sink in and add up’.³ Sedgwick also describes her work as an experiment with side-stepping propositional knowledge to ‘get a little distance from that bossy gesture of calling for an immediately perfected critical or revolutionary practice that one can oneself only adumbrate’.⁴ This is academic writing that aims not to conform to the model of logical syllogism between premise and conclusion. Sedgwick’s introduction articulates a desire for a more pliable and musing writing space, one which aims to stay *beside* rather than get beyond. She wants *Touching Feeling* to feel open but at the same time concentrated: ‘ideally [in the book] life,

¹ See Nancy Miller, *But Enough about Me: Why We Read Other People’s Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. xv.

² Victoria Hesford, *Feeling Women’s Liberation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 158; 156.

³ Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), p. 17.

⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 8.

loves, and ideas might then sit freely, for a while, on an open hand'.⁵ This is loose, descriptive work; a way of turning things around to offer different slants on an ongoing area of concern. Such processes can get obscured in academic writing in which 'we are taught to tidy our texts, not to reveal the struggle we have in getting somewhere'.⁶ I argue that this looseness allows these books to hold simultaneously multiple structures of feeling. Speaking from a moment of flux, where the meaning of queer is in revolt, both authors reflect "back" on what they can retrospectively recognise is the emergence of a queer sensibility which was historically contingent. At the same time, they project "forward" to explore and enact how queer might begin to look different in different circumstances which may or may not include them.

As explored in the introduction, queer can be understood as an affective habitus; Deborah Gould writes that in the context of AIDS it 'entailed an assertion of heroic agency: never mind the enormous barriers standing on our way, we *would* save our lives and the lives of our friends, and fellow activists'.⁷ She argues that this training in certain affects, however, left little space for 'outlaw emotions' such as despair or ambivalence. Gould argues that Act Up's strategic narrowing of affects therefore risked creating instability over time, as repudiated emotions inevitably resurfaced. I will argue that, because these hybrid critical-memoir texts afford an 'assemblage of present tense impressions of immediate experiences, memories, free-association thought riffs, and anxious or boasting asides to the reader', they are well-placed to register emergent 'outlaw emotions' which threaten to unravel an earlier queer habitus with which the authors remain identified. They approach these as contradictions without having to reconcile them and therefore, they 'reveal what criticism often masks [which is] the recalcitrance of epistemologies and the ways in which we remain implicated in them'.⁸ I begin with a specific set of outlaw emotions which arise in the classroom, a fertile site of reflexivity because mismatches and ruptures to communication inspire efforts to figure out what caused the problem.⁹ Faced with the student/Other, the teacher actively compares what she is observing in herself with what

⁵ Sedgwick, p. 3.

⁶ Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 13.

⁷ Deborah Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and Act up's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 432.

⁸ Cynthia Franklin, *Academic Lives: Memoir, Cultural Theory, and the University Today* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), p. 87.

⁹ Dawn Skorczewski, *Teaching One Moment at a Time: Disruption and Repair in the Classroom* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), p. 11. Generational time is clearly an important theme here, but it will be backgrounded for this chapter and considered more fully in the following chapter.

she believes is happening in the student's minds, which is then checked against prior expectations and extrapolated in reflections about its wider significance.¹⁰

In terms of structure, this chapter begins by looking at the distinctive affect of the teaching impasses in *Touching Feeling* and *Gentrification of the Mind*. In the middle section I spend some time teasing out why these scenes of pedagogy prove incongruous with earlier queer sensibilities, bringing in *A Dialogue on Love*. In the final section, I experiment with reading Sedgwick's now canonical 'Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading', the penultimate chapter of *Touching Feeling*, outside of its reputation as a landmark intervention in literary theory by inserting it in a sea of more minor texts with which the chapter is concurrent. As Tyler Bradway reminds us, Sedgwick's turn to affect has been primarily understood in the context of the academy's exhaustion of critique, but this overlooks her developing interest in experimental autobiography as a counterpoint to propositional forms of knowledge.¹¹ These qualities are especially obvious when *Touching Feeling* is read alongside the Sedgwick's contemporaneous memoir *A Dialogue on Love* which shares many of the same themes while anchoring them to a more local point of view.¹² Reading the essay in context of the wider book experiment, as well as with her memoir and the posthumous *The Weather in Proust*, I focus on what Jason Edwards understands to be Sedgwick's late method of, 'identifying with what is, at any given moment, understood to be the growing edge of the self', using moments of 'cognitive rupture' as a means of 'experiential reflection, forward projection, trial and error, and reality testing of such surmise'.¹³

Classroom Encounters

Ahmed has suggested that the 'problem student' circulates widely as a figure in public discourse; 'students are not transmitting the right message, or are evidence that we have failed to transmit the right message. Students have become an error message, a beep, beep that is announcing system failure'.¹⁴ Ahmed argues that this anxiety is disproportionate and misplaced, 'my own sense', she writes, 'is that our feminist political hopes rest with over-sensitive students' and she concludes with the declarative statement that 'we need to support, stand with, stand by those students who are fighting to survive in hostile institutions. It is our job'. Here Ahmed draws on what in the previous chapter I termed

¹⁰ Skorczewski, p. 12.

¹¹ Tyler Bradway, *Queer Experimental Literature: The Affective Politics of Bad Reading* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), pp. 194–95.

¹² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

¹³ Jason Edwards, *Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 126.

¹⁴ Sara Ahmed, 'Against Students', *The New Inquiry* (2015) <<https://thenewinquiry.com/against-students/>> [accessed 23 June 2019].

queer intuition: an ability to ‘sense’ how and on which bodies in particular the violence of discourse sets to work. However, what if, unlike Ahmed here, you begin to notice that your intuitive and immediate responses are *not* matching up with what you reasonably know to be your ‘job’? Somewhat audaciously, in the opening pages of *Gentrification* Schulman represents and amasses scenes of pedagogic misrecognition, with herself, the teacher, and the student unable to recognise the problem spaces which animate each other’s questions and concerns. Schulman describes six scenes of pedagogic nonrecognition in the opening pages, letting them ‘all sink in and add up’.¹⁵ These visceral failures in transmission provide the motivation for an investigation as to what has gone wrong; ‘this book’, writes Schulman at the end of her introduction, ‘is my effort to find awareness about what was lost, what replaced it, and how to move forward to a more authentic and conscious and just way to live’.¹⁶ As with the anecdotes of Chapter 2, the pedagogic scene is a location where multiple structures of feeling collide; though here they are held in ongoing tension.

The pedagogic encounter proves useful because it allows the author to compare her expectations with what she can observe or imagine is happening in the younger person’s mind; the contrast clarifies her own values and allows her to interrogate their development in context of wider historical junctures. To take one example, Schulman writes of teaching at College Staten Island and of an experience with one student in particular, Michelle, who came out in her class. In a creative writing assignment, Michelle had plotted a character who falls in love with a woman but decides to sacrifice romance for the comfort of a continued relationship with her family. Schulman recalls that:

Later in my office, Michelle tells me, “I know my parents love and support me. This is just too hard for them to understand”.

I say nothing, but I know that her parents do not love and do not support her. All they care about is themselves. They do not see her as real. And for now, she agrees with them. [She has] no cultural context for being able to imagine a more humane, truthful, and open way of life, in which her expressions and self-perceptions would not have to be diminished for the approval of straight people.¹⁷

The wider book explores the notion that the AIDS crisis afforded a distinctive queer sensibility to take hold, which grew out of the political concerns of the moment and was embraced by a cross-section of gender outlaws. Public reaction to the AIDS crisis left gay people in little doubt of what they already feared true: they were distained. Schulman explains that, though this was an incredibly painful realisation, it provided a clarity of insight

¹⁵ Schulman, p. 17.

¹⁶ Schulman, p. 20.

¹⁷ Schulman, p. 11.

that made collective action possible. Schulman is interested in articulating and preserving this sensibility in general, using herself as an example, but we can see it vividly in this exchange. The teacher possesses an absolute certainty, without needing details, that Michelle's family do not love her. Michelle's utterance falls into a category of utterance that those of queer sensibility know to guard against; to borrow phrasing, 'first, it is a lie. But, second, it is a particular lie that animates and perpetuates the mechanisms of homophobic self-ignorance and violence and manipulability'.¹⁸ At the level of its core grammar, Michelle's declaration that her parents love her is a request for confirmation from the other that this could be a realistic possibility. But in this scene the teacher refuses to be used to this end; at least, we can presume so because the passage, which breaks off here to move to another pedagogic scene of bruising misrecognition. The six images of bruising pedagogy that open the book, we are told, inspire an investigation into why and how 'something had [been erased] between A and B'.¹⁹

It can be difficult to think through what this might tell us about conflicting obligations which can surface in queer teaching. We might want to just call it bad teaching.²⁰ However, I think the text is better understood as articulating in compressed form a conflict between affective scripts, one belonging to pedagogy as traditionally conceived and one to queer activism/research. In this, I take inspiration from the work of Kimberly Quigoe Andrews, who has examined the aesthetics of a generation of poets who hold positions in creative writing faculties, to theorise 'the relationship between innovative poetic work and the academic labour that increasingly underwrites it'.²¹ She finds evidence that balancing teaching and creative writing can produce an 'almost existential tension' because, in making oneself accessible to students, the experimental writer must 'reconcile a penchant for obliqueness with the explicatory demands of pedagogy'.²² These insights might be extended into the domain of queer theory which, as explored in the previous chapter, has much at stake in obliqueness. In addition, queer theory also been explicitly concerned with interrogating the cultural demand that LGBTQ+ people accommodate the needs of others, recognising that such accommodation is typically at the expense of developing complex queer epistemologies and expressions. We can see undercurrents of this in the teaching scene above, where queer's oppositional stance, its fuck you attitude and its refusal of the

¹⁸ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) p. 204.

¹⁹ Schulman, p. 11.

²⁰ Presenting on this topic at conferences, this has tended to be the immediate reaction of at least some listeners.

²¹ Kimberly Quigoe Andrews, 'Trade Secrets: Poetry in the Teaching Machine', *New Literary History*, 49.1 (2018), 71–91 (p. 73) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2018.0003>>.

²² Quigoe Andrews, p. 73.

idea that it should fall to non-normative people to accommodate others prove virtually untenable in the daily labour of the classroom, where meeting the student/Other in their current state and helping them reckon with their own motivated implication within knowledge is quite literally the job description.

We might recognise this affect precisely as a *structure* when we compare it with formally and affectively similar scenes in Sedgwick's late work. If nothing else, the similarity is significant for the fact that Sedgwick has a reputation for having been an outstanding teacher, with skills in non-oppositional relationality. And yet, her texts are peppered with similar scenes of conflict at the heart of the pedagogic exchange. The teacher, a fictionalised version of herself, is obligated to support her student's intellectual growth but, in the experiential moment, to do so would appear to stand in the way of a honed refusal to accommodate the motivated ignorance of the other. In *Touching Feeling* the classroom is everywhere conjured; it crops up in passing mentions, the reoccurrence of which makes the classroom seem like the perpetual background to the book's arguments. This stands out as an unusual contrast because teaching is a part of daily academic work which tends to remain behind closed doors. Elaine Showalter comments that the hierarchical division between publication and teaching means that if desired 'it is possible [for professors] to go through their whole careers without examining the gap between their teaching personae and their critical beliefs'.²³ By contrast, Sedgwick brings this conflict to the surface of the text, using it as an example of the growing edge of the self.²⁴

To capture the particular flavour of these asides, I want to first focus in on one illustrative example. Sedgwick is discussing how Silvan Tomkins, one of her newly discovered favourite thinkers, would be considered essentialist by today's terms and therefore easy to dismiss. She addresses her frustration with the contemporary academy which would quickly dismiss him out of hand for committing that most grave of errors: essentialism. Sedgwick worries that, as queer theory has become institutionalised, the understandable need to reject essentialist assumptions has hardened into something automatic and self-justifying. To illustrate her point, she briefly imagines a classroom seminar exchange about Tomkins' theories of biological-based affect systems:

Surely the absence of different affects from his "theory of affect" is not oversight. It represents, instead, a theoretical decision ... Wouldn't it, after all (we imagine the quizzing from any well-drilled graduate seminar),

²³ Elaine Showalter, *Teaching Literature* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), p. 39.

²⁴ Edwards, p. 126.

wouldn't it risk essentialism to understand affects as qualitatively different from each other? Yes, it certainly would.²⁵

Difficult to capture outside of the context of the argument, this tableau is dense with affect. The 'well-drilled graduate student' offers a stylised, self-congratulatory comment which relies on an established argumentative pathway for its rhetorical force. It relies on what Sedgwick elsewhere calls, 'the hyperstimulation of one-directional capillaries of interpretation'.²⁶ Though different in content, its core grammar is similar to the above comment from Michelle; it is a statement which, in addition to literal content, functions to extract agreement from the listener, with the effect of shutting down rather than inviting discussion. With delicious sadism, the imagined teacher/self refuses the perlocutionary logic of the statement and gives what is a rhetorical question an actual answer: 'yes, it certainly would'. The rejoinder is suggestive of compassion fatigue, emphasised by the fact that this retort is presumably *imagined* rather than actually spoken; the humour of this miniature relies on the contrast it represents to the genre of real-time responses, where the teacher is more likely to patiently accommodate all comments, squash any rising impatience, and remind herself that there is no such a thing as a silly question.

We might easily pass over a minor moment like this; however, as with Schulman, this little aside is one of many similar scenes and when these images are taken *as* a pattern, they might represent the beginnings of a quantitative break in terms of structures of feeling.²⁷ These tableaux are clustered at the start of *Gentrification* whereas in *Touching Feeling* they are scattered throughout, where they become a kind of embedded grammar, the theme of classroom patience/impatience returned to again and again. I provide the following table to capture the distribution of these comments (Figure 7), though it is hard to evoke their individual and broader tonal resonance when taken out of context:

²⁵ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 111.

²⁶ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 261.

²⁷ Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: Verso, 2015), p. 161.

Remark	Page	Context
You don't have to be long out of theory kindergarten to make mincemeat of let's say, a psychology that depends on...	94	Discussion of how hard it is to appreciate the work of favourite Silvan Tomkins, which goes against the prevailing common-sense of the academy
Wouldn't it, after all (we imagine the quizzing from any well-drilled graduate seminar), wouldn't it risk essentialism to understand affects as qualitatively different from each other? Yes, it certainly would.	111	Discussion of how Silvan Tomkins risks essentialism, which, based on the reaction of her graduate students, is criminal in current academic practice
We know the force-field creating power of this attitude, the kind of skin that sheer textual attention can weave around a reading body: a noisy bus station or airplane can be excluded from consciousness, an impossible ongoing scene refused, a dull classroom monologue ignored.	114	Comparison between lowering head in shame and lowering the head to read. Comments on the way that reading allows one to shut out annoying disturbances, including classroom monologues
The moralistic hygiene by which any reader of today is unchallengeably entitled to condescend to the thought of any moment of the past...is globally available to anyone who masters the application of two or three discrediting questions.	117	Implicit reference to graduate students who dismiss thinkers from the past as essentialist
But one need not read an infinite number of students' and other critics derivative rephrasings of the book's grimly strong theory to see, as well, some limitations...	136	Description of the need for weak theory to account for the richness of an author's work, which cannot be subsumed to the main argument
I daily encounter graduate students who are dab hands at unveiling the hidden historical violences that underlie a secular, universalist liberal humanism. Yet these student's sentient years, unlike the formative years of their teachers, have been spent [in an era] where "liberal" is, if anything, a taboo category...	139-140	Expression of concern that the most commonly used critical practices are out of step with the problems of the contemporary world
Teaching privileged undergraduates, I sometimes had a chilling imitation that while I relied on their wish to mirror me and my skills and knowledge, they were motivated instead by seeing me as a cautionary figure...	154	Describes unsuccessful pedagogy
A predictable choreography ensues. I point at the thing I want her to look at, and she, roused to curiosity, fixes her attention on the tip of my extended index finger and begins to explore it with delicate sniffs.	168	Describes the frustration of failed pedagogy via a comparison with her pet cat. In this failed pedagogic scene, just as she would with a student, she tries to point out the moon but the cat misunderstands the gesture
Every summer, almost every student loses almost all memory of who she or he is. Come September, most have forgotten they have even enrolled in school.	177	Comparison between reincarnation and progress through school

Figure 7: Sedgwick's personal gripes about students

The students of *Touching Feeling* are a sketchily drawn, flat characters who do not so much think as master a series of steps which they then repeat, irrespective of context or nuance. In these scenes, the teacher's heart sinks in real time as she watches the student reach for a predictable heuristic; she has to find resources of 'teacherly patience' to wait for the student to finish before gracefully reframing and questioning the comment to elicit a more fruitful direction for conversation.²⁸ Sedgwick's *A Dialogue on Love* describes this as a trait for burdening the responsibility for making the other more interesting.

This (im)patience stands out because it so starkly goes against the grain of what the book is understood to be about on a broader level. *Touching Feeling* is recognised as a celebration of the transformative powers of pedagogy, as a mode of relation which mitigates projection, burns out paranoid defences and cultivates a reparative care for the other. Indeed, the introduction guides us to read in this way. We are told that *Touching Feeling* was written over nine years, and that it captures and enacts an affective shift which the author experienced across this period: we should notice as we read in time that, 'the sexual interest of essays seems to decrease, whereas the sense of pedagogy deepens' and we will find that by the final chapters there is less emphasis on the negative affects while the positive become much more involving'.²⁹ However, despite what we are told about the narrative arch, these scenes of sinking patience are returned to consistently across the text. Isolating these more negative affective pockets to think about the tension they provide in light of the whole can feel uncomfortable. Heather Love speaks of the difficulty in remaining open to what Sedgwick actually says about the lived experience of pedagogy, and the place that she makes for aggression within it, because this requires that we relinquish the idealised student/teacher dyad of feminist and queer politics; 'the fact that Sedgwick embodied that ideal for so many of us', writes Love, 'should not lead us to diminish the wide spectrum of her thinking and feeling'.³⁰ As the above table shows, the gripes do not start until relatively late in the text but once they do, they repeat intermittently and, if anything, they get more frequent. Notably, this is not a resolved topic – a difficulty moved past, in any final sense.

I want to suggest that part of the reason why these comments can be uncomfortable to think about for too long is that, when taken to their logical conclusions, they point to a conflict within the queer theoretical framework as it is taken up within

²⁸ Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love*, p. 62.

²⁹ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 21.

³⁰ Heather Love, 'Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading', *Criticism*, 52.2 (2010), 235–41 (p. 240).

institutions. The comments about the classroom have the quality of intrusive thoughts that one might find oneself having in everyday life, as opposed to fully theorised and worked through positions on pedagogy. Sedgwick tentatively draws the conclusion that graduate students generate feelings of unease because they provide a means of gauging the ‘automatic nervous system’ of the academy: the output of dissertators can have the defamiliarizing effect of dramatizing ‘the economy of transmissibility’ across ‘academic generations’ and ‘disciplines’ because student writers mimic the epistemological values of the previous academic generation, reflecting back an image of its most routine practices.³¹ However, precisely because they are still learning, they have not mastered the conventions to the extent that their performances seem natural and therefore inevitable.

Scott uses the label of generational unease to describe such encounters. He uses the term generation very loosely, to mean a group who share similar formative experiences; there are times at which this sense of something shared will be intensified; through, for example, collective political action, but there are other times when a sense of co-presence is far less in evidence. He says that because intellectual generations are never successive, but overlap in ways which require continual effort to construct copresence, there are times when ‘within the span of [one’s] own lifetime crucial aspects of the historical cognitive-political present in relation to which we conceive the *background* as well as the *horizon* of criticism have altered with bewildering speed and apparent finality’.³² In such moments, ‘it is no longer as clear as it once appeared which *memory* of the past or which *expectation* for the future ought to frame the exercise of our critical faculties, our moral judgments, concerning our dissatisfactions with the present’. This seems to accord with Sedgwick’s later reflections, in her posthumous book, *The Weather in Proust*, in which she describes how she was feeling ‘increasingly disconcerted’ with ‘the self-perpetuating kinds of thought’ which she was seeing in ‘a lot of more recent queer theory’ which had ‘retained the paranoid structure of the earlier AIDS years but done so increasingly outside of a context where it had reflected a certain, palpable purchase on daily reality’.³³ It also accords with Schulman’s broader contention that a generation of gay men were wiped out, making it difficult to bridge the gulf and create a meaningful shared context.

Nevertheless, such asides do register uncomfortably; Sedgwick seems to be saying that graduate students are inauthentic copies of a true original. This feels uncomfortable

³¹ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 117; 109 n 8.

³² David Scott, ‘The Temporality of Generations: Dialogue, Tradition, Criticism’, *New Literary History*, 45.2 (2014), 157–81 (p. 158) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2014.0017>>.

³³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, ed. by Jonathan Goldberg and Michael Moon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 139.

not only because queer theory in general and Sedgwick in particular has critiqued the logics of generational time but also because queer theory cuts its teeth on critiquing the notion of the authentic original; one of queer theory's most successful and foundational arguments has been that there is no authentic original, but only copies of copies.³⁴ Origins are suspect because they inscribe a sense of propriety, lineage and norms. Moreover, queer theory does not only have the conceptual tools to stop this intuition in its tracks, it is also able to empathise with the injustice of having been assigned the status of copy by contrast to the more authentic original. In a late description of the aims of *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler writes that her early work had been motivated by an urgent need to equalise the hierarchy between copy and supposed original, writing lyrically of how 'to be called a copy [...] is to find that one has not yet achieved access to the human. It is to find oneself speaking only and always as if one were human, but with the sense that one is not'.³⁵

Another, related complication is the fact that it is difficult to see how the graduate student could satisfy the contradictory desires of the queer teacher as dramatized in both Sedgwick and Schulman's narration of their frustrations with scenes of 'unsuccessful pedagogy [that] resonate with plenty of [an educator's] everyday nightmares'.³⁶ They both narrate the predicament of a queer teacher who, on the one hand, is surprised and disconcerted when she finds that there is not a seamless continuation of political values and intuitive methods for approaching culture but, on the other hand, today's queer youth disappoint because they try, albeit unsuccessfully, to mimic their elders rather than take an oppositional and critical stance to that which already exists. Schulman describes being put off by students who 'replicate or enhance' the avant-garde style of their teachers 'without the hard-core need' and 'cultural conflict' at the heart of the work'.³⁷ This is a complex and contradictory set of desires, which seem to represent a set of emergent internal contradictions that have only become obvious by living with theory over time, and by allowing some of the knottiest areas of queer epistemology to come to the surface of the text.

³⁴ The argument is best known in terms of heterosexuality's relationship to homosexuality. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 138. For queer critiques of reproductive logics and generational time see Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, ed. by Julia Kasdorf and Michael Tyrell (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

³⁵ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 218.

³⁶ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 154.

³⁷ Schulman, p. 103.

Queer Activist / Queer Teaching Sensibilities

I have argued that autobiographical scenes of pedagogic labour evidence conflicting obligations in the queer classroom, as dominant behavioural scripts of pedagogy work against those cultivated by 1990s queer activist subcultures – namely, the very queer insight that it will no longer be the burden of queer people to continually accommodate the needs and motivated interests of others at the expense of queer subtleties. Though both books show that vexing pedagogic exchange provides the spark of inspiration for an exploration of the queer sensibility, neither is explicit about *why* the pedagogic scene in particular is a privileged site for noticing queer as an affective habitus. I want to spend some time thinking about the role that the classroom has within these books, in enabling a reflexive stance on a former mode of production. To clarify, this is not to deny that queer theory has plentiful resources for pedagogy. On the contrary, some of its specialisms make it perhaps uniquely well-placed for the task – for example, its suspicion of binary identity categories (including student/teacher), its multiplication of the modes of relationality and its detailed theorisation of ignorance and knowledge as performative, motivated and political.³⁸ However, both texts evocatively suggest that there is nevertheless something which causes an impediment to *mobilizing* some of this resource in scenes of lived experience.

In both *Gentrification* and *Touching Feeling*, the formal arrangement of the classroom/pedagogic scene causes a difficulty in establishing a copresence across difference. Psychoanalytic approaches to pedagogy argue that the classroom, as with all scenes predicated on knowledge, elicits dynamics of transference and countertransference; when a teacher enters a classroom, she occupies the position of “the one supposed to know”.³⁹ Nobody really *is* the subject supposed to know but the idea is that the mistaken projection can inspire a desire to learn and interpret out of this dynamic. Shoshana Felman writes that teaching ‘has to deal not so much with lack of knowledge as with resistances to knowledge’, as well as ‘the refusal to acknowledge one’s own implication in the information’.⁴⁰ She argues that learning happens when the teacher inspires the student to interpret out of their passion for ignorance. Felman argues that some of the most successful pedagogues, she points to Socrates and Freud, have been interested in locating

³⁸ See Susanne Luhmann, ‘Queering/Querying Pedagogy? Or, Pedagogy Is a Pretty Queer Thing’, *Queer Theory in Education*, (2015) <<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f789/3c95e540f1f2c10981adee807e2b56cec767.pdf>> [accessed 28 January 2019].

³⁹ Daniel Cho, *Psychopedagogy: Freud, Lacan, and the Psychoanalytic Theory of Education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 54.

⁴⁰ Shoshana Felman, *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 77.

point of resistance, turning the ‘locus of that ignorance’ into ‘an instrument of teaching’.⁴¹ We can see this in the scene above; teaching Michelle would require a patience with the student’s passion for ignorance and an interest in helping her realise her own implication within knowledge.

This psychoanalytic approach to teaching would also insist that pedagogy requires an ironic stance towards the otherwise static identities of student/teacher. Albrecht-Crane argues that pedagogy can lock the student and teacher into pre-defined positions; she believes this to be especially true for critical pedagogy which ironically is prone to see the student as deficient, in need of disenchantment from ideologies. She warns that students can react negatively to this positioning of themselves, causing educators to act defensively in turn, which means that there is a confrontation on the level of antagonism and opposition.⁴² She hypothesises that learning can only take place when parties can create space for mediation; ‘this working-in-the-middle, where new lines of thought open up’.⁴³ Similarly, drawing on object relations and clinical practice, Dawn Skorczewski argues that teaching occurs in mutually created moments of relatedness, the split-second world of behavioural “fittedness”.⁴⁴ She argues that seminar teaching is built around the expectation of mimesis, ‘the teacher compares these observations with what he or she is feeling inside, to gauge where to take the group next’.⁴⁵ However, this fittedness is continually broken as designs clash with actual occurrences. She sees this ongoing pattern of rupture and repair as necessary for intellectual growth and what she calls person-building.

Skorczewski writes that ‘disruption and repair are not about fixing broken classrooms [...] but a process through which students and teachers lose and refind themselves over and over again. The teacher who embraces this process takes numerous risks and realises the rewards of deep engagement with his or her students’.⁴⁶ However, the high tolerance for misrecognition, and the idea of working to stay on the same wavelength of the other stands at an odd angle with foundational queer epistemologies. I want to think about this further by focusing on the now iconic affective fabric of Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet*, a book which throngs with the rage, exhaustion, and dread of the AIDS moment at a time when ‘despite the many dead, the words “AIDS” didn’t cross the lips of the U.S president throughout the early years of the epidemic, while legislators and pundits

⁴¹ Felman, p. 80.

⁴² Christa Albrecht-Crane, ‘Pedagogy as Friendship’, *Cultural Studies*, 19.4 (2005), 491–514 (p. 496) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380500219548>>.

⁴³ Albrecht-Crane, p. 493.

⁴⁴ Skorczewski, pp. 11–12.

⁴⁵ Skorczewski, p. 12.

⁴⁶ Skorczewski, p. 12.

busied themselves with devising more or less frankly punitive schemes for rounding up, classifying, tattooing, quarantining and otherwise damaging men and women with HIV'.⁴⁷ Against this backdrop, Sedgwick makes the bold argument that ignorance is not lack but key to the workings of power. Though *Epistemology* is iconic of a historical moment, this is not always explicit at the level of argument, which primarily concerns nineteenth century literature. Stephen Shapiro reflects that 'anyone who has recently tried teaching Eve Sedgwick to contemporary students will know the tremendous contextualisation required to deliver the received sense of her 1980s interpretative claims that are often difficult to locate precisely in the actual printed argument'.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, its introduction is the clearest articulation of what Ahmed has called a 'snapping point', a moment when we determine to stop doing the work of reconciliation within a bond that is exhausting and which weighs you down.⁴⁹ Sedgwick makes a stand against tolerating systematic misrecognition and comes to declare that 'ignorance is as potent and as multiple a thing there is as knowledge'.⁵⁰ She recommends that queers develop a nose for silence so that they can better notice the aggressive workings of active unknowing which cuts them off from what they need to be able to think. Sedgwick warns that, contrary to received wisdom, because conversation depends on shared knowledge, it is actually he who feigns less knowledge who has the power to define the terms of the debate, with the more insightful interlocutor shouldering the burden of meeting the unknowing-other in a location not of their choosing. She warns that this means that unthought can be harnessed for political gain; not only is it that 'powerful people don't have to be acute or right' but 'obtuseness itself arms the powerful against their enemies'.⁵¹

The detail of this affective stance becomes much more obvious when we sidestep Sedgwick's major works and look to her memoir, *A Dialogue on Love*. As Shapiro correctly notes, the contemporary relevance of *Epistemology of the Closet* for its cultural moment is primarily communicated on the affective rather than the argumentative level. In *A Dialogue on Love*, which reflects on Sedgwick's contributions to queer theory, she audaciously undercuts some of its axioms, redescribing them less as epistemic principles than character traits, 'something that you figure out early that becomes the node of later creative skills'.⁵² *A Dialogue on Love* is an example of periodic life writing; inspired by *The Clinical Diary of Sandor*

⁴⁷ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. xv.

⁴⁸ Stephen Shapiro, 'Marx to the Rescue! Queer Theory and the Crisis of Prestige', *New Formations*, 53.1 (2004), p. 86.

⁴⁹ Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, p. 193.

⁵⁰ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 4.

⁵¹ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 7.

⁵² Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love*, p. 125.

Ferenczi, Dialogue, it is a kind of “scientific diary” which shows the practice of therapy at work. Sedgwick documents her unfolding three-year relationship with her therapist Shannon Van Wey, showing how her prior academic work comes under sustained challenge through the unusual intersubjective relation which Van Wey extends and is able to maintain for long enough that it becomes possible not to repeat responses which have firmly established as interpretative schemas; she documents how this unanticipated space of interlocution invites a new beginning. As Edwards summarises, the book emphasises ‘both the intergenerational context of Sedgwick’s subjectivity, to the depth of her life history and beyond, each textual element occurs within the intersubjective context of Sedgwick’s ‘transferential’ relationship to [her therapist] Van Wey’.⁵³ Sedgwick opens by recreating the affects of her immediate and automatic assumptions about the therapeutic relation, which she expects will prove ‘hideously stylised’ and ‘battering’.⁵⁴ Her immediate and ongoing concern is that he will let her down by proving to be fatuous, complacent, stupid.⁵⁵ She is horrified by his ‘gift for guyish banalisation’.⁵⁶ From this opening, the book addresses, and tries to texturally recreate, Van Wey’s ability to create a simple and trusting atmosphere which he maintains long enough for Sedgwick to avoid repetition of what she comes to think of as an ingrained adaptation to familial and broader misrecognition which is consistent with queer childhood more generally.

These early scenes of the book represent Ignorance as if it were a physical force, a kind of hard wall against which we bang our heads. Writing that she is not necessarily looking for Van Wey to be a brilliant intellectual, she explains that this is only in abstract, because: ‘in the real world, stupidity isn’t a lack but an aggressively positive, entitled presence, and to chafe my own mind and psyche raw against it would be cruel medicine’.⁵⁷ Similar imagery abounds in *Epistemology of the Closet*. For example, suspecting that what it aims to know will be ‘trivialised or evacuated at an early stage’, the book declares that it will be shameless about speaking the obvious, while seeking to ‘resist in every way it can the deadening pretend knowingness by which the chisel of modern homo/hetero definitional crisis tends, in public discourse, to be hammered most fatefully home’.⁵⁸ Again, ignorance has a physical, bludgeoning quality against which we must protectively cocoon ourselves in order to preserve more fragile and queerer instincts. Above all, Sedgwick warns against

⁵³ Edwards, p. 132.

⁵⁴ Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love*, p. 11.

⁵⁶ Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love*, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love*, p. 11.

⁵⁸ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 12.

dwelling with ambivalence of nonrecognition, suggesting that we adopt positions more conducive to self-preservation.⁵⁹ *Epistemology of the Closet* comes to an early conclusion that it is a mistake to confuse ignorance with innocence, which would leave us endlessly trying to meet other people on their terms:

Inarguably, there is a satisfaction in dwelling on the degree to which the power of our enemies over us is implicated, not in their command of knowledge, but precisely in their ignorance. The effect is a real one, but it carries dangers with it as well [...]. The angles of view from which it can look as though the political fight is a fight against ignorance are invigorating and may be revelatory ones but dangerous places for dwelling.⁶⁰

Sedgwick's warns that we can get trapped in this dwelling zone, which will be to the detriment of nurturing queerer countercultures and heuristics. We can end up expending all our energy on trying again and again to get the motivated other on the same page, as if by articulating the message better or more carefully we would finally be successful.

Interestingly, this phenomenology of dwelling resonates with Schulman's descriptions of what she sees as the role of the educator. In the final part of *Gentrification*, Schulman provides a phenomenological description of what it feels like, moment to moment, to be a politically engaged teacher in contemporary North America. Schulman describes how teaching is essentially being a 'do-gooder'. Politically engaged teaching involves careful judgement about pushing students out of their comfort zones, away from familial attachments and normative aspirations, while refraining from pushing too hard, too fast; demystification can easily become just 'a burden dumped in the lap of hard-working but powerless students'.⁶¹ It is a balancing act, requiring that she maintain 'a thin line' between helping and humiliating, and it is one that often involves keeping up a pretence. She can see herself pretending that the education she is offering will allow her students to fulfil their life goals, when she knows that this isn't how wealth is actually acquired and distributed. She describes her ambivalence, as she steps back and sees herself withholding or softening difficult truths in order to provide a level of classroom comfort. She reprimands herself for maintaining their fantasies for betterment within an economic system while withholding from them their 'realistic positionality within that system' and she contrasts this with her preferred disposition, inherited from Act Up, which is 'asking

⁵⁹ I am thinking here of Gould's findings that early AIDS activism was able to make sense of painful ambivalence and provide a training in how transform this into rage. See Gould, p. 28.

⁶⁰ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 7.

⁶¹ Schulman, p. 172.

uncomfortable questions and saying things that are true but which might make us and others uncomfortable'.⁶²

Schulman's description suggests that pedagogy elicits dispositions and orientations: cheeriness, optimism and caution. Schulman does not speak of this comportment with admiration; 'there is a suggestive, cheerleading quality to my encouragements about reading, thinking, writing and analysing'.⁶³ Her description accords with Silvan Tomkin's idea of the educator's affective script. He argues that the teaching profession is especially appealing to those of a certain sensibility. According to Tomkins, on emerging from childhood, the depressive personality maintains an extreme pleasure in mimetic communication, coupled with acute shame when communication fails. He understands this to be a recipe for academic overachievement. The depressive student/teacher dyad is formed around a shared 'adoration of excellence', he writes, where each party is drawn into pleasing the other through displays of brilliance.⁶⁴ According to Tomkins, the classroom appeals to the depressive because it encourages an oscillation between familiar roles. Sometimes students are substitute parents who are 'impressed and excited' but whose 'boredom [...] censure, and [...] turning away constitute an enduring threat and challenge'.⁶⁵ Other times students take on the position of *ourselves* as children; we 'censor [our] beloved children for their ignorance' but 'love and respect them for their efforts to meet [our] highest expectations'.⁶⁶ The classroom, 'permits the depressive parent-child reproof-reward theme to be repeated again and again with endless variations'.⁶⁷ Tomkins is helpful for understanding the implicit affective scripts of teaching. I also appreciate his rare ability to take a non-judgemental stance on the classroom; contrary to the well-worn wisdom that teaching always informs research, Tomkins 'wish[es] to distinguish sharply between the role of the educator from the role of scholar or investigator'.⁶⁸ Writing with a distinct lack of moralism, he hypothesises that the teaching profession does not appeal equally well to everyone.

Gentrification, *Touching Feeling* and *A Dialogue on Love* too begin to distinguish between the role of the educator and the scholar or investigator who has been schooled in queer heuristics. For example, Schulman's phenomenology of the educator resonates with

⁶² Schulman, p. 167.

⁶³ Schulman, p. 170.

⁶⁴ Silvan Tomkins, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, ed. by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 225.

⁶⁵ Tomkins, p. 229.

⁶⁶ Tomkins, p. 229.

⁶⁷ Tomkins, p. 229.

⁶⁸ Tomkins, p. 229.

Tomkin's description of a classroom which 'permits the depressive parent-child reproof-reward theme to be repeated again and again with endless variations',⁶⁹ and Sedgwick's warnings about the dangers of dwelling with ignorance can help explicate why this may not be appealing to everyone. Bringing Schulman together with Sedgwick helps us to see how this dynamic is liable to be restaged in the queer classroom. I am not suggesting that Sedgwick and Schulman are somehow unable to tell the difference between Ronald Reagan's silence on AIDS and the student who keeps a blank stare or turns their body away from group discussion – it is the knowing that these are different and yet experiencing a sense of generational unease anyway that prompts these books to examine how the queer sensibility took hold and what it might keep open or foreclose in circumstances different from its emergence. They register epistemic contradictions without immediately progressing to reconcile them. Stretching the boundaries of critical writing, they are able to hold different structures of feeling simultaneously – to think about what it means to move back and forth between them.

Sedgwick tells us that *Touching Feeling* will enact a shift *between* affective systems, moving us from projective paranoia which she argues was a necessary response to the epidemic and to more relaxed depressive scripts which she associates with pedagogy. However, her affect-heavy scenic elaborations of everyday teaching nightmares means, I would maintain, that this is not a smooth progression; the narrative gets continually pulled back into this tantalising force-field of affect. This is not a smooth progression or a resolution. It is worth saying that these asides are funny; they have an appeal despite the disparaging terms with which she often speaks about paranoid reading. Fredric Jameson speaks about the relationship between narrative and localised, affective narration. He explains that 'an attention to affect denarrativizes and de-chronologizes the action ostensibly being narrated',⁷⁰ writing that the realist mode is characterised by two antinomies or poles: firstly, the narrative momentum whose 'events are already over and done with before the telling of it can begin' and secondly, the descriptive impulse.⁷¹ Jameson argues that 'the very force and pungency' of realist writing is predicated on 'that tension [between antinomies] which must remain an impossible one, under the pain of losing itself altogether and dissipating if it is ever resolved in favour of one of the parties to the struggle.'⁷² Jameson is speaking specifically about realism, but the picture he draws has resonances

⁶⁹ Tomkins, p. 229.

⁷⁰ Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (London: Verso, 2013), p. 83.

⁷¹ Jameson, p. 9.

⁷² Jameson, p. 11.

with Sedgwick's theorisation of the difference between strong theory, which sets out to prove what it knows in advance, and weak theory of a kind which is more concerned with the local affects. Like Jameson's version of realism, she sees these poles as working in a delicate symbiosis within critical writing.

These insights are helpful in thinking about how, in letting the local image seep in and add up, *Gentrification* and *Touching Feeling* are able to keep multiple structures of feeling in simultaneous circulation. The aim is not to move us into a zone which feels less muddled, but rather to inhabit this muddle in order to ask questions about how their own thought idioms, which their books actively perform, might be understood in terms of the wider historical forces shaping them. Both books are interested in excavating the way that the AIDS crisis saw the invention of new social subjects. Schulman writes that the 'compartmentalised grief' of seeing a whole generation of gay people die around her resulted in the survivors cultivating a specific idiom of response: 'efficiency, this wisdom, and calm unstoppableity', as well as 'alienation, this total disregard, this lack of fear, this common understanding, this quiet perseverance, the impossibility of being stopped or getting upset about anyone trying'.⁷³ Sedgwick comes to similar conclusions about how the 'punishing stress of such dread, and the need for mobilising powerful resources of resistance in the face of it' stamped a distinctive sensibility onto this period. She calls this a 'paranoid structuration' but is careful to explain that this was an appropriate and justified response.⁷⁴ Both also understand this affective model to be in a specific response to a set of historical conditions but 'crucial aspects of the historical cognitive-political present in relation to which we conceive the background as well as the horizon of criticism have altered with bewildering speed'.⁷⁵ It is not the system of thought that is inadequate, rather changing in political circumstances have meant that the distinctive vision of those prior demands appear to be having, at least for now, diminishing returns.

Schulman's book aims to keep that distinctive vision open as a possibility in the present, to persuade readers to see outside the dominant structure of feeling, which she calls the gentrified mind. She favours the cultivation of an anachronistic stance, which requires learning to live without one's context, 'remember[ing] what we used to know in a world that officially knows none of it'.⁷⁶ Schulman says that progressive periods cannot be forced, must be waited out until there is a swing back in the other direction'.⁷⁷ She explains

⁷³ Schulman, p. 68.

⁷⁴ Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, p. 139.

⁷⁵ Scott, p. 158.

⁷⁶ Schulman, p. 70; 109.

⁷⁷ Schulman, p. 160.

that the key is to find ways of ‘keep[ing] rigorous thought and small, accountable action alive’.⁷⁸ In the meantime, she will assemble an interview archive of Act Up and has started a creative writing from her flat; ‘in this way I have recreated my lost world for myself, and it gives me hope that bohemian, smart and angry girls with something new to say and a desire to say it are never in short supply’.⁷⁹ And, of course, *Gentrification* is part of this project of keeping a residual cultural identity alive and available for a future point at which it might be needed. Sedgwick’s book is much more concerned with serial development, initiating rubrics which she believes have more of a ‘palpable purchase on daily reality’.⁸⁰ However, the pull of her funny scenic elaborations and local asides mean that, even as one subject position is ostensibly cast off, the discarded model leaves traces that conflict with any sense of final closure or resolution.

How to Read ‘Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading’?

The fourth chapter of *Touching Feeling*, ‘Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You’ is perhaps a rare instance of a late text which rivals early 1990s queer output in terms of its reputation proceeding it. Francois Cusset describes the familiar process by which certain theory texts reach a canonical status whereby a set of guidelines is isolated and extracted so that they can be put to work in service of other projects.⁸¹ In the process, the ‘tensions, turning points, and fissures that separate the many facets of [a] career’ are reduced to create ‘a zero degree of pragmatic paradox’.⁸² This can be seen in the reception of ‘Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading’ which has been packaged as an intervention in light of the academy’s exhaustion with critique. The essay travels under the short-hand notation of an articulation of reparative reading methods. A slightly more nuanced summary explains that the essay points out the dominance of hermeneutics of suspicion in the humanities and, noticing the role of the paranoid position in the work of Melanie Klein, and the way that it oscillates with and informs the depressive, it argues that we might take up other affective stances towards our objects and therefore cultivate a wider range of reading practices. ‘Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading’ often travels as a stand-alone piece but reading it within this network of comparably minor works brings out alternative,

⁷⁸ Schulman, p. 164.

⁷⁹ Schulman, p. 109.

⁸⁰ Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, p. 139.

⁸¹ Francois Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 278.

⁸² Cusset, p. 285.

implicit narrative about gradual change; a narrative which is not obvious because of the essay's reception as a landmark intervention.

This reception is not surprising because the essay frames itself as an intervention in the very broad domain of literary theory and humanities scholarship of recent decades. However, as Bradway notes, 'this focus obscures that Sedgwick's investment in affective reading was motivated, in a large part, by the politics of the AIDS crisis and the inheritance of para-academic and activist hermeneutics'.⁸³ *The Weather in Proust* reframes 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading' in these more minor and autobiographical terms. Sedgwick writes that, though she does spend time thinking about the centrality of paranoia for queer heuristics in 'Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading', 'in those speculations I overlooked the crudest, most contingent, and probably most important reason why paranoia seems so built into queer theory as such'.⁸⁴ I like the counterintuitive implication of this statement: that something crude and contingent does not preclude it from being 'probably [the] most important reason'. She explains that, 'to quite get that' you had to have experienced the 'dread, intense, dread, both focused and diffuse' that characterised the 'dominant tonality' of gay life in the 1980s and early 1990s.⁸⁵ In this section, I want to read Sedgwick's essay in context of some of her contemporaneous para-academic and late texts, to explore an otherwise obscured narrative about an interaction with culturally available structures of feeling and ruptures to epistemic schemas within the temporality of the everyday. I will do this by reading this essay under the inspiration of Sedgwick's posthumous *The Weather in Proust* and her memoir *A Dialogue on Love* as well as thinking about it in its setting within the structure of *Touching Feeling*.

Edwards tracks how Sedgwick used the first person singular differently across her career, with *A Dialogue on Love* a turning point.⁸⁶ Edwards describes how increasingly Sedgwick was interested in dramatizing 'what is, at any given moment, understood to be the growing edge of the self', harnessing ruptures which were then used to create 'new speculations [...] about what now constitutes the growing edge of the self', reflecting back and forth 'until one has a consolidated-enough site from which to desire to find a different place again'.⁸⁷ He adds that moments of rupture 'might also reveal further paths and itineraries whose existence could never have been guessed from the place where one

⁸³ Bradway, p. 194.

⁸⁴ Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, pp. 137–38.

⁸⁵ Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, pp. 137–38.

⁸⁶ Edwards, p. 130.

⁸⁷ Edwards, p. 128.

began'.⁸⁸ Reinserting 'Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading' in this context helps us to see it not only as an intervention that aims to change the terms of a debate (though it is this too), but a tentative and provisional experiment in which the author takes her bearings within a terrain that both she and the implied reader are immersed within from the position of present tense. Sedgwick uses her authorial function, mobilising and playing with expectations about this persona, to induce a similar process of cognitive rupture in her reading audience to that which she explains she has herself gone through and which *Touching Feeling* captures/argues for on a broader scale. In other words, I read the essay alongside Sedgwick's other late experiments with deploying 'a first person at the very edge of its decomposition'.⁸⁹

The 'Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading' chapter opens with a familiar figure: key proponent of queer theory and author of *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who is in conversation with friend Cindy Patton.⁹⁰ Patton frustrates Sedgwick's eager question about whether AIDS might have been genocidally motivated, surprising Sedgwick by stating that, even if concrete evidence were to emerge in confirmation, it would only tell them what they know already. The "Sedgwick" which we get here is commensurate with the authorial function that attaches to her name: there is little distinction between her professional reading modes and the kinds of everyday theorising she does with her friend in her spare time. In the first section of the essay, we follow Sedgwick's thought patterns regarding Patton's comment, over which she says she has spent some years 'brooding'. We see her arrive at an early conclusion that Patton's rejoinder is asking us not to think about whether a proposition is true or false, but to focus instead on what knowledge does.⁹¹ Sedgwick's first conclusion is arrived at early on in the essay. She decides Patton's remark is really asking: 'How, in short, is knowledge performative, and how best does one move among its causes and effects'. This will be familiar terrain to those conversant with the interpretative tactics of *Epistemology of the Closet* and queer heuristics more broadly; Sedgwick tells us that 'by now [such a finding] ought to seem quite an unremarkable epiphany'.⁹² In context of what is to come, we might say that this opening uses the anecdotal mode to incite assumptions about the coherence of Sedgwick's persona and therefore predictions about the kinds of arguments we are likely to find in what lies ahead. We are treading safe ground: the local image, represented by the

⁸⁸ Edwards, p. 128.

⁸⁹ Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, p. 111.

⁹⁰ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 123.

⁹¹ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 123.

⁹² Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 124.

anecdote, threatens to be a rupture to an established discursive system but this is temporary, far from fatal.

At the outset “Sedgwick” is positioned firmly on the side of a hermeneutics of suspicion. However, it is not only Sedgwick who is thus positioned – as immediately obvious by the chapter title’s address. Indeed, for many readers, there will be a sense of comfort and familiarity in being in proximity to Sedgwick’s first person singular, which she had consistently used to nurture and safeguard what are now recognisable as queer idioms of thought. As Barber and Clarke write, Sedgwick’s “I” has been actively mobilised as a heuristic: ‘who can forget the extraordinary ways that Sedgwick’s “I” means – performatively, epistemologically, autobiographically, institutionally, politically – or how this I at once demands, gives, and *is* queer representation?’⁹³ If, as Sedgwick tells us, queer has an intimate relationship with paranoia then by extension we all have an intimate relationship with paranoia. We are in this together. Moreover, the opening paragraphs do not suggest that Sedgwick is going to radically depart from familiar heuristics; she shows us how useful such a line of thought can be for solving conundrums in the present. However, though the matter seems tied up, she then goes on to make what might feel like a surprising and unnecessary claim: ‘to apply a hermeneutics of suspicion is, I believe, widely understood to be a mandatory injunction rather than a possibility amongst other possibilities’.⁹⁴

I think that the reader’s ears are meant to prick up when they hear this disparaging remark about “hermeneutics of suspicion”. The essay at this point has the quality of thinking-aloud. Having been made privy to her own trails of suspicious thought, it seems plausible that, at the fictional level of the narrative, Sedgwick might be about to paint herself into a corner by inadvertently discrediting her own work and reputation. If we find ourselves entertaining such a thought, we have already been solicited into the position of the paranoid reader, who reads for an author’s elisions and motivated silences; we don’t yet know that it is this thought pattern that is about to be lambasted precisely as an automatic habit. Activating our interpretative antenna, Sedgwick starts off this trail of thought by talking about the dominance of a hermeneutics of suspicion in the humanities in general. Things start to heat up, however, a couple of paragraphs on, when she notes that, ‘even aside from the prestige that now attaches to hermeneutics of suspicion in critical theory as a whole, queer studies in particular has had a distinctive history of intimacy with the

⁹³ Stephen Barber and David Clark, *Regarding Sedgwick: Essays on Queer Culture and Critical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 19.

⁹⁴ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 125.

paranoid imperative'.⁹⁵ Sedgwick's own implication in the debate at this point remains an open secret. A paragraph later and she is writing: 'paranoia thus became by the mid-1980s a privileged object of antihomophobic theory'. It is increasingly difficult not to read between the lines, especially now that she is using a coinage of her own. Then, finally, eight paragraphs in she understatedly says: 'I have been looking back into my own writing of the 1980s as well as that of some other critics, trying to retrace that transition – one that seems worthy of remark now but seemed at the time, I think, the most natural move in the world'.⁹⁶ And so it turns out that she knew of her own implication in the debate all along – our critical habits are predictable, and would have only told this author what she already knew anyway. I want to think about this in terms of a cognitive break, inducing a revelation from which 'further paths and itineraries' can be entertained.⁹⁷

Attempting to make reparative affects available, Sedgwick's writing often seems calculated to "catch" a reader who is predisposed to resist. Part of Sedgwick's strategy seems to be creating enough distance from critical reading so that we can consider it as having a history; it is as if it is currently too close for us to see it properly. At this point in the essay she not only undercuts the reading strategies that she has provoked but provides a dazzling abjection of profession-wide agreement on what constitutes adequate reading. At this crucial part of the essay, having stated that one style of academic argument has become imperative, she writes of new historicism in general and the methods of Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* in particular:

"Always historicize" [...] fits oddly into its new position in the tablets of the Law *Always* historicize? What could have less to do with historicizing than the commanding, atemporal adverb "always"? It reminds me of the bumper stickers that instruct people in other cars to "Question Authority." Excellent advice, perhaps wasted on anyone who does whatever they're ordered to do by a strip of paper glued to an automobile! The imperative framing will do funny things to a hermeneutics of suspicion.⁹⁸

Wayne Koestenbaum writes that the meaning of Sedgwick's work is 'not only or even primarily to be found in its clearest statements' but resides instead in 'surprising locutions' where Sedgwick allows a 'condensed illumination to flood the sensitive reader, who function[s] as sister, ephebe, student, hermeneut, novitiate, ideology-wracked body, fellow sufferer'.⁹⁹ This analyses seems apt for this particular instance, which seems calculated to

⁹⁵ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 126.

⁹⁶ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 126.

⁹⁷ Edwards, p. 128.

⁹⁸ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 125.

⁹⁹ Wayne Koestenbaum, 'Forward: The Eve Effect', in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), pp. ix–xvi (p. xiii).

flood the reader with shame. This snipe is made less at Jameson's actual work than the way it circulates in the contemporary academy – nevertheless, it is still uncomfortable; especially as Sedgwick has herself been so subject to reductive reading.¹⁰⁰ Suddenly, what counts as an interesting argument has turned topsy-turvy. “Our” intuitive picture of what constitutes reputable intellectual work is invaded by a competing image, perhaps more vivid, of a happy-go-lucky, anti-intellectual from whom Sedgwick can bet we want to disidentify.

We can see why shame might be especially important in this venture of creating some leverage by looking at how *Touching Feeling* elsewhere theorises it as a key affect for identity formation and deformation. Sedgwick explains that in the moment of shame the individual becomes painfully aware of their badness or wrongness in relation to the other which can, at the same time, spur efforts to creatively reconstitute identity in ways that will prevent future exposure. It is this ‘double movement [...] towards painful individuation, towards uncontrollable relationality’ that can provoke a different orientation towards others and the world.¹⁰¹ This is useful for her project in ‘Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading’ because she is asking her reader to think again about what has for the past quarter of a century constituted academic subjectification. As Ramzi Fawaz writes, Sedgwick ‘developed a writing style that functions not merely to transmit ideas but also to pass along, invoke, or generate the very kind of affects required to grapple with them’. She works from the assumption that ideas can only ‘arrive at their conceptual destination’ if there is ready in place ‘a reading subject affectively capable of receiving them’.¹⁰²

Considered in this light, the essay can be seen as an instance of reframing. Lauren Berlant writes about engaging with Sedgwick that it often means getting ‘pulled’ into a ‘perceptual universe’ from which we find ourselves having to ‘continue the project of coming to terms with that which we can’t specifically have asked for, the shocking impact of radical reframing’.¹⁰³ It is, after all, easy to be taken unawares, led into a place in which we could not have guessed in advance because, even though Sedgwick is developing new methods for reading, she is articulating them in the familiar terms of strong theory. Sedgwick tells us that strong theory always proves the assumptions it had at the start,

¹⁰⁰ I do not want to spend too long here thinking about the ethics of these strategies. However, it is worth briefly noting that the Kleinian understanding of aggression would take as read that ‘the need to destroy and ruin is as endogenous as the need to relate and repair’; what distinguishes the depressive sensibility from the schizoid/paranoid is its faith that our external objects will prove able to withstand our bile. On this, see Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, p. 181.

¹⁰¹ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 37.

¹⁰² Ramzi Fawaz, ‘Introduction “An Open Mesh of Possibilities”: The Necessity of Eve Sedgwick in Dark Times’, in *Reading Sedgwick*, ed. by Berlant Lauren (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), pp. 6–33 (pp. 22–3).

¹⁰³ Lauren Berlant, ‘Preface: Reading Sedgwick, Then and Now’, in *Reading Sedgwick*, ed. by Lauren Berlant (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), pp. 1–5 (p. 2).

proceeding with ‘reach and reductiveness’ that gives it a distinctive ‘conceptual economy and elegance’.¹⁰⁴ This is precisely how her own argument proceeds in this chapter. After all, we end the introductory section on five axioms, which claim to organize decades of transnational intellectual work. The essay will prove, one axiom at a time, that: Paranoia is anticipatory, Paranoia is reflexive and mimetic, Paranoia is a strong theory, Paranoia is a theory of negative affects, Paranoia places its faith in exposure. Sedgwick’s use of strong, paranoid theory comes across in its tone too. Jonathan Flatley writes that the essay is more conflicted than tends to get remembered: ‘there is a lot going on in this essay [in] terms of the affects that are swirling around. That is, it’s not all friendly and reparative in there’.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, I would suggest that the essay inhabits an extremely paradoxical position: if it is successful in its aims, critique turns in on itself in an uber-act of self-destructive exposure, which would both prove the ongoing power of suspicious reading and, at the same time, prove its central thesis that critique has become routine, predictable and mundane.

Having emerged from axioms which have systematically exposed a reading practice with which both reader and author are asked to recognise themselves, the essay concludes by moving away from “negative” affects towards those which we might call reparative. In the essay’s final section, “Sedgwick” emerges once again but now looking and sounding different. She ends the chapter by describing how her diagnosis with terminal cancer has bought home that paranoid modes of relationality give few resources for bearing company with a group of friends who have too had their lifespans brutally foreshortened.¹⁰⁶ Far from the consolidated, recognisable self from the introduction, this figure is battered from illness and is seeking out ‘resources to offer an inchoate self’.¹⁰⁷ The tonal change accords with what she describes in *The Weather in Proust* as a post-diagnosis realisation: ‘without necessarily being secure in my depressive position, I knew for sure that the paranoid/schizoid was no place that I could afford to dwell as I dealt with the exigencies of my disease’.¹⁰⁸ She wonders at how brilliant a resource paranoia and strong theory were for responding to AIDS, when she intuitively knows that a position which tracks with ‘impoverishing and humiliating’ affects cannot help her with her own illness.¹⁰⁹ If she is right about the effects of strong theory, we may be having adjacent feelings of humiliation and impoverishment, having had our habits of mind so systematically exposed across the

¹⁰⁴ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 134.

¹⁰⁵ Jonathan Flatley, ‘Unlike Eve Sedgwick’, *Criticism*, 52.2 (2010), 225–34 (p. 225) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/crt.2010.0041>>.

¹⁰⁶ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 148.

¹⁰⁷ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁸ Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁹ Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, p. 138.

previous section. Obviously, we cannot experience the private pain of someone else's illness; however, those familiar with Sedgwick's work will recognise that ontological barriers have rarely presented a block to identification. We may too, at this point, be feeling in dire need of resources to come to terms with a 'radical reframing which we can't specifically have asked for'.¹¹⁰ She introduces the reparative register just when we might be feeling in most need of it, providing lavish and loving descriptions of camp performance as 'startling, juicy displays of excess erudition' with its 'rich, highly interruptive affective variety; the irrepressible fascination with ventriloquistic experimentation; the disorienting juxtapositions of present with past, and popular with high culture'.¹¹¹ She seems to be extending an invitation to just the kind of reader who will be feeling especially bruised by the strong exposure we have just been through; 'it is often the most paranoid-tending people who are able to, and need to, develop and disseminate the richest reparative practices', she writes.¹¹² If the shoe fits, then the need for reparative reading should be both palpable and self-evident.

Conclusion

I have paired Sedgwick with Schulman's projects because both document the immediate whirl of a life lived in the present tense of identity knowledges, and the difficulty of remaining internally consistent within them over time. Both books are peppered with scenes of pedagogic labour, which represent a privileged site from which to explore what register as conflicting queer obligations, as dominant behavioural scripts of pedagogy come into conflict with those cultivated by 1990s queer activist subcultures. Approaching these scenes from different angles, the authors do not aim to get beyond the difficulty so much as use the felt-difficulty for an investigation into a genealogy of queer sensibilities and the concomitant affective scripts available at the present historical juncture. If the classroom represents a cognitive rupture to the queer affective habitus, 'Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading' pushes the reader to experience a similar cognitive rupture, enabling them to move, with Sedgwick, along with the growing edge of the self that the essay aims to stimulate and set in motion.

Schulman and Sedgwick's projects have much in common in this regard. Both are motivated to make certain affective scripts available and appealing for their readers, encouraging us to take up what they differently perceive to be non-dominant structures of

¹¹⁰ Berlant, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 150.

¹¹² Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 150.

feeling. However, for all that Schulman and Sedgwick's projects have in common, they do ultimately have different aims in mind when it comes to the future of queerness as an activist and disciplinary formation. Simplifying to the extreme, in response to historically contingency and lived experience, Sedgwick favours adaptation while Schulman prefers cultural preservation and deliberately cultivated anachronism. My aim has not been to adjudicate between these positions because my primary interest is in mood. When approached for an interest in what they tell us about a present tense – a perspective which these books afford – we can see late queer theory precisely as *a moment*. Both books express a disorienting reflexivity in relation to a prior period of production, provoked by disquieting rupture which is experienced in the everyday and jolts the subject into a new plane of awareness regarding the contingencies of the self in a moment of painful individuation. Both use the 'self', and its non-seamless positionality within circulating discursive formations, to render what they differently consider a non-dominant or residual mood available to themselves and their readers.

However, it can be difficult to keep the focus contained to the present tense of these texts because of the different choices that Schulman and Sedgwick make are contentious within academic feminism. As I will explore further in the conclusion, the need for a continuity between lived and academic theory is fraught for feminist and leftist projects, which justify their relevance by maintaining this connection with experience. Furthermore, the choices which Sedgwick and Schulman finally make, which map loosely onto "paranoid" and "non-paranoid" modes if we accept Sedgwick's terms – is easily subsumed by the method wars and the 'well-worn grooves of discourse on the subject'.¹¹³ The imperative to "take a side" is perhaps only exacerbated by Sedgwick's use of psychoanalysis to distinguish "depressiveness" from paranoid modes, which establishes associations with a developmental stages of maturation. Therefore, no matter how many times Sedgwick stresses that she thinks of the depressive and the paranoid as *positions* rather than personality traits, this tends to be read with the suspicion that what she really means is that the depressive position represents a better, more advanced state whereas paranoid activism and critique are irrational and immature. Indeed, the use of psychoanalytic categories is highly risky when describing activism because accusations of the irrational and the immature are frequently used as a way to 'circumscribe the political and pronounce what is appropriate to that domain'; which typically, 'ratifies the existing social order'. In

¹¹³ See Jennifer Doyle, *Hold It Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 28.

other words, such slurs are used to make activism seem embarrassing, with the effect of ‘impede[ing] political activism oriented towards transformation’.¹¹⁴

However, when we read ‘Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading’ in context of *A Dialogue on Love* we see that Sedgwick is serious about not seeing reparative/paranoid positions as linear developmental stages. It is not just that, as she expresses in the essay, they are positions that can be simultaneously held by the same person. In the memoir, reparation itself can constitute a regression. Sedgwick makes clear that *Dialogue* was in part inspired by Michael Balint’s *The Basic Fault*, which argues that the therapeutic space can allow a return to a ‘regressive’ state, in which there is no rush to interpret, correct or solve apparent problems. For example, at the close of *Dialogue* she writes:

I see that one of the main ways I am using [the therapy space] is as an excuse to be more withdrawn [...]. It reminds me of all those unsuccessful job interviews, in the years before I got professionalised, when I’d be asked to describe my dissertation and gazing off into / outer space, would murmur, “Oh, / it’s ... complicated.” It’s hard to say why the return to this unskilled, unsociable demeanour feels just right.¹¹⁵

Though she does sometimes seem to equate depressiveness with the easing of paranoid defences, she sometimes seems to be talking in quite the opposite terms, framing this late moment as the stripping back of professionalisation, to allow the re-emergence of childish states after more adult forms have established themselves. Drawing on Blaint, she theorises the reparative interlocution as an interactive space which precedes original trauma or misrecognition, but it also precedes identity and even personality. As explored above, an established proprietor of “big ideas”, Sedgwick can use our established expectations to smuggle in very non-academic affects, ranging from sentimentality, happiness, slowness and ‘continually pressing against the limits of [one’s] stupidity’.¹¹⁶ As Stanley Fish writes, with characteristic insouciance, ‘in the system of currency within the academy [...] big ideas count more than small points made in the course of an argument. [...] if you are known as the originator, thereby the proprietor, of a big idea, then your academic stock is to some extent secure; for that identification goes with you even if you have not touched or developed the idea in years.’¹¹⁷ Sedgwick’s use of an established authorial persona as a means of questioning established values of academic practice is notable in light of the previous chapter, where lugging around the authorial function mostly acts to stymie innovation. ‘Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading’ shows that an established identity can

¹¹⁴ Gould, p. 443.

¹¹⁵ Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love*, p. 197.

¹¹⁶ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 24.

¹¹⁷ Stanley Fish, *Winning Arguments: What Works and Doesn’t Work in Politics, the Bedroom, the Courtroom, and the Classroom* (New York: Harper, 2016), p. 161.

provide room to experiment, even with areas highly abjected within the academy like with themes of sentimentality, reverie, and love, without automatically being dismissed as naive. In the next, and final, chapter, I turn to think about how Sedgwick's particular variant of late queer style spills over into a new academic generation via the reparative classroom. Having experienced this strangely located, affectively disorienting space, student practitioners grapple with the challenge of extending "non-professionalised" modes of reading learnt from the reparative classroom into the world beyond it, but without the security generated by a consolidated authorial function.

Chapter 5: student writing, generational unease and teaching reparative reading

‘The “problem student” is a fictional constellation of related figures’, writes Sara Ahmed, and it is usually conjured up by those who are invested in preserving academic privilege. It conflates ‘the consuming student, the censoring student, the over-sensitive student, and the complaining student’ and it ‘consistently position[s] students, or at least specific kinds of students, as a threat to education, to free speech, to civilization, even to life itself’.¹ This chapter theorises and historicises “student writing” as an emergent genre of late queer writing. Drawing on Ahmed’s insights, but taking them in a different direction, I am interested in para-academic texts that create thick descriptions of those who inhabit this abjected student position; or, more specifically, those who take up a former student self that has it would seem evidently has *not* been left behind at the point of graduation and in the assumption of a “proper” academic identity. I argue that, despite how readily generational models can be critiqued, these figures are adopted nonetheless and used to explore a difficulty in the transmission of queer methods as the discipline turns against itself in a deliberately contradictory stance; a reflexivity which coincides with the downsizing of the university and the casualisation of academic labour. Having explored the importance of pedagogy for late queer style from the teacher’s perspective, I am also interested in flipping the focus to concentrate on the student’s side of the sinking interlocution-space discussed in the previous chapter – to access this position, I focus on autotheory and memorial writing.

Traditionally, the link between graduate education and identity formation has been a strong one. However, it has concerned itself primarily with transitions *away* from student subjectivity. Frances Kelly argues that, in relation to graduate education, traditionally the formation of this academic identity was supposed to occur ‘not just in the discipline, but in a specific, narrow area of research: producing a Shakespearean scholar, for instance, rather than a scholar of English literature’.² Emerging in tandem with the nineteenth century research university, a model which aimed to combine research and teaching, graduate education was not only concerned with guiding a candidate in academic writing but also with the transition from apprentice to independent researcher.³ In this model, the

¹ Sara Ahmed, ‘Against Students’, *The New Inquiry*, (2015) <<https://thenewinquiry.com/against-students/>> [accessed 23 June 2019].

² Frances Kelly, *The Idea of a PhD* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 41.

³ Lesley Johnson, Alison Lee, and Bill Green, ‘The PhD and the Autonomous Self: Gender, Rationality and Postgraduate Pedagogy’, *Studies in Higher Education*, 25.2 (2000), 135–47 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/713696141>>.

doctorate is less a programme of education than a first faculty position; an experiment in whether the candidate could do this kind of work in this kind of department.⁴ Arguably, the master/apprentice model of pedagogy continues as the signature feature of doctoral education today, forming a kind of structural unconscious, even as competing agendas have been absorbed into the idea of the university. For example, though the notion of master/apprentice is nowadays more likely to be critiqued than celebrated, the model is nevertheless often implicitly expressed in the commonplace metaphor of the PhD as “a journey”, with the candidate moving from student to independent researcher and the supervisor’s input shifting in response to this gradual development. As Barbara Grant argues, graduate education and doctoral supervision in particular can be thought of as a palimpsest-like map, on which you can see traces of earlier inscriptions under the new. When older and newer layers conflict, their meanings are interrupted, and this can cause misunderstandings, ambiguities, and confusions.⁵ I argue that the student voice surfaces at these locations of misunderstandings, ambiguity, and confusions, when this submerged apprenticeship model rises to the level of conscious thought and starts to stand out as an enabling fiction in which, for multiple reasons, it has become increasingly hard to believe.

I want to focus on two areas of ambiguity, and their intersection. One such ambiguity has arisen in light of the rise of knowledge economies, provoking debates about whether the doctorate is fit for the purpose of delivering flexible, mobile and adaptable workers with a range of interpersonal and technological skills who can move into vocations outside of academia where knowledge workers are required for economic growth.⁶ Sedgwick links her own experiments with the reparative classroom to broader changes in the profession which have left it ‘so catastrophically situated’; she describes how her teaching practices changed partly in response to there being ‘fewer straightforward narratives of empowering students, of moving them into an ongoing profession, helping them in turn pass along the good stuff to young ones. Careers don’t tend to get shaped predictably like that’.⁷ Sedgwick also describes how this sense of a crumbling profession coincided with the worsening AIDS epidemic and her own diagnosis with breast cancer

⁴ Ann Austin, ‘Preparing the Next Generation of Faculty: Graduate School as Socialization to the Academic Career’, *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73.1 (2002), 94–122 (p. 96) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2002.11777132>>.

⁵ Barbara Grant, ‘Mapping the Pleasures and Risks of Supervision’, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 24.2 (2003), 175–90 (p. 176) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300303042>>.

⁶ This is frequently expressed as an uncertainty about whether the doctorate should concern the production of a thesis, making an original contribution to a discipline, or the preparation of skilled and innovative knowledge workers. See Gerlese Åkerlind and Lynn McAlpine, ‘Supervising doctoral students: variation in purpose and pedagogy’, *Studies in Higher Education*, 42.9 (2017), 1686–98 (p. 1687).

⁷ Stephen Barber and David Clark, *Regarding Sedgwick: Essays on Queer Culture and Critical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 258).

which made it viscerally evident that everyone involved in the pedagogic scene potentially had futures to look forward to that were extremely modest.⁸ She comments that this combination necessitated a reconsideration of what the classroom might be for; the focus needing to be ‘snatch[ing] what enlightenment we can from one another, hollowing out and nesting in the most provisional spaces’.⁹

With it suddenly excruciatingly obvious that the university system was creating degree-holders without there being a future for them to move into, notions of apprenticeship were finally out of the question.¹⁰ It was therefore increasingly possible and ethically imperative to concentrate on how ‘lives slide up more intimately alongside one another than can any lives that are moving to the regular schedule of generations’.¹¹ However, the texts which I look at here are authored by graduates who, despite being educated in an atmosphere where there seemed to be no place for the people they would want to become, outlived the teachers and artists that inspired them and survived the worst of the AIDS epidemic that threatened to decimate a generation of young gay people.¹² I look at Maggie Nelson and Jonathan Flatley’s accounts of being a recipient of an education in reparative pedagogy; both explore how reparative epistemologies disrupted conventional student/teacher identities, in turn inculcating a desire to learn which, perhaps ironically, extended far beyond the classroom to influence their publishing career. These authors capture how the “journey” from student to autonomous researcher was disrupted by late reparative methods which refuse to break with folk reading in a valorisation of critical dispositions. Even if the successful approximation of a discourse is always to an extent a fiction, the reparative position’s principled avoidance of method means that the “student voice” cannot convincingly or in any final sense be cast off. However, notably, these depictions arise in paratextual spaces – memorial issues and autotheory – where it is generically permissible to experiment with inhabiting student voice in an ongoing sense; as opposed to something that is hurriedly rushed through in a state of embarrassment. This suggests that queer’s late style may be only emulable outside the academy; meanwhile, academic queer theory ostensibly moves on with new directions and avenues for investigation.

⁸ Gary Fisher, *Gary In Your Pocket: Stories and Notebooks of Gary Fisher*, ed. by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 276.

⁹ Barber and Clark, p. 258

¹⁰ Fisher, p. 278.

¹¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 149.

¹² Doyle speaks of the disorientation of having grown older than the people who inspired her as a young adult who struggled to imagine a future for herself when ‘it seemed as if there was no space in the world for the people we wanted to become’. Jennifer Doyle, *Hold It Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 130.

Student voice

I want first to pinpoint what I mean by the term *student voice*. Phrases like “student voice” and “the student experience” immediately bring to mind the bureaucratisation of the university under neoliberalism, where students become customers whose feedback shapes the kind of service that the university provides. However, I am interested in something which functions in excess of this discourse. For example, collecting ethnographic data from Rutgers University, Michael Moffatt noted the subcultural language of the student culture, which he labels Undergraduate Cynical; a way of being “wise to the world”.¹³ He hypothesises that this style of being constitutes a subtle revolt from the otherwise twin dominant discourses on campus: academic-speak and bureaucracy. David Bartholomae’s thoughts on “basic writing” may also prove useful for understanding how student voice can be distinguished from other kinds of academic writing. Bartholomae argues student writing evidences on the surface of the text an attempt to wield the language of a discursive community to which the writer is not yet fully a member, therefore holding different literacies together which, he says, ‘understandably causes problems’.¹⁴ I do not think there is a *strict* link between this writing style and institutional/ontological status. Indeed, with journals now deeply encouraging of early career and graduate perspectives, and a publication record necessary for first positions, those who are “officially students” need to be able to *not* speak in the voice of one long before it is something they actually cease to be.

Student voice might be thought of as those qualities in the writing that are liable to be removed in the process of peer review or the self-editing process which experienced academics conduct on their own work. Eva Bendix Petersen argues that academic subjectification requires a process of ‘category boundary work’ and teaching is a site of intense negotiation of the ‘boundaries around what constitutes culturally intelligible academic performativity’.¹⁵ She writes that a subject fails to be recognisable as a proper academic when there is ‘something about their acts and articulations places them on the outside of the boundary separating the academic from the non-academic, the Other’.¹⁶ She draws on Butler’s idea of an ‘exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed’ which requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet

¹³ Michael Moffatt, *Coming of Age in New Jersey: College and American Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), pp. 90–5.

¹⁴ David Bartholomae, ‘Inventing the University’, *Journal of Basic Writing*, 5.1 (1986), 1–23 (pp. 4–5).

¹⁵ Eva Petersen, ‘Negotiating Academicity: Postgraduate Research Supervision as Category Boundary Work’, *Studies in Higher Education*, 32.4 (2007), 475–87 (p. 475).

¹⁶ Petersen, p. 478.

“subjects”, but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject’.¹⁷ Petersen notes that falling outside of proper academicity does not mean that you will not be recognised as a subject in other domains; for example, perhaps your performances better fall into the category of journalist, novelist or politician.

Drawing on Bousquet’s descriptions of the casualisation of labour in universities, we might imagine that there is a whole cross-section of people who are the ‘by-products of the graduate employee labour system’ which create ‘constant pressure’ on the system ‘not toward their incorporation but toward compelling their recognition that they must serve as the system’s indigestible remainder’.¹⁸ Frances Kelly, for example, argues that representations of the graduate student have proliferated in resistance to governmental and institutional lists of graduate attributes which have only become a phenomenon since the 1990s. She describes how, prior to this national interest in doctoral attributes, ‘the PhD candidate was [a] less defined, more shadowy figure, rarely glimpsed in discursive form’.¹⁹ However, as the “good” doctoral researcher came to be defined as a skilled knowledge worker who can flexibly move between academic and business domains, counter-discourses grew. She notes that the construction of “good” researcher relies on the abjected figure of the bad student researcher, constructed through non-completion statistics and their non-representation in institutional documents and ‘whose very existence haunts and threatens to destabilise the proper, good doctoral self’.²⁰ This ‘esoteric student’ conducts unprofitable experiments, works unsupervised or remains so enamoured with the narrow concerns of a subdiscipline that they are virtually unemployable in other domains. Such students embarrass the institution by disclosing what Marc Bousquet calls ‘a horrible truth’ that ‘under the actually existing system of graduate education, the terminal degree is no longer the beginning of one’s [academic] career but the logical end of that career’.²¹ If student writing is a genre, it might be one in which either students (almost) successfully write as degree-holders, or degree-holders lapse back into a position from which they have ostensibly moved away in a progression to academic careers or other vocations.

I suggest that to access this voice we need to step to the side of peer-reviewed writing to consider spaces where the editing function operates differently (which is not to say that it doesn’t function in its own way to produce its own abject others). One site

¹⁷ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 3.

¹⁸ Marc Bousquet, ‘The Waste Product of Graduate Education: Toward a Dictatorship of the Flexible’, *Social Text*, 20.1 (2002), 81–104 (p. 86) <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-20-1_70-81>.

¹⁹ Kelly, p. 42.

²⁰ Kelly, p. 43.

²¹ Bousquet, p. 89.

which I find productive for detecting student voice is in the genre of memorial essays which mourn a departed teacher. According to Jacques Derrida the memorial genre is treacherous in context of academic writing because combining mourning and intellectual work mixes the personal connection with the theoretical viewpoint in ways that are ‘indecent’ and ‘intolerable’.²² However, as Jane Gallop writes, ‘while for Derrida the connection between mourning and theoretical insight seemed unjustifiable, indecent’ the connection looked different from the perspective of the AIDS crisis; ‘queer theory [has been] energised and politically justified by the embrace of precisely such indecencies’.²³ The texts I look at are included in a special issue of *Criticism*, which is a memorial celebration of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s life and work.²⁴ I look at Johnathan Flatley’s essay contribution and briefly at Heather Love’s reflection. I also look at Maggie Nelson’s *The Argonauts* which, as The Acknowledgments recount, was composed against the background of Sedgwick’s death.²⁵ These works embrace not just the indecency of combining mourning with intellectual work but also the indecency of performing an ongoing attachment to the scene of pedagogy.

Another site for student voice is autotheory – both Flatley and Nelson’s work could be said to fit this category, if defined loosely as a genre in which writers ‘use the first person [...] to process, perform, enact, iterate, subvert, instantiate, and wrestle with the hegemonic discourses of “theory” and philosophy’.²⁶ One of the first public mentions of “autotheory” referenced a longing to remain a student after the allocated time, perhaps speaking to an emergent phenomenon of self-identified “non-professional” readers who continue an enthusiasm for theory despite its lack of obvious use value in vocations outside of the academy. With palpable bitterness, KC’s blog narrates having ‘quit the academy or maybe the academy quit me with a thick stack of rejection letters’ but still feeling that ‘there was a particular genre of work that i craved [...] testo junkie, ann cvetkovich’s depression, s. lochlann jain’s malignant, audre lorde’s zami’.²⁷ The genre can begin to provide that which Bousquet calls for: he says that ‘until graduate employees have an excrement theory of their own, they will continue to grasp their circumstance incompletely—that is, that they feel

²² Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 50.

²³ Jane Gallop, *The Deaths of the Author: Reading and Writing in Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 11.

²⁴ Jonathan Flatley, ‘Unlike Eve Sedgwick’, *Criticism*, 52.2 (2010), 225–34 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/crt.2010.0041>>.

²⁵ Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2015), p. 146.

²⁶ Lauren Fournier, ‘Sick Women, Sad Girls, and Selfie Theory: Autotheory as Contemporary Feminist Practice’, *A/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, 33.3 (2019), 643–62 (p. 643) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/08989575.2018.1499495>>.

²⁷ KC, ‘Academy, Autotheory, and the Argonauts’, *Aminotfemme*, (2016)

<<https://aminotfemme.wordpress.com/2016/04/22/the-academy-autotheory-and-the-argonauts/>> [accessed 21 May 2020].

“treated like shit”—without grasping the systemic reality that they *are* waste’.²⁸ He calls for degree-holders to refuse to be quickly flushed out of the university system which seeks to replace them with new cohorts of cheap adjunct labour. He advises that they deliberately clog up the system, creating a toxic blockage. He explains: ‘Where the degree-holding waste product understands its capacity for blockage and refuses to be expelled, the system organizing the inside must rapidly succumb’.²⁹

Bousquet’s analysis might have some explanatory power with regards to the immediate and gushing popularity with which Nelson’s *The Argonauts* was met on publication and the burgeoning of autotheory as a distinct publishing phenomenon in its wake. This publishing phenomenon may well be suggestive of a market of graduate students who will never officially become professional readers in the sense of assuming academic positions as an end goal, but nevertheless live a ‘life that has, at least in part, been made through a certain compliance with scholarly rules’.³⁰ As Jackie Stacey notes, the response to *The Argonauts* was gushing, and a flurry of readers took to Instagram to post pictures of themselves holding the book, while enthusing that this was the book which they should have written.³¹ Nelson is obviously not your typical student and yet she still is able to articulate the phenomenology of inhabiting the boarder of an academic discursive community, shaped by it and yet not fully of it; establishing identification with this space through the book’s use of direct address. As Jackie Stacey also notes, for all its popularity, the book produced ambivalence from the academy itself; she details her own reading experience of irritation, how ‘each new marginal citation grated on me’, and she comes to understand this as a symptom of her own envy at an academic-type who is apparently not subject to the same rules as everyone else; ‘I became aware of my own envy: how great not to have to bother with full references’.³²

The Argonauts may be a prime example of the way that genre can embody the ideologies of a time in which they are popular, but also help to shape and reinforce those conditions in a reciprocal relationship.³³ *The Argonauts*, I would suggest, is responding to an emergent category of personhood. This is implicit in an interview with *The White Review* in

²⁸ Bousquet, p. 89.

²⁹ Bousquet, p. 91.

³⁰ Judith Butler and Bronwyn Davies, *Judith Butler in Conversation: Analyzing the Texts and Talk of Everyday Life* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 87.

³¹ On the ‘swoony kind of fandom’ that characterised the ‘psychic life of the book’s reception’, see Jackie Stacey, ‘On Being a Good-Enough Reader of the Argonauts’, *Angelaki*, 23.1 (2018), 204–08 (p. 205) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2018.1435402>>.

³² Stacey, p. 204.

³³ Tony Thwaites, Loyd Davis, and Warwick Mules, *Tools for Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994), p. 100.

which Nelson recounts how, during the editing process, she was questioned about the book's unusual emphasis on the classroom. Nelson acknowledged that, 'to stay fixated on pedagogy as an adult is seen as a shameful thing'. Early readers of the manuscript had suggested these scenes be deleted: 'some early readers of *The Argonauts* said, "You've got a lot of scenes in here about either being a teacher or about your teachers – and are you sure you want all this in there?"'.³⁴ She details her rationale for not following their well-meaning advice: 'I think it would be very strange if you [...] spend a lot of your adult life in these relationships, that you would consider them better off repressed when it came to writing'. Recognising the crassness and leaning into it nonetheless, Nelson takes on the voice of the ex-student still fixated on the classroom. She also opts not just for citation but *over*-citation. *The Argonauts* flaunts that tic of student writing and *female* student writing in particular: an excessive overreliance on the words of others which is thought symptomatic of a timidity in arrogating one's own voice to stake an autonomous position. Nelson speaks of this as both a preference and a sensibility a certain type of person: 'for a long time I worried that there was something wrong with me as a writer because I leaned so heavily on the thinking and writing of others'. *The Argonauts* embraces this feature as a sensibility or orientation: 'my impulse', she writes, is 'to make this thinking-with-others, this weaving of mine and other's words part of the texture of my writing'.³⁵

The texts which I look at here introduce student voice by working with and against the policing function of academic norms. Not only are these norms in active and constant negotiation, which is arguably a feature of all academic writing; this friction is not erased from the final text but is actually made into a key feature. In conversation, Petersen and Butler discuss para-academic writing of this kind. Butler, reflecting on Petersen's experimental writing, says:

[This kind of writing] does not push the backspace button; it does something else. It continues to write and continues to write about the possibility of pushing the backspace, and it may well be that the author pushed that backspace button at some points, but we have no way of knowing. [It] writes through or against the backspace to talk about what it is like to sit there, to handle that door, to take account of that life that has, at least in part, been made through a certain compliance with scholarly rules. [...] We have [...] an actual enactment of compliance/noncompliance and then we are asked to consider whether it complies

³⁴ Jess Cotton, 'Interview with Maggie Nelson', *The White Review*, (2015) <<http://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/interview-with-maggie-nelson/>> [accessed 26 January 2019].

³⁵ Maggie Nelson, 'Writing With, From, and For Others', *Tin House*, (2012) <<https://tinhouse.com/writing-with-from-and-for-others/>> [accessed 26 January 2019].

or does not comply with academic standards, and whether it would be publishable.³⁶

I am interested in late queer texts which that reintroduce this perceptive of s/he who tries on the discourse of the university without seamlessly extending into its gestures and rituals. Instead, these texts experiment with the backspace; with what it is like to inhabit rather than move embarrassedly and hurriedly through student subjectivity to get somewhere else on the other side. However, crucially, even if there is some estrangement from academic rules in these texts, they could not have been written without the training; the writing would not be possible without 'a firm grasp of the norms that [they are] trying to sidestep or question'.³⁷ It is this ongoing sense of negotiation which leads me to want to say that these are accounts of he or she who is *existentially* a student.

Inside the reparative classroom

A number of critics in the field of Education have studied the importance and necessity of affect for successful learning. For example, Albrecht Crane argues that the classroom can generate a micropolitics; learning is most dramatic when the student/teacher binary is disrupted to create a productive new space for interlocution, making room for something in excess of that which has already been established.³⁸ Megan Watkins similarly argues that the repetition of similar affects in the classroom can 'contribute to a student embodying the desire to learn and the capacity to do so'.³⁹ She looks at case studies where classroom practices increased student interest, which had cognitive but also corporeal effects, and was ultimately 'effective in equipping students with the skills they require for academic success'.⁴⁰ Sedgwick emphasises that her own theorisation of affect was inspired and mutually informed by seminar pedagogy.⁴¹ Therefore, it is not altogether surprising that the reparative classroom would generate some of the features which Albrecht Crane and Watkins describe. However, as Franklin notes, far from equipping students with the skills necessary for academic success, Sedgwick at this point in her career was interested in moving away from 'academic ways of knowing', including high valuations of fluency, originality and complexity, in realisation that, 'despite being a critic who has made a career

³⁶ Butler and Davies, p. 87.

³⁷ Butler and Davies, p. 89.

³⁸ Christa Albrecht-Crane, 'Pedagogy as Friendship', *Cultural Studies*, 19.4 (2005), 491–514 (p. 492) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380500219548>>.

³⁹ Megan Watkins, 'Pedagogic Affect/Effect: Embodying a Desire to Learn', *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 1.4 (2006), 269–82 (p. 270) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/15544800701341533>>.

⁴⁰ Watkins, p. 274.

⁴¹ Sedgwick, p. 21.

out of challenging norms', academic ones had 'escaped her otherwise relentless deconstructive intelligence as ultimate goods'.⁴² Drawing on *The Argonauts*, I want to think about the paradoxical nature of the affects generated in the reparative classroom.

The Argonauts is concerned, amongst other things, with detailing the contagiousness of the atmosphere which Sedgwick created in her classes at City University of New York. The citation of authorities is conventional for academic writing, affording evidence of how an argument has been constructed under the influence of others. However, Nelson's citations are less concerned with demarcating the boundaries of intellectual property than affective contagion; an enlargement of affect that spills over natural boundaries of the individual subject and therefore disrupts our usual understandings of subjectivity.⁴³ In one scene, Nelson writes of how, witnessing Sedgwick's performance of the excessive nature of identification, any intuitive fears about appropriating gay subcultures were backgrounded in the extension of a habitus which was more 'powerful, particular and compelling' than the poles of gender identification which had heretofore presented themselves. Nelson explains that Sedgwick's presence made compelling and necessitated a theory that could make sense of how a "straight woman" could be so passionately and enthusiastically identified with gay men:

Such were Sedgwick's identifications and interests; she was nothing if not honest. And in person she exuded a sexuality and charisma that was much more powerful, particular and compelling than the poles of masculinity and femininity could allow – one that had to do with being fat, freckled, prone to blushing, bedecked in textiles, generous, uncannily sweet, almost sadistically intelligent, and, by the time I met her, terminally ill.⁴⁴

Here, ideas are not abstract; this is not really a case of deciding on the theoretical merit but the happenstance of how ideas are rendered *appealing* through contingent encounters. Sedgwick's traits are emphasised, many of which overlap with queer epistemologies: she is large, sadistically intelligent, flamboyant, shame prone. Erica McWilliam notes that, though it can be disconcerting to think about, in practice pedagogy rarely concerns the disembodied transmission of disciplinary material; when teachers enter a classroom they are made to structurally stand for "the body of knowledge", extending an invitation for others to join in a scholastic career.⁴⁵ Though not mentioned in this specific extract, Nelson elsewhere specifies that Sedgwick's star status played a role in heightening the stakes of this

⁴² Cynthia Franklin, *Academic Lives: Memoir, Cultural Theory, and the University Today* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), p. 248.

⁴³ Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (London: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 16.

⁴⁴ Nelson, *The Argonauts*, p. 30.

⁴⁵ Erica McWilliams, *Pedagogical Pleasures* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 109.

as an invitation; Franklin notes that landmark accounts of critical pedagogy, written from the teacher's perspective, often fail to discuss the difference it makes when the classroom figurehead is 'not simply a teacher, but also internationally renowned public intellectual'.⁴⁶

However, the impact which Nelson details is not just an invitation into queer theory generally but a queer theory at a moment of self-conscious lateness; one which experiments with turning against its former projects. As Nelson points out in the anecdote above, one trait which mattered, which is worth singling out, is that: 'by the time I met her [Sedgwick was] terminally ill'.⁴⁷ Sedgwick's work links her experimental pedagogy of this period with the bardo, a meditative space located between what has already happened and what is to come. Sedgwick is especially interested in her own position in 'the painful bardo of dying', which occupies the space between contracting a terminal illness and death itself.⁴⁸ Inspired by the bardo, her classroom was constructed as a space of hyper-relaxation which refuses to generate a first person singular and instead favours the regression into states that predate the construction of identity in general and academic personhood in particular. Later in *The Argonauts*, Nelson narrates that what she encountered in the disorienting space of this bardo/classroom was precisely the opposite of what she thought she would be exposed to by getting into graduate school.

Nelson depicts her younger self as a proto-queer student, who entered graduate school with a set of expectations about what an encounter with an internationally renowned public intellectual might extend. She depicts how the opening moments of Sedgwick's class on Non-Oedipal Models of Psychology thwarted such expectations:

By way of introduction, [Sedgwick] announced that she had started going to therapy because she wanted to be happier. To hear a scary theoretical heavyweight admit such a thing changed my life. Then, without missing a beat, she said she wanted to play a quick get-to-know-you game involving totem animals.

Totem animals? how could it be that I had fled the spacey Haight Ashbury of my youth for the hardcore, intellectual New York, explicitly to escape games involving totem animals, only to find myself in the middle of one in a doctoral seminar? The game placed an icy finger on my identity phobia [...]. Perhaps anticipating this horror, Sedgwick explained to us that the game had a kind of out. She said we were free to offer up a fake animal, a kind of decoy if we desired. If, for example, we had a "real" totem animal that we would prefer to keep to ourselves. I didn't have a real or a fake animal, and so I just sweated as we went round the room. When it got to me, I burped out *otter*.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Franklin, p. 203.

⁴⁷ Nelson, *The Argonauts*, p. 30.

⁴⁸ Cited in Barber and Clark, p. 212, n. 3.

⁴⁹ Nelson, *The Argonauts*, pp. 111–12.

This recount humorously details the teacher's embodied performance frustrating the student's expectations about how a 'scary theoretical heavyweight' should behave. "Sedgwick"'s performative admission of therapy and articulated aspirations for happiness are ill-fitting with the expected critical disposition and, furthermore, the hippy-dippy game comes uncomfortably close to the provincial, parochial and unenlightened values that represent a nightmare for the precocious queer youth who dreams of escaping suburbia in favour of the urban terrain of university cities.⁵⁰ Nelson remembers back to her student-self, who asks with silent incredulity how it could be that she 'fled the spacey Haight Ashbury [...] explicitly to escape games involving totem animals, only to find myself in the middle of one in a doctoral seminar?' Her gut unease and disorientation is combined to toxic effect with more generic embarrassment typical of ice-breaker introductions.

A Dialogue on Love can help unpack the affects of this little scene which I want to spend some time on. *Dialogue* charts Sedgwick's gradual shift towards reparative relationality, and near the end of the book she describes a change in attitude towards spiritualism, leading her to engage in practices that she would once have thought sentimental and unsophisticated. *Dialogue* details that, at an earlier life stage, she would have been (much like student-Nelson) embarrassed by the scenes that she later curates: 'with my puritanical modernist aesthetic, I used to find it embarrassing in a religion like Buddhism, to have images of idolatry scattered around the place'.⁵¹ She narrates how she is then shocked to realise that her house is bedecked with pandas; the value of these totems lie in how she is 'made happy' by the 'clumsy comedy of these big, inefficient, contented, very endangered bodies with all their sexual incompetence and soot black cookie-cutter ears'. She recognises herself in the panda's image, as well as those she most dearly loves. Coming to the conclusion of *Dialogue*, Sedgwick determines that she need not feel ashamed of this evident desire to be made happy: 'it never seems sensible to pass along moral injunctions. I sometimes think that beyond the golden rule, / the only one that / matters is this: If you can / be happy, you should'.⁵² When read in context of *Dialogue*, the totem game tableau seems neither arbitrary nor a teaching faux-pas but rather a condensed image of how the performative affects of the classroom involve those usually abjected in the graduate classroom – like, for example, guileless happiness.

I think of this scene as a concrete condensation of what is elsewhere widely evident in *The Argonauts*: the paradoxes of an education in reparative reading and how these

⁵⁰ On the significance of gay urban migration see David Halperin, *How to Be Gay* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2012), p. 436.

⁵¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), p. 215.

⁵² Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love*, p. 216.

paradoxes are inculcated in a process of subject formation. In this scene many of the structural features of the classroom persist; however, content clashes with these structures and the roles they implicitly generate. Ben Highmore writes that ‘if a lecture offers a playing-through of ideas, then seminars are where ideas become inhabited’.⁵³ Similarly, Caroline Levine writes that the seminar space functions to build academic identity by ‘moulding “free,” self-governing subjects through strategies of selection, examination, and panoptic spatial arrangements, as the students and teacher sit around a long table and observe one another’.⁵⁴ In the reparative classroom, as documented here, we still have the teacher who stands at the head of the classroom and occupies the position of the “one who is supposed to know”. And we still have the student who comes to the space in anticipation of being disciplined into a discipline. Such structural features are already in play before anyone has to say or do anything. However, even if the usual formal arrangements are all in evidence, shaping expectations for how to behave, what is on offer does not seem to be inviting students into an ongoing profession, passing on ‘the good stuff to young ones’.⁵⁵ Instead, the teacher performatively brings a set of non-academic affects into the disciplinary space of the graduate classroom. For example, Edward Said states that “the intellectual” iconifies an oppositional spirit: s/he is a person who ‘can’t be easily co-opted by governments and corporations’ and whose very sense of self is ‘staked on a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés’; the intellectual is ‘sceptical, engaged and unremittingly devoted to investigation’.⁵⁶ Though this ideal has surely come under sustained pressure in light of the neoliberalisation of the university, it is not difficult to see that it continues to have currency as an identity-ideal and an image of what an intellectual culturally represents. Sedgwick’s totem animal game operates in provocative contrast to this image, teetering on the precipice of the ready-made clichés, new-age feminism and colonial appropriation.⁵⁷

With the teacher taking the lead in disrupting the student/teacher binary, the student waivers in turn; reaching out for various scripts that might guide how to be the appropriate student of such a classroom. The deprecating humour of the scene lies in the student’s inability to successfully commit to any of the scripts circulating for how to *be* in relation to such a classroom. Helen Horowitz’s *Campus Life* describes how “the student” is

⁵³ Ben Highmore, *Cultural Feelings: Mood, Mediation and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 12.

⁵⁴ Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 47.

⁵⁵ Barber and Clark, p. 258.

⁵⁶ Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), p. 17.

⁵⁷ For a detailed exploration of Sedgwick’s position on appropriation with regards to her late interest in Buddhism see ‘Pedagogy and Buddhism’ in Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, pp. 153–82.

shaped by a history of cultural traditions which place constraints on how individuals see themselves, make decisions and behave. She outlines “classic” American campus culture which arose out of the elite male culture of the eighteenth century. For students of this type, ‘the real measure of success was the judgement of peers’ and close contact with faculty was treated with suspicion and scorn.⁵⁸ Sports clubs, fraternities and adolescent rebellion were the keynotes to this exclusive culture and there was little premium on getting to know faculty inside or outside of class. Horowitz details alternative models which emerged when women, people of colour, and people of working-class backgrounds entered the university. This type of student was more likely to work hard and view college as a precious gateway to the professions. These “outsiders” valued good grades, sought closer relationships with faculty and were regularly to be found in women’s studies departments.⁵⁹ These archetypes are recognisable in this scene, where they simultaneously arise and fail to take hold. This is perhaps an affordance of the genre; autobiography studies teach us that memoir often evidences narrators who actively negotiate culturally available models of identity which coexist and sometimes conflict in a given time and place.⁶⁰ Nelson describes her graduate self as ‘cruising for intellectual mothers, gravitating towards the stern and nonmaternal type’, who might act as a gateway to a different kind of life.⁶¹ However, disoriented by the affects of the reparative classroom, the character grasps for another script: the cynical student who refuses to speak in class and maintains a scornful distance from faculty. “Nelson” begins to sneer at the icebreaker instruction but cannot commit to actual refusal – caught between different scripts for how to be the appropriate student, when it comes to her turn, she burps out otter.

The literature on pedagogy and affect suggests that such ruptures to student identity can be fantastically effective in inspiring a desire to learn.⁶² In the book, it is obvious that this encounter is intellectually significant; life-changing, as she puts it here. However, it is difficult to determine exactly what kind of learning follows from the reparative classroom. It is difficult to work out what exactly it is trying to make available. As Michel Warner explains, though different teachers might have different ideas about what critical reading means, ‘the axis of opposition is fundamental to our institutional role’

⁵⁸ Helen Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 34.

⁵⁹ Horowitz, p. 269.

⁶⁰ Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 39.

⁶¹ Nelson, *The Argonauts*, p. 58.

⁶² Watkins, p. 277.

and, irrespective of which school we are propounding, our ‘common enterprise’ is to ‘discipline students out of their uncritical habits into critical reading – whatever we mean by that’.⁶³ He explains that this means that teachers usually have their ‘work cut out for them’ in the classroom:

students who come to my literature classes, I find, read in all the ways they aren’t supposed to. They identify with characters. They fall in love with authors. They mime what they take to be authorized sentiment. [...] They shop around among taste-publics, venturing into social worlds of fanhood and geekdom. They warm with pride over the national heritage. [...] My job is to teach them critical reading, but all these modes of their actual reading—and one could list count-less more—will tend to be classified as uncritical reading.⁶⁴

Warner contrasts critical reading pedagogy – which, though never stated in such propositional terms, aims to ‘save [students] from habits of critical reading that are naïve, immature, underexamined – or worse’ – with uncritical reading which might embrace the naïve, the immature, the underexamined and worse. He explains that reparative reading, based on Sedgwick’s articulation of it at least, is by definition ‘non-systematised’ and therefore is apparently ‘not so much a method as a principled avoidance of method’.⁶⁵ He says that Sedgwick’s uncritical reading would seem to be by definition naïve and therefore, ‘by its nature it cannot attain the coherence of a normative program of reading’.⁶⁶ He notes the potential paradox of such a programme, which, because unsystematised, ‘cannot constitute a real rival to what is called critical reading. Hence the ready consensus: If the choice is between critical and uncritical reading, who could be for the latter?’.

If the pedagogic scene requires the teacher’s address which is actively aimed at ‘shaping, anticipating, meeting or changing who the student thinks she is’, the reparative teacher’s address aims to be not only without projection and anticipation but to create space for practices of reading that the student already had before entering the scene.⁶⁷ It sanctions styles of reading of which the student *already* has possession. Indeed, in this case, the teacher’s mode of address requires this particular student to undo some of the formation of an academic identity which she has managed on her own, just by virtue of a (perhaps innate?) tendency to disidentify with her first culture. Nelson arrives at college in eager anticipation to continue the process of disciplining herself out of the uncritical

⁶³ Michael Warner, ‘Uncritical Reading’, in *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*, ed. by Jane Gallop (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 13–38 (p. 13).

⁶⁴ Warner, p. 13.

⁶⁵ Warner, p. 18.

⁶⁶ Warner, p. 15.

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Ellsworth, *Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy and the Power of Address* (New York: Teachers’ College Press, 1997), p. 7.

reading habits inculcated from her suburban family of origins. Ironically, the otter which Nelson offered as a ‘form of true’ has just the qualities that Sedgwick’s early work showcased in its deconstructive refusals: Nelson tells us that the otter had appealed at the time because of its wily slipperiness – ‘in the face of dogmatism, the menacing pressure to take sides, [the otter] offers novel responses: to flee, to escape, to demure, to shift or refuse terms, to disengage, to turn away’.⁶⁸ This classroom brings together two people who are both experiencing a critical juncture but travelling in seemingly opposite directions: the proto-queer student imagines that she has fled the oppressive space of childhood while the teacher actively revisits such discarded and abjected scenes.

Unable to respond to this mode of address in the moment, *The Argonauts* is, among other things, an account of how these formative classroom experiences became lodged in the body as an accumulation of affects and affections that extended across decades.⁶⁹ Nelson’s book is interested in detailing how this ‘particular manner of thinking’ became an orientation which she is interested in ‘offering up’ and ‘performing’ to the reader.⁷⁰ The book is an experiment with the paradox of constructing a career, identity and a voice out of a programme which dissolves career, identity and professional voice. And it is an experiment with whether it is possible to go against the consensus that nobody could be for *uncritical* reading if the choice were between it and critical reading.⁷¹ Looking back on the scene from the distance of a couple of decades, Nelson can finally conclude that ‘whatever I am, or have since become, I know that slipperiness isn’t all of it’. She describes how encounters such as the one detailed taught her that ‘studied evasiveness has its own limitations, its own way of inhabiting certain forms of happiness and pleasure’ and the book theorises itself as a delayed effort to explore, ‘The pleasure of obligation, the pleasure of dependency. The pleasure of ordinary devotion’.⁷²

Beyond the Reparative Classroom

As part of his history of French Theory and its afterlives, Cusset examines how ‘student users’ of theory took what they had learnt in graduate school into other professions like fashion, film and advertising. He notes that, in contrast to ‘official, diploma-bearing experts’, these students tended to use theory in a more fragmentary and eclectic manner, blending texts with existential angst, personal recommendations and

⁶⁸ Nelson, *The Argonauts*, p. 112.

⁶⁹ Watkins, p. 273.

⁷⁰ Nelson, *The Argonauts*, p. 97.

⁷¹ Warner, p. 15.

⁷² Nelson, *The Argonauts*, p. 112.

playful re-appropriations to ‘carve [...] a bio/bibliography, a unique connection between text and real life, by releasing a theoretical enigma from its paper prison and try[ing] out its implications in every aspect of existence’.⁷³ He draws attention to the ‘the light-hearted qualities of student conversation’ with its ‘free use of tactics such as name-dropping and spontaneous association with incompatible concepts, a heady collage of notions in which thinking up the most incongruous combination is a mark of intellectual ease and brilliance’.⁷⁴ Cusset acknowledges that, though surely many quickly abandoned their interest in theory when they moved into alternative vocations, others ‘were bold enough to extend into their professional lives the universe of perspectives [their teachers] had taught them’.⁷⁵ Cusset’s work opens up a whole new dimension for thinking about how theory travels. His work is richly suggestive – opening up a previously obscured landscape, populated by those who retain this style of reading because, with academia not their official vocation, there is little imperative to conform to its internal standards of competence.

The voice of *The Argonauts* seems to belong to this milieu; it is obviously shaped by exposure to academic learning but, like the student reader, it approaches theory primarily as a ‘living object of both desire and disapproval’ from which it ‘constructs a bio/bibliography’.⁷⁶ While many student readers cannot fully locate themselves in a discourse of a particular academic community, not because they lack competence but because they “choose” employment in other professions,⁷⁷ Nelson’s book considers what it means to technically belong in the fold of an academic community without finding oneself able to seamlessly extend into the language of that community through critical orientations. Her thinking idioms, inspired by the reparative classroom, are those which Warner says are ‘by definition neither reflective nor analytic’ and therefore, ‘must [...] prove untenable—i.e., transmute into the material of critical reading—when summoned to the bar of examination’.⁷⁸ *The Argonauts* is primarily about Nelson’s relationship with her gender-fluid partner Harry Dodge and their shifting experiences of embodiment as he begins testosterone and she goes through pregnancy. However, it is also a document of thought-styles which emerged out of a historically specific encounter with critical theory. The book opens with a series of fragments where we are shown how the narrator “reads” the

⁷³ Francois Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 227; 226.

⁷⁴ Cusset, p. 219.

⁷⁵ Cusset, p. 227.

⁷⁶ Cusset, p. 217.

⁷⁷ Bousquet argues that the discourse around choice and alt-careers usually obscures the fact that the choice is often involuntary. See Bousquet, p. 82.

⁷⁸ Warner, p. 15.

immediate surroundings. Nelson and Dodge seem to question everything in their immediate environment, from the television they watch to the road signs that they drive past; retaining that joy of discovery, of seeing life through fresh eyes, that Cusset says is characteristic of student's love affairs with theory. However, far from the insider codes that Cusset describes, Nelson's prime interest in these opening pages is how her immediate sense of how to interpret her environment continually clashes with other graduates of the theory classroom which whom she spends her time. She catalogues the difficulty of extending into all corners of her life the 'the universe of perspectives' that she has picked up from the micropolitics of the reparative classroom and whether she is 'bold' enough to carry this through in light of continual misrecognition.⁷⁹

For example, Nelson describes a friend's visit to her house which resulted in a scene of shaming misrecognition around the proper way to read. Her friend reaches for a mug and pulls down one that was gifted from Nelson's mother. It was 'one of those mugs that you can purchase online from Snapfish, with the photo of your choice emblazoned on it', and it depicted a family Christmas scene, with Nelson 'seven months pregnant' and her partner and his son 'wearing matching dark suits' against a backdrop of a mantle with 'monogrammed stockings hanging from it'.⁸⁰ The friend recoils in visceral disgust: '*Wow*, my friend said, filling it up. *I've never seen anything so heteronormative in all my life*'. Nelson's shame remaining implicit, the narrative progresses to ask a series of questions which will become central to the book: what is the essence of heteronormativity? Are pregnancy, love and happiness always the opposite of queerness? Is it possible to rethink the word "radical"? Reviewing Sedgwick's late work, Nelson describes how theory of affect 'teaches us that that rush of blood signals our interest, our investment, our care'.⁸¹ She goes on to link this with being a student, and a student taught by Sedgwick in particular. She describes how Sedgwick theorised shame in many settings but overlooked a key one: 'being a student is – perhaps structurally – an incredibly rich, contradictory, and volatile place to be. She describes how easy it is to forget the 'the melancholia of inferiority, of distance, of longing, of feared impossibility, of shame about where you are, or who you are, right now' that constitutes student subjectivity.⁸² Bartholomew writes similarly of how student writers need time to locate themselves in the discourse of a particular community, its gestures and rhythms, before they can be expected to wield this language in service of original thought.

⁷⁹ Cusset, p. 227.

⁸⁰ Nelson, *The Argonauts*, p. 12.

⁸¹ Maggie Nelson, 'Finishing Touches', *Los Angeles Review of Books* (2012) <<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/finishing-touches/>> [accessed 26 January 2019].

⁸² Nelson, *Finishing Touches*.

In the meantime, their writing will evidence points of discord; ‘difficult, and often violent, accommodations that occur when students locate themselves in a discourse that is not “naturally” or immediately theirs’.⁸³ The comment from the visiting friend is in some ways similar to teacher feedback, which points out a misjudgement in reading and thereby signals that the other’s approval has slipped.

However, tellingly, any shame communicated about this encounter is implicit in the narrative rather than explicitly detailed. Instead, Nelson cuts directly to her series of questions about the inevitability of this criticism. Being called out as an uncritical reader does not seem to bring our narrator back into line, back into the realm of what Petersen calls ‘proper academicity’.⁸⁴ If uncritical reading is blocked by shame on one side, then so too is critical reading blocked on the other. We might think of this with regards to the previous chapter’s argument, which explored how, in making room for abjected reading styles like identification, self-forgetfulness and reverie, Sedgwick turns what counts as an interesting reading inside out. It is ritualised critical reading which represents deadening common-sense, shamefully bad parody. Heather Love’s memorial reflection, published in *Criticism*, addresses the specificity of responding to ‘Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading’ as a student reader. Love notes the ‘suppleness’ of the direct address in the essay’s title and says that, in her particular case, she is ‘hailed as one of the latecomers to queer theory who picks up paranoid habits of mind as critical tools or weapons but is detached from the living contexts [of the 1980s AIDS crisis] in which these frameworks were articulated’. However, in excess of this, ‘I also find myself hailed in another less damning, but more embarrassing way’.⁸⁵ She describes this as specific to inhabiting student subjectivity: ‘my misrecognition of myself as the essay’s addressee is in the longing, absurdly hopeful mode of the amorous student – looking for love in all the wrong places’.

The difference between “expert writers” and “basic ones”, writes Bartholomew is that the former can ‘better imagine how a reader will respond to a text and can transform or restructure what they have to say around a goal shared with a reader’.⁸⁶ However, Sedgwick’s late writing often works by moving what we might have assumed was our common ground with her; requiring us not to rise to even higher levels of shared understanding but to sink to ever lower levels of self-deprecation. I can illustrate by drawing on my own reading encounter with a moment in one of her chapters: ‘Affect

⁸³ Bartholomae, p. 11.

⁸⁴ Petersen, p. 478.

⁸⁵ Heather Love, ‘Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading’, *Criticism*, 52.2 (2010), 235–41 (p. 236).

⁸⁶ Bartholomae, p. 9.

'Theory and Theory of the Mind'. Sedgwick explains that she finds Klein's work 'thrilling' because it does not hold academic thinking above other kinds and this 'makes it possible to be respectful of intellectual work without setting it essentially apart from other human projects'.⁸⁷ In other words, academic and folk theorising are rendered indistinguishable. She illustrates by turning to *Epistemology of the Closet's* much venerated Axiom 1: people are different from each other. She argues that this axiom, when we get down to it, is little more than an expression of theory of the mind; a basic developmental stage of almost any ordinary toddler. Whether or not Sedgwick actually remains 'respectful of intellectual work' is always pushed that little bit beyond the limit. Reluctant, I can follow her in her point; I can see that it may not be a good thing to sequester academic theory into an ivory tower where it stands above the theorising that ordinary people do. So yes, the axiom could, perhaps, be considered toddler theory – no better, no worse. It, and I by implication, can withstand the depreciation. A few paragraphs later, however, she comes back to reiterate this point, as if recapitulating an established argument to make sure it has stuck (which would make sense, because it is hard to take); but, this time she surprises by pushing me just that little bit further than what I have already stretched to accept, by adding a sting in the tail at the sentence's end: 'I was interested in the attribution of theoretical activity to lay persons – including lay toddlers and even lay primates'.⁸⁸

Sedgwick's stated aim is not to replace one method of reading with another, but rather to 'extend the gene pool' of critical practices on which we may freely draw. However, Nelson and Love's comments begin to suggest that these tactics may have unanticipated effects on student readers encountering them in the midst of the awkward process of assimilating the "basic language" of the discipline and therefore already structurally susceptible learning through feedback. That sting at the end of the sentence's tail is in some ways reminiscent of the discomfort of having anticipated common ground only to sink back into oneself, to question where the mistake was made and one could do differently next time.⁸⁹ Though Sedgwick insists on the flexibility between scripts, *The Argonauts* if anything suggests a *lack* of flexibility. Critical dispositions are abjected and therefore blocked off to the graduate of the reparative classroom. This is perhaps telling in light of the fact that, as Bradley notes, it is hugely important for Sedgwick's ethics to insist

⁸⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, ed. by Jonathan Goldberg and Michael Moon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 127.

⁸⁸ Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, p. 146. Sedgwick explains how she has a love of putting a 'sting [...] in a paragraph's tail', which she 'identified with and was envious of' when she came across it in the work of her student Gary Fisher. See Fisher, p. 277.

⁸⁹ Elspeth Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. xii.

that affective scripts are flexible. However, ‘it is not clear that Klein saw the position as one we can choose to inhabit’.⁹⁰ With shame seemingly blocking uncritical reading on one side and shame blocking uncritical reading on the other, the book’s method is to take note of misrecognition, and use shame as a starting point for an investigation into *how* this particular person came to read in this particular way; and what she might do next, in light of having a reading disposition that she cannot choose not to have. In an interview, Nelson explains that many of the book’s anecdotes have the quality of micro-aggressions and she explains that a lot of them began life in a ‘petty place’ of ‘listen to this fucked up thing someone just said to me’.⁹¹ She describes, however, how her final interest was in ‘getting them to the next level’. The aim was ‘to let these anecdotes from life be as surprising as they sometimes are, instead of having the punch line to each one be like my or someone else’s ignorance’. Getting to the next level seems to mean stepping momentarily outside both “critical” and “uncritical reading”, to reflect on them as historically mediated practices which have only come to *feel* natural and innate; this becomes a springboard for new thinking, a way of moving beyond a conversation that has otherwise been shut down.

With deprecating humour, *The Argonauts* jokingly ontologises “early” and “late” queer epistemologies in the book’s central couple, Harry and Maggie. In the opening sequences the pair often fail to share a world in terms of how they intuitively read their surroundings. In broad sweeps, Dodge’s sensibilities align with a poststructuralist cynicism; Nelson is by now prone to the reparative modes of vulnerability, romance and nonviolence. The pair not only interpret the world in different ways but experience intense frustration when they are not able to sway the other’s reading. For example, Nelson describes a scene in which she and Harry are watching television in a hotel room. They decide on X-Men. Harry expresses sympathy for the revolutionaries, who want to blow up the enemies because he knows that they would be quick to do the same and Nelson understands the logic his thinking but can’t seem to meaningfully extend into that range of response:

We bantered good-naturedly, yet somehow allowed ourselves to get polarised into a needless binary. [...]. While we talked we said words like non-violence, assimilation, threats to survival, preserving the radical. But when I think about it now I hear only the background buzz of our trying to explain something to each other, to ourselves, about our lived experiences thus far on this peeled, endangered planet. As is so

⁹⁰ Tyler Bradway, *Queer Experimental Literature: The Affective Politics of Bad Reading* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 215.

⁹¹ Cotton, *Interview with Maggie Nelson*.

often the case, the intensity of our need to be understood distorted our positions, backed us further into a cage.⁹²

Rational argument and even words themselves begin to lose their efficacy, only serving to push them further and further away from each other and into the prison of their own experiences. The scene is reminiscent of Stanley Cavell understanding of the nature of disagreements in aesthetic judgment: we sometimes hit a point where disagreements cannot be resolved through intellectual justifications: ‘don’t you see, don’t you hear, don’t you dig? . . . Because if you do not see something, without explanation, there is nothing further to discuss’.⁹³ However, the heat of the non-recognition is turned up because of their queerness; the ‘intensity of [their] need to be understood’ and ‘to explain something to each other, to ourselves, about our lived experiences thus far on this peeled, endangered planet’.

According to Tomkins, all people’s lives are organised by hypothetical affective schemas, and this has a determining impact on what we can hold in theory and share by way of common ground: affects ‘tend to be both determined (they have histories) and determining (they create the situations to which they apply).’⁹⁴ This is echoed in the scene above, their discussion collapsing into a buzz; it grows increasingly evident that the pair cannot meet each other in a common world. Sometimes the pair do convince each other, swap sides or surprise themselves by adopting a position that they didn’t know they could hold but there are also many cases, like this one, where they cannot. Notably, unlike the disagreement that Cavell describes, the queer readers cannot accept that ‘at some point the critic will have to say: This is [just] what I see’.⁹⁵ Their ‘need to be understood’ speaks to the importance of reading for queer people. As Ramzi Fawaz and Shanté Paradigm Smalls state, ‘when queers read—whether their sights are set on a traditional literary text, a particular performance, or an entire cultural scene—they do so as a form of survival just as much as a way to gain pleasure, develop knowledge and skill, and make a mark on the world’.⁹⁶ The first eleven pages intersperse scenes of Nelson and Dodge’s feverish sex with continual disagreements about how to interpret their environment; the frisson produced by the former seemingly enhancing the experience of the latter by keeping a sense of unbreachable otherness in play.

⁹² Nelson, *The Argonauts*, p. 81.

⁹³ Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 93.

⁹⁴ Adam Frank, *Transferrential Poetics, from Poe to Warhol* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), p. 3. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctt9qds3q>> [accessed 23 June 2019].

⁹⁵ Cavell, p. 93.

⁹⁶ Ramzi Fawaz and Shanté Paradigm Smalls, ‘Queers Read This! LGBTQ Literature Now’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 24.2 (2018), 169–87 (p. 169).

I want to end with an analysis of a final scene which is also interested in capturing the mood of late queer theory as characterised by the ‘surprise and disappointment that can happen when there is a collision between different affective theories’.⁹⁷ It can be found in Flatley’s contribution to memorial special issue of *Criticism*, which considers the influence of Sedgwick’s life and work. The particular case that interests him is a clash between a reparative stance whereby ‘imitation and identity games are a regular source of enjoyment and interest’ and another, which dominates academic communities, where ‘such imitation is suspect and where authenticity and a self-identity are the source of one’s value’. Flatley details how his time at Duke constituted an education in playful emulation, where Michael Moon and Sedgwick were ‘abundantly and enthusiastically available for various practices of resemblance, identification, and imitation’.⁹⁸ He describes how, to his later embarrassment, being a beneficiary of an education in non-paranoid modes of imitation would set him at odds with the institutions in which he would later seek employment – where hermeneutics of suspicion remains the dominant mode of relationality.⁹⁹ A paranoid reading of this anecdote might be sceptical about whether Flatley’s every tutor, his every intellectual exchange, was really ensconced in reparative reading. However, I want to approach this less in terms of transparent truth than as a window opened by virtue of genre; this is memorial writing and therefore it is hardly surprising that the figure of the one departed would loom large in the narrative.

Not pushing the back button on an ‘embarrassingly autobiographical’ moment, Flatley remembers back to his first year on the job market; he thinks his way back into the particular shame and anxiety of the unemployed PhD.¹⁰⁰ This scene provides an elegant illustration of a clashing system of affects circulating at a moment of late queer theory, which becomes viscerally visible to the student who imagining themselves into it. Flatley describes how a ‘downward spiralling resource of calories, dwindling self-confidence, and declining lucidity’ left him defenceless when ‘a certain faculty member asked me something like “since your talk is a queer reading of Henry James [which it was], what makes you different from Eve Sedgwick?”’. The graduate of the reparative classroom is flummoxed:

I understood the tone of the question to clearly indicate that being similar to Eve (whom the faculty knew to be my teacher) was the wrong thing to be, and that explaining my difference was the only way to demonstrate that I was the right kind

⁹⁷ Flatley, p. 230.

⁹⁸ Flatley, p. 229.

⁹⁹ Flatley, p. 230.

¹⁰⁰ Gallop argues that the job-market is not just a socio-economic system but a ‘resonant psychological scenario’, in which the graduate is confronted by our own powerlessness within a symbolic system. See Jane Gallop, *Anecdotal Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 127–34.

of original, authentic, independent-thinking, young (but not immature) scholar who could be offered a job at Harvard. The question was further overdetermined by the fact that the English department was at that moment actively considering offering Eve a position. In any event, for my part, because I so much wanted to be more like Eve than I was or ever could be, my non—Eve-ness ever apparent to me, the possibility that someone could see me as somehow being too similar to Eve had never even entered my head. Nor, for that matter, had it occurred to me that the desirability of imitating Eve could be in question, although I have since learned that being asked to distinguish oneself from one's teachers is not unusual during a job interview. However, here, when the evidently apparent pleasure I took in imitating Eve was questioned, I was not only flummoxed and flustered, I was ashamed. Like a boy who thought that his dressing in women's clothes was really quite exciting and likely to meet with the enthusiastic approval of his parents or his friends, only to discover that approval was far from what they felt, I suddenly felt painfully exposed, as though my very being announced an essential wrongness.¹⁰¹

Though it would be a mistake to see Harvard as representative of “the profession”, in this anecdote it does metonymically stand for its norms. The scene draws out an excruciating doubling-up of shame: there is, most immediately, the shame of the student who is unable to convincingly approximate the discourse of the university. In addition, there is an echo of the shame of queer childhood, during which time one learns, over and over, the social consequences of having tendencies which do not conform. As Sedgwick puts it, ‘Queer, I’d suggest, might usefully be thought of as referring in the first place to [...] an overlapping group of infants and children, those whose sense of identity is for some reason tuned most durably to the note of shame’.¹⁰² Rather than extend into a discourse which promises to reorganise wincing shame and induct the student into a more universal and abstracting community language, here we have an extension into a discourse sure to land you back in that originating shame.

Shame depends on a sudden perception of the other's judgement, a perception which makes you feel suddenly exposed in your difference. In this case, it is not that the interview question is entirely alien; the student suddenly understands that demarcating his difference from his teacher would prove he is the ‘original, authentic, independent-thinking, young (but not immature) scholar who could be offered a job at Harvard’. However, like the persona of *The Argonauts*, Flatley suggests that his former self encountered in this moment a visceral inability to extend into that alternative affective script as the moment demanded. It is as if where he needed to go in that moment was blocked, a certain set of affects having been, to borrow Watkin's words, ‘inscribed in the body, lodged in the flesh as traces of experience’ and as ‘an accumulation of affects [or]

¹⁰¹ Flatley, pp. 227–28.

¹⁰² Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 63.

affections'.¹⁰³ What would have been required is some mental gymnastics: the moment demands that he understand and address head-on how their different systems of affect produce different values. Or, even better would have been a wide pool of reading from which the candidate might freely draw. Indeed, paranoid modes of knowing, ones which seek to ward off bad surprises, might have been just the thing to fish out of that pool in aid of interview preparation.

However, rather than gravitating towards modes more appropriate for navigating the job market, Flatley details how, after the event, he and his teacher experimented with how reparative scripts *could* have been extended in that moment. One way to avoid being shamed would have been to pre-empt the interview panel's thinking. He describes how he and Sedgwick 'had fun playing around with the different ways I might have responded to the demand to explain my difference from her'. 'Eve's favourite was "Unlike Eve Sedgwick, I would take a job at Harvard"'.¹⁰⁴ This amusing anecdote of student subjectivity, which Flatley suggests continues to burn and play a constitutive role for him, suggests that the deliberate abandonment of communication with one's contemporaries is not an easy thing to practice while inhabiting the liminal position of the student/unemployed PhD. Even had this particular student pulled off this particular rhetorical feat it would likely have backfired due to the structural power imbalances of the interview. The difficulty is twofold. Firstly, without the freedom granted by the authorial function, the student/unemployed PhD is structurally required, with academic and non-academic jobs alike, to evidence that he is capable of a remarkable performance: imagining himself into a particular community, carrying off the bluff of speaking in its language, before having a firm place and project within it.¹⁰⁵ Secondly, in a situation where hermeneutics of suspicion remains the academy's dominant structure of feeling, the student of the reparative classroom needs to try to get inside a discourse that he can only partially imagine and has been defamiliarized to such a degree that it fails to ever quite feel naturally or immediately his.

Conclusion

I have argued that student writing, as captured in the genres of autotheory and memorial essays, is a key site for late queer style. Though the idea of the "problem student", and the generational time on which it relies, can readily and convincingly be critiqued, here, nonetheless, thick descriptions of ongoing student subjectivity appear in

¹⁰³ Watkins, p. 273.

¹⁰⁴ Flatley, p. 229.

¹⁰⁵ Bartholomae, p. 17.

illustration of the pressure points at which the relationship between graduate education and academic identity formation threaten to breakdown. The texts which I have looked at in this chapter bring student shame to the centre of the narrative; they ‘writ[e] through or against the backspace to talk about what it is like to sit there, to handle that door, to take account of that life that has, at least in part, been made through a certain compliance with scholarly rules’.¹⁰⁶ I have suggested that this is because at this historical moment the metaphor of the PhD as “a journey”, with academic identity as an end point, seems to represent a curiosity worth exploring rather than an inevitability. I have looked specifically at the intersection between the rise of the knowledge economy and the emergence of non-critical reading practices; both defamiliarize professional reading and inspire questions about “how we read now”, what kind of person this process of subjectification creates and to what end. Though reparative reading (and to some extent the discourse of transferrable skills) seeks to broaden the possible outcomes of this process of subjectification, texts which take up the student position represent the actual embodied effects of these experiments quite differently: the student becomes ontologised into an ongoing state of the uncritical reader and, rather than entering a community of common language users, he or she therefore finds misrecognition at precisely those points at which solidarity had been most keenly anticipated.

These texts therefore draw attention to the ongoing significance of (academic) generations and their impact on the mood of queer theory. Because the classroom is a site where knowledge is meditated, challenged, and inhabited, the student body readily becomes a point of projected anxiety and contest; the texts which I have looked at here step into the abject position of the “problem student” who hasn’t quite mastered how to read according to community standards. Reparative reading calls to attention the extent to which, in mapping onto academic discourses, institutionalised queer theory has been amenable to the transmission across academic generations, promising increased professional influence even while at the same time adroitly speaking to minoritarian subjectivity. Reparative reading by contrast is an experiment with practices that need not be so amenable, in light there being less pressure to pass on professional skills to younger people. And yet, these accounts of the difficulty of extending the skills learnt in the reparative classroom show that generational models *still* play a structuring role here. Indeed, from these accounts at least, it seems that it is precisely because the reparative mode works against and through such expectations, creating a clash between the structural unconscious of the university and the

¹⁰⁶ Butler and Davies, p. 87.

actual affects performed in its classrooms, that it had such disruptive effects. These accounts show the paradox of being invited into a late queer theory which is not amenable to professionalisation, but which nonetheless sparked, to use that catch-phrase of 1990s policy, a process of life-long learning.

However, it is nevertheless of significance that these representations of an ongoing attachment to student subjectivity arise in paratextual spaces where it is more possible to experiment with *not* pushing the backspace because the editorial function operates differently. Furthermore, Flatley and Nelson are not typical students. It is not difficult to imagine that the further away one is from such faculty security, the less likely it is that one can risk using student voice. Therefore, much of the landscape that Cusset's descriptions suggest inevitably remains obscure. Nevertheless, as with the other chapters of this thesis, I have focused attention on these paratextual spaces because there is less of a demand here for new scholarly directions; therefore, in them it is possible to find and give sustained attention to how ideas work themselves out, in sometimes quite unpredictable ways, over time.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that to account for an emergent sinking feeling in queer theory it is necessary to extend into para-academic, auxiliary texts which are frequently overlooked – such as delayed prefaces, comics, introductions to special issues, critical memoirs, memorial writing and autotheory. My findings have been primarily in dialogue with recent publications on the “field imaginary” of identity knowledges, including the work of Janet Halley, Kadji Amin, Clare Hemmings and Robyn Wiegman. Though these authors do not explicitly define their arguments in terms of mood, they are nevertheless each interested in incremental change which is mediated through written conventions in their innovative but also more mundane forms. They are interested in ‘the rising and falling quota of hope, of political fatigue, the amount of energy that can resource projects of collective action’.¹ However, each of these studies is caught in and performs a tension between (1) the desire to inhabit the gap between expectation for transformative politics and actual effects and (2) an ambition for intervention, which derives as much from the internal conventions of critical academic writing as author intent.

The tension which they both analyse and engage inspired me to extend my own study of identity knowledges into para-academic texts where there is less expectation that arrival at closure overlaps with the arrival of social justice. Inspired by Browne’s modelling of multiple temporalities, each chapter paired a genre with a non-rapturous temporality, exploring how genre and mood interface at the formal level of text. I argued that my corpus attaches to temporal switchpoints, mediating between the critical moment and the quotidian into which it is absorbed.

The aim and central aesthetic challenge of this thesis has been, then, to notice the shifting mood of queer theory; to find a means of listening without transforming it into something *else* in the process. I have been perturbed throughout by Mary Capello’s warning that, ‘in the case of certain moods, the minute you decide to think about them, they cease to be moods’.² Her own work evidences her recommendation that the only way to respond to such a mood is neither to explain nor define it but rather ‘to do something *like* it without killing it in the process’.³ However, even as I sought to extend into other genres, I have presented my argument in the form of a thesis, the mandates of which have continually

¹ Highmore is summarising what interests Williams about collective structures of feeling. See Ben Highmore, *Cultural Feelings: Mood, Mediation and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 32.

² Mary Capello, *Life Breaks In (a Mood Almanack)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 39.

³ Capello, p. 15.

pushed me in the other direction towards analysis.⁴ Thus, I have never been quite certain about whether this project should sound more like the minor texts that inspired it, or whether it should be using the kinds of figure/ground relationships, scrutiny of key terms, syllogism between premise and conclusions which it aimed to side-step to focus on mood. The dilemma about what this thesis should sound like reminds me of what D. A. Miller describes as a tension endemic to close reading more generally – a tension between getting the critical distance required for commentary and a reading which practices ‘an almost infantile desire to be *close*, period, as close as one can get, without literal plagiarism to merging with the mother-text’.⁵ He notes that the point of picturing these two extremes – of mastery and merging – is not to choose sides, but to recognise that, ‘if we retain any vital relation to close reading whatsoever, which we all do, we must always be on both’ because ‘the practice of close reading has always been radically cloven: here, on the one side, my ambition to master a text, to write *over* its language and refashion it to the cut of my argument, to which it is utterly indifferent; there, on the other, my longing to write *in* this language, to identify and combine with it’.⁶ My ambition to listen for mood has tended to mean that I have had to extend my stay on the second, merging side, of this pairing; however, this conclusion aims to more directly address the first. With particular reference to more recent activism around pleasure, gender and sexual violence, I now turn to consider the insights minor texts can generate about the practicalities of maintaining the critical energy of identity knowledges over time. What remains of this conclusion is therefore structured to address the research questions which inspired this project:

To what extent have the concerns of queer theory changed, and how does this map onto mood?

This thesis has approached “queer” as a historically emergent sensibility with its roots in late 1980s and early 1990s U.S. activist cultures. This is perhaps a contentious decision because queer studies has tended to define itself against singular programmes, geographies and temporalities; however, I have followed Kadji Amin’s recommendation that if queer theory is to have wider relevance that necessarily requires a simultaneous ‘reckoning with the field’s affective haunting by [that] inaugural moment’.⁷ In the first

⁴ I am here reminded of Wiegman’s comment that the task of inhabitation is difficult ‘in part because everything I have learned about critical authority urges me to travel in the opposite direction’. See Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 135. As explored in the previous chapter, the thesis, as a sub-genre of academic writing, not only requires the conventions of critical writing but uses them for the explicit purpose of performing its belonging within a particular interpretative community. It is therefore tempting to say that it requires the conventions of critique but on steroids.

⁵ D. A. Miller, *Jane Austen, or The Secret of Style* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 58.

⁶ Miller, p. 58.

⁷ Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 17.

chapter of this thesis I argued that the mood of early queer theory derives from an overlap between a minoritarian critical attitude and academic critique of existing knowledge formations; one dimension legitimated the authority of the other to electrifying effect. However, I also argued that this emergent sensibility and affect orientation has come under pressure due to changing contexts.

Deborah Gould argues that activist cultures are likely to provide a training in certain affects at the expense of others, which can leave them vulnerable as contexts change and “outlaw emotions” surface.⁸ Inspired by her insights, but extending it to account for the intersection between activist and academic queer theory, the Prelude built a “moodboard”, which set out three such changes in context that generate outlaw emotions. I focused on institutionalisation, which required constant compromise in negotiating embedded conservative and patriarchal values. I looked at rituals of academic debate, which have meant that contemporary queer theory is just as likely to be considered a source of exclusion as the means of correcting it; finally, I looked at some of the potentially conflicting obligations of queer pedagogy. I suggested that each of these incremental changes has the capacity to exert local pressure on whether foundational queer tactics – like queer intuition, oppositionality and rage – prove successful for handling contingencies. The first section of this thesis considered moments when minoritarian and academic discourses overlap and moments when they seem to part ways, linking the latter instances with a sinking feeling.

This sinking mood of late queer theory can typically be found, as I have shown, in a proximity to autobiographical writing – images of the self, where the analysis keeps close to the contours of present tense experience. Though this sinking feeling may well have generalisability for other identity knowledge formations, it is especially poignant in queer theory because this discipline’s institutional success stems from its ability to get beyond minoritarian logic and gain more abstract purchase on identity.⁹ These moments of embodied writing introduce pathos to the narrative but this is held in check by an ironic construction; a knowingness about the impossibility of any transparent access to the self in light of a wealth of queer analysis on the topic. In some disciplinary contexts the act of returning theory to its first conditions might represent a relatively benign activity.¹⁰

⁸ Deborah Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and Act up’s Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 136.

⁹ Heather Love, ‘Queer -- This’, in *After Sex?: On Writing since Queer Theory*, ed. by Janet Halley and Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 180–91.

¹⁰ Said suggests that we should welcome the travel of theory to different contexts. However, he also advises that, when blunted from too much travel, we must be prepared to return it to its first conditions. See Edward Said, *The Edward Said Reader* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), p. 205.

However, I have argued that it can be especially sinking in this particular situation in which the hire-wire tension of inaugural queer theory is to some extent dependent on the fact that, irrespective of external pressure, it will *never* admit what some might claim to be obvious: its purchase on large-scale phenomena is reducible to the musings of a damaged subjectivity.¹¹

Though the mood generated is especially poignant in this disciplinary location, what I have described does nevertheless have implications for all disciplines that aim to affirm and be accountable to the identities which they critique. Williams looks at emergent gaps between codified knowledge and the consequences of living them out and many have taken his argument to mean that emergent feeling structures are always counter-hegemonic.¹² However, this thesis has found that this is not always the case for disciplines which distinguish themselves by constructing knowledge from personal experience. Here the disciplinary expectation is that there be tight overlap between codified knowledge and lived experience. This expectation is articulated in bell hooks' essay 'Theorising', which explains that there should be 'no difficulty building a mass-based feminist resistance struggle' if our theory addresses our pain. She writes: 'when our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, *no gap* exists between theory and practice'.¹³ She contrasts with its negative: 'a kind of narcissistic, self-indulgent practice that almost seeks to create a gap between theory and practice so as to perpetuate class elitism'.¹⁴ This claim is axiomatic for identity knowledges: if there is too stark a division between academic theory and experience we have a problem. However, as Highmore puts it: 'commentators [who claim] that 'structures of feeling' are always counterhegemonic, miss something crucial in the ways that cultural feelings can be residual or dominant as well as emergent, and that patterns of feeling may be an articulation of an emergent extension of a current hegemony, a new addition to undemocratic culture, for instance'.¹⁵ A number of the authors of this thesis make the case that an emergent structure of feeling within queer theory might prove *more* conservative – both Sarah Schulman and Tim Dean, for instance, make this point with regards to later developments in queer theory. Others, in fact the majority looked at here, express uncertainty about whether it is politically effective to follow 'what is, at any given moment,

¹¹ Miller, p. 39.

¹² Andrew Milner, 'Cultural Materialism, Culturalism and Post-Culturalism: The Legacy of Raymond Williams', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 11.1 (1994), 43–73 (p. 55).

¹³ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 61.

¹⁴ hooks, p. 64.

¹⁵ Highmore, p. 41.

understood to be ‘the growing edge of the self’.¹⁶ The minor texts of queer theory step into the present tense of this gap and explore it precisely as a dilemma.

My aim has not been to adjudicate between these different responses because to do so would run roughshod over the mood for which I have been interested in accounting. However, the difficulty I have had in remaining agnostic has made evident the extent to which the dilemma – whether it is more politically efficacious to keep appropriate to changing times or to engage the untimely – is a contentious one for identity knowledge disciplines.¹⁷ Wherever the primary texts of this thesis are positioned along this spectrum, what they share is a sinking feeling at the point of realisation that codified knowledge is not mapping onto the contingencies of the present. The moments of sinking feeling which I have looked at entertain the idea of turning away from foundational assumptions of queer theory in a deliberately contradictory fashion, driven by a moment of ‘palpable pressure’ which ‘sets effective limits on experience and on action’.¹⁸ It is the recurrence of this sinking feeling across the work of multiple authors that leads me to call this phenomenon *queer’s late style*.

What moods are made newly available in the minor texts of queer theory? How might they be theorised, in relation to each other and to major texts?

I have argued that both mood and genre are schemas which orientate us towards certain attitudes; genre conventions can therefore either block or amplify an emergent structure of feeling. In a consideration of special issue introductions, I found that a desire to render the figure/ground relationship more fluid, to do justice to the way queer theory remains mutually informed by other disciplines, came into conflict with a need to differentiate from the given to develop something new. I found that these special issue introductions, like the anecdotes of Chapter 2, introduce local pockets of sinking affect. However, in the final instance, these sinking feelings are to at least a certain extent sublated into the broader argument which does offer new pathways for investigation and therefore provides ‘one of the preeminent pleasures of critique [which] is its relief effect’.¹⁹ With this in mind, I tracked what I recognised to be a sinking feeling by extending out to consider texts which do not place such a premium on this widening of perspective. Each of these

¹⁶ Jason Edwards, *Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 126.

¹⁷ Elliott draws attention to this tension in the work of Wendy Brown, noting her early call for left theory to be accountable to changing times and her later call which goes against this by arguing for an ‘untimeliness’ which ‘requires resisting the pressure to merely replicate the terms of the times’. See Jane Elliott, ‘The Currency of Feminist Theory’, *PMLA*, 121.5 (2006), 1697-1703 (p. 1700).

¹⁸ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 132.

¹⁹ Janet Halley and Wendy Brown, ed., *Left Legalism/Left Critique* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 29.

genres that I looked at is auxiliary to a major work which its existence is defined in relationship both to and against. I found that the minor texts of queer theory attach to different temporal framings where the emphasis tends, in the wake of the project, towards carrying on living with damage within a damaged world.²⁰ Indeed, if academic writing tends to generate a relief effect at the point of closure the minor texts belie this authority by opening out the possibility that something could and certainly will “happen next”; something which is different enough from that performative closure to be worthy of comment.

In some ways the attention that this thesis has given to these temporal switchpoints shares coordinates with discourses around research impact. The minor genres show how the project is interrupted and modified by more affective narratives. They also show the effort required to create the conditions of coevalness necessary for the sharing of critical thought; as Victoria Browne writes, shared time is ‘something that must be *created*, rather than something that automatically exists.’²¹ As explored in the Prelude, in a context where the university is required to be accountable to the taxpayer, its staff have been increasingly subject to accountability metrics that are deemed to make sense in the context of a knowledge economy. What happens to knowledge as it moves through public cultures, and whether the conditions are right for the sharing of this knowledge has, in this context, been cause for attention, speculation and anxiety. As Pam Green and Robin Usher put it, the neoliberal university works from the anxious assumption that: ‘knowledge must be locked into systems and processes that enhance knowledge production and where knowledge can be effectively and efficiently managed’.²² The working assumption here is that, if knowledge is to have societal impact, systems need to be in place to ensure its successful arrival.

As Green and Usher describe, the philosophy underpinning this model of knowledge production clashes with some longstanding and deeply embedded ideas about the purpose of research. They note that newer schemas rely on a ‘Mode 2 model’, where the value of knowledge lies in ‘its applicability or performativity in the solving of problems in the contemporary moment’. This kind of knowledge is ‘essentially ephemeral or transient’ and ‘quickly becomes obsolete’.²³ They contrast this to the ‘Mode 1’ knowledge which had previously dominated our understanding of the purpose of universities. In the Mode 1 model, research is curiosity-driven and based on advancing knowledge within

²⁰ I borrow this phrase from Amin who uses it to describe the de-idealisation of the depressive position. See Amin, p. 11.

²¹ Victoria Browne, *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 40.

²² Pam Green and Robin Usher, ‘Fast Supervision: Changing Supervisory Practice in Changing Times’, *Studies in Continuing Education*, 25.1 (2003), 37–50 (p. 38) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01580370309281>>.

²³ Green and Usher, p. 40.

relatively narrow disciplinary communities. Such research might then prove applicable to other domains; however, in Mode 1, those who discover knowledge are not necessarily those who *apply* that knowledge, and nor will these parties be expected to possess the same attributes, networks and motivations. In other words, for Mode 1 the process of exchange between those that discover and those that apply remains somewhat mysterious, whereas Mode 2, suspecting that without intervention there might be no transfer, aims to micro-manage the process – by definition, research impact has to be measurable in order that it counts.

However, as Green and Usher recognise, it is not the case that Mode 2 has replaced Mode 1 entirely because the older model remains linked to an institution's prestige and cultural capital. Therefore, university staff are expected to meet the requirements of both. Cris Shore has argued in a slightly different context that the internal contradictions of university mission statements show the extent to which the purpose of universities under neoliberalism fracture in an attempt to embody a plethora of contradictory aims.²⁴ In my experience, rather than risk a discussion that might uncover such internal contradictions, impact is anxiously assumed to flow from good research. Knowledge should be discipline specific *and* useful for broader society, without that representing too much in the way of additional work and this should not prove problematic so long as there is some willingness and institutional support. The discussion is quickly moralised. Any failure to lock knowledge into systems is rendered a symptom of poor planning and/or a personality flaw. This researcher development website summarises the broader sentiment, for those uncertain about whether their research is having impact: '[Impact is necessary] in order to continue to justify public funding of research. At a more personal level, understanding and demonstrating the impact of your research can provide a great deal of personal satisfaction, and can improve your prestige as a researcher'.²⁵ The implication: researchers will have to justify their funding, but they should also feel the right way about having to do so. The moralising nature of this discourse was driven home to me in conversation with a senior academic when I asked her about her experience with using researcher-development frameworks in the supervision of her research students – as mandated by the funding body. She told me that she wasn't interested in that kind of thing because it wasn't suited to her

²⁴ Cris Shore, 'Beyond the Multiversity: Neoliberalism and the Rise of the Schizophrenic University', *Social Anthropology*, 18.1 (2010), 15–29 (p. 15) <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8676.2009.00094.x>>.

²⁵ Vitae, 'Demonstrating Research Impact', *Vitae*, (2020) <<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/leadership-development-for-principal-investigators-pis/intellectual-leadership/demonstrating-research-impact>> [accessed 27 August 2020].

temperament. My spontaneous laughter in response flagged that she has led me into the terrain of what had previously felt unspeakable.

These generic frameworks are obviously not able to account for the kinds of public backlashes against counter-cultural knowledge production which this thesis has explored in relation to queer theory. Nor can it account for a researcher's possible ambivalence about reaching, or not reaching, his or her audience. Joe Moran writes movingly of what he calls the depressive academic who negotiates neoliberal metric systems. He writes of how the system of the contemporary academy 'demands that we all follow its unowned, unexamined protocols [which] force us to fit into competitive metrics that we have no faith in and that we know will make others unhappy as well'.²⁶ Speaking in terms that accord with Tomkins' ideas about amenability of the classroom to the depressive sensibility, Moran hypothesises that academic-types are so susceptible to being made unhappy by these metrics because at school would-be academics were the ones 'who purchased self-worth with the currency of teachers' ticks and stars'. However, 'if you're looking for reassurance or affirmation in [the corporate university], it never comes' because 'the marketised university keeps demanding more because that is how markets work [...] an academic can always strive to be more excellent, more world-leading, more impactful'.

I think of the minor texts of theory as a kind of affective antidote for the depressive academic negotiating university systems. Like these frameworks, the minor texts of this thesis are concerned with how knowledge makes contact with its audience; yet they provide an alternative because they do not take as read that all knowledge *can* be 'locked into systems and processes [where it] can be effectively and efficiently managed'.²⁷ They are a way of thinking about "what happens next", without that entailing a charade that we can know in advance and also always feel the correct way about that process. I am thinking of the minor texts of queer theory almost as an alternative "tool" or framework for thinking with, but one that can account for that which could not have been predicted at the point of writing. This secret framework would want to account, to take a recent example, for this weird scene in São Paulo, where Judith Butler's scheduled academic presentation was met with angry protestors: a figure representing Butler, adorned with a pink bra and a witch's hat, was burnt in effigy. What kind of framework could accommodate such a delayed and wild reaction? In response to the event, medieval historian Francois Soyer tweeted: 'How can you know if your research is having an impact? When a mob holding Bibles and

²⁶ Joe Moran, 'The University: A Guide for Depressives', *Times Higher Education*, (2018) <<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/university-guide-depressives#>> [accessed 9 May 2020].

²⁷ Green and Usher, p. 38.

crucifixes burns an effigy of you outside your seminar'.²⁸ I want to suggest that in this context, minor texts might move us out of this position into one where we could say what would otherwise be unspeakable: "as it turns out, I had no impact". "Actually, the process took care of itself". Or, perhaps, even: "unlike usual, I could tell I had impact because a mob burnt my figure in effigy".

What can minor texts tell us about the challenges of institutionalising activist and identity knowledges?

I want to end by exploring what minor genres can tell us about movement sustainability and the practicalities of institutionalising disciplines which draw on activist energy in their ambitions for social justice. Gould notes that, 'in order to attract and retain participants and to pursue a movement's agenda, activists continually need to mobilize affective states and emotions that mesh with the movement's political objectives and tactics and suppress those that do the opposite'.²⁹ In other words, movements require that emotion be linked with the desire for an expanded political horizon. Gould states that intense emotions are necessary for a movement's emergence. However, she also points to a bleaker conclusion. The resolution of ambivalence is, according to Gould, necessarily unstable because it sanctions one set of emotions at the expense of less useful ones; therefore, the affective pedagogies which prove to be so successful in the short term can ironically go on to cause movement decline when outlaw emotions resurface to produce a gap between the dominant account and experiences which contradict it.³⁰ She argues that movements can find themselves without the resources to deal with the re-emergence of more ambivalent affects. Using her insights about sustainability as a launchpad, I note the amenability of academic arguments to similar dynamics. I suggest that minor texts are therefore worth assimilating into the stories we tell about identity knowledges because they introduce affects that are otherwise frequently unaccounted for, but which can drain activist energy if they have nowhere to go.

I want to think of this specifically in terms of a surge in recent activism around sex and power. It has been a dissonant experience to write a thesis about the development of a movement organised around sex, while simultaneously witnessing the budding of another collective movement also organised around sex: #MeToo. At the conceptual level these different activist formations appear to be very different; and yet, they are not so very

²⁸ Scott Jaschik, 'Judith Butler Discusses Being Burned in Effigy and Protested in Brazil', *Inside Higher Ed*, (2017) <<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/11/13/judith-butler-discusses-being-burned-effigy-and-protested-brazil>> [accessed 9 February 2018].

²⁹ Gould, p. 213.

³⁰ Gould, p. 212.

different when it comes to their mobilisation of affect. Catalysed by the shock of the election of President Trump and a hash tag that recognised the endemic nature of sexual violence, 2017 has been called ‘the year of women’s anger’.³¹ Writing in *Vox*, Constance Grady summarised the collective mood:

And so the year that began with the Women’s March, in which millions of pussy-hatted women came together to protest the Trump administration, ended with the Reckoning, in which hundreds of women have come forward to accuse powerful men of acts of sexual violence, and dozens of those men have been fired or resigned in disgrace. And in between, popular culture has told story after story about angry women who are burning shit down.³²

As evident here, like Act Up, this movement required the transformation of ambivalence into rage as a means of getting people to declare that this *was not okay*. It was a strange privilege to be reading about the 1980s sex wars while simultaneously experiencing another systemic shift regarding the framing of sex, danger and power in the collective imagination. I was reading about, but also witnessing first-hand, a palpable shift in collective feeling. I was bearing witness to the apparent emergence of something new and the release of collective energy which that feeling of a break with the social order entails. I could recognise from queer activism a similar sense of an emergent political horizon. And I could recognise too the power of its universalising claims, its stark division of the world into us/them, as perhaps even a necessary condition for getting people onto the streets.

And yet, for all that this felt like a rupture in the collective imaginary, it paradoxically had uncanny resemblance of the kind of feminism that queer activism reacted against in rejecting censorship picketing. It was not hard to see some uncanny resonances with a second-wave feminism. There were obvious similarities to be found in, for example, the commonality of experience it assumed around the category of womanhood defined in relation to a vulnerability to violence; its use of outrage as a means of consciousness raising; its quickness to seek retribution by drawing on the powers of state institutions; in the way that justified demands for women’s safety risked being weaponised against other groups. This felt like an emergent structure of feeling but at the same time maybe the resurgence of a residual one that had supposedly been lived through and learnt from. We saw before, in McLaughlin’s ‘cycles of theoretical fashion’, that both institutional and activist cultures, in seeking something new, can have the consequences that ‘whole bodies of work [getting] mislaid or stereotyped’ with the result that ‘there are ideas of merit amongst rejected works

³¹ Constance Grady, ‘2017 Was the Year of Women’s Anger, Onscreen and Off’, *Vox*, (2017) <<https://www.vox.com/2017-in-review/2017/12/21/16776708/2017-womens-anger-womens-march-reckoning-handmaids-tale-alias-grace-big-little-lies-three-billboards>> [accessed 7 May 2020].

³² Grady, *2017 Was the Year of Women’s Anger, Onscreen and Off*.

and that such works influence those texts that present themselves as their replacement'.³³ This can mean in practice that each new cohort coming up has to learn the basics of how to come to feminism and make all the same mistakes all over again.

As with the classroom scene of the Prelude, it seemed as though this cycle of theoretical/activist fashion might be playing out in an excruciatingly literal fashion, with little awareness that those most innovative insights might be consistent with an older model whose claims to coherence had already been critiqued. In this light, I was apprehensive about any possibility of longevity. I felt too, watching its marking out of the domains of those with privilege and those without, to be galactically distant from that queer axiom for identity: 'never to claim, never to disavow'.³⁴ Deborah Withers' work on the transmission of fragile knowledges can illuminate why these dynamics of rupture and replacement can be such a problem in the context of fragile knowledges. She looks at the processes via which countercultural knowledges are transmitted across generations, both within institutions that disseminate resources and in terms of how individuals take up feminist ideas from the knowledge circuits in which they are embedded.³⁵ She draws attention to the inherent fragility of identity knowledge cultures, arguing that feminism is always just as much about the problem of access *within* a generation as across them; it is difficult to access that which is already there. 'The circuitry of feminism's already-there, always requires work', she writes; 'its transmissive trajectories always have to be constructed, elaborated and continually reaffirmed'.³⁶ She argues, moreover, that because activism often happens in proximity to trauma, participants remove themselves from these circuits out of exhaustion, causing breaks in the long-circuits of alternative knowledge formations.

Significantly, moreover, in my case there was something about *knowing this*, and the subsequent ambivalence which this provoked, that seemed to bar my own participation. In 2017 the proper way to feel in relation to revelation after revelation was moral outrage and furious disbelief; ambivalence was too close to complicity, not enough like taking a stand. In other words, I did not find myself in possession of the feelings necessary to quite get swept up in that moment; I was not quite able to find a place for myself in the habitus which it extended. As Johnathan Flatley puts it: 'any kind of political project must have the

³³ J. McLaughlin, 'The Return of the Materials', in *Intersections between Feminist and Queer Theory*, ed. by D. Richardson et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 59–77 (p. 68).

³⁴ Kristen O'Rourke and Mark Kerr, 'Sedgwick Sense and Sensibility: An Interview with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick', *Nideffer*, (1995) <<http://nideffer.net/proj/Tvc/interviews/20.Tvc.v9.intrvws.Sedg.html>> [accessed 30 March 2020].

³⁵ Deborah Withers, *Feminism, Digital Culture and the Politics of Transmission: Theory, Practice and Cultural Heritage* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), pp. 1–2.

³⁶ Withers, p. 11.

“making and using” of mood as part and parcel of the project; for, no matter how clever or correct the critique, or achievable the project, collective action is impossible if people are not, so to speak, in the mood’.³⁷ It is not that I failed to see that the aims of this movement were necessary or that they might achieve something. My difficulty was its apparent promise to inoculate participants against complicity. This promise to get beyond ambivalence was clearly what gave the moment its propulsive energy. And yet, I was not in the mood to be surprised, and hurt by ‘the inexorable laws of unintended consequences’.³⁸ Whether this is deemed a mature developmental stage or its opposite (a stage prior to having one’s consciousness-raised), it had the effect of failing to act either way.

The splitting practices of outrage cultures are often justified in a world of heinous inequality, but they tend to have deleterious effects on movement sustainability. As Sarah Schulman notes, they tend to have the unfortunate consequence of requiring the “perfect victim” as a precondition for the extension of solidarity.³⁹ As Douglas Crimp puts it with regards to Act Up, ‘by making all violence external, pushing it to the outside and objectifying it in the enemy institutions and individuals, we deny its psychic articulation, deny that we are effected as well as affected, by it’.⁴⁰ Though splitting dynamics were clearly galvanising for the #MeToo movement, the less fortunate consequences were also everywhere on display, especially in the discussions around privilege and race. Before the Women’s March on Washington had even taken place, white women were threatening to drop out. As reported in *The New York Times*, in response to a Facebook post quoting bell hooks on forging a stronger sisterhood by confronting how women exploit other women, a white woman was reported (we are supposed to take her as typical) as responding: “I’m starting to feel not very welcome in this endeavour”.⁴¹ Apparently, it was just too difficult to embody furious indignation about externalised violence and see oneself as part of that violence at the same time.

None of this comes as much of a surprise to those familiar with the history of feminist movements; what perhaps *was* surprising was the fact that these developments were met with the kind of hurt that gains its edge precisely because it arrives as a surprise.

³⁷ Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 23.

³⁸ E. K. Sedgwick, J. Halley, and A. Parker, ‘Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 106.3 (2007), 625–42 (p. 637).

³⁹ Sarah Schulman, *Conflict Is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility and the Duty of Repair* (London: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016).

⁴⁰ Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), p. 147.

⁴¹ Farah Stockman, ‘Women’s March on Washington Opens Contentious Dialogues About Race’, *New York Times*, (2017) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/09/us/womens-march-on-washington-opens-contentious-dialogues-about-race.html>> [accessed 15 May 2020].

And perhaps so too was the speed involved in the unfolding of this predictable story of collective hope into the fracturing of solidarity under the pressure of difference. For instance, though similar in so many ways, the fracturing of movement solidarity which Gould describes with regards to Act Up is narrated as having taken place over a decade and only after substantial movement gains. In the sped-up age of social media, by contrast, the whole process had been cycled through *before* the planned March on Washington had even taken place. As Grady recalls:

almost as soon as the Women's March was announced last fall, it was plagued by accusations that it was ignoring women of color, that it was overwhelmingly white, that it was a movement for white feminists. [...] The pain of a white woman and a racist white man seem to trump the pain of people of color, as though it's only possible to focus on one form of oppression at a time, rather than examining how different systems of oppression interlock and feed off one another.⁴²

And yet, if the critiques of white liberal feminism were already readily to hand, it did not seem to make those who found themselves corrected any better equipped to receive the message: would-be-marchers seemed incredulous that women traumatised by sexual violence could also be privileged and the immediate reaction seemed to be self-removal. The same women, speaking in *The New York Times* declared to the reporter: 'the last thing that is going to make me endeared to you, to know you and love you more, is if you are sitting there wagging your finger at me'.⁴³ We are told that the phrase "check your privilege" exasperates this would-be attendee: 'She asked a reporter: "Can you please tell me what that means?"' My exhaustion was not just with these responses but the way of handling them too. Again, that queer axiom for identity: 'never to claim, never to disavow' seemed to be virtually unreachable.⁴⁴

Grady's comment is grimly ironic, its derision thinly veiled. If this were phrased as a question it would be rhetorical: do we, *really*, need reminding that it is possible to think about how oppressions interlock? However, I want to experiment, having learnt how, with being tone-deaf, so that I can give some earnest attention to why it apparently does so often prove hard to maintain an awareness of internal complicity within social justice movements. I want to suggest that there might be something in the emotional structuring of activist cultures that makes this, if not impossible, then a challenge. I am thinking specifically of a tentative comment made by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick about her own experiences of activism and its emotional structure. Sedgwick's description resonates with some of Gould's

⁴² Grady, 2017 *Was the Year of Women's Anger, Onscreen and Off*.

⁴³ Stockman, *Women's March on Washington Opens Contentious Dialogues About Race*.

⁴⁴ O'Rourke and Kerr, *Sedgwick Sense and Sensibility*.

conclusions about the importance of being able to sanction certain affective responses while downplaying others. It is worth citing Sedgwick here at length:

My own uncomfortable sense is that, for me at any rate, activist politics take place – even at best – on the difficult nexus between the paranoid/schizoid and the depressive positions. Suppose the paranoid/schizoid, entirely caught up in splitting and projection, to be always saying, like Nietzsche or Harold Bloom, “Those others are all about *ressentiment*”. [...] Suppose the depressive is able to say, at least intermittently, “We, like those others, are subject to the imperious projective dynamics of *ressentiment*”; what next? By what means might the dynamics themselves become different? As I understand my own political history, it has often happened that the propulsive energy of activist justification, of being or feeling joined with others in urgent cause tends to be structured very much in a paranoid/schizoid fashion: driven by attributed motives, fearful contempt of opponents, collective fantasies of powerlessness and/or omnipotence, scapegoating, purism, and schism. Paranoid/schizoid in short, even if the motives that underlie political commitment may have much more to do with the complex, mature ethical dimension of the depressive position.⁴⁵

We can imagine why this would be an ‘uncomfortable’ intuition, in light of the biases against activism from the U.S. right in particular, who have a history of dismissing angry protest as naïve, anti-democratic, immature and ultimately counter-productive.⁴⁶ The phrase ‘mature ethical dimension’ stand out as especially uncomfortable, considering. And yet, like Crimp, Sedgwick suggests that the fearful attribution of motives to external opponents is somehow a necessary ingredient for feeling joined in an urgent cause. I wonder, then, is it possible to have a *depressive activism*? An activism which operates around an originating assumption that “we, like those others, are subject to the imperious projective dynamics”? This is a question that Sedgwick raises but to which she does not give an answer.

Some of the earliest academic commentary about #MeToo took the position that the movement desperately needed to cultivate ambivalence. In other words, it seems to be calling for an activism that could organise from that depressive-base. For example, in conversation with Dubravka Zarkov, Kathy Davis recommended that the movement redirects its attention to ‘the murky and complicated ambivalences in which sexual harassment and the #MeToo movement itself are embedded’.⁴⁷ In a superbly broad survey of recent feminist activist politics organised around sex and violence, Alison Phipps concludes with the recommendation that ‘to become comrades [...] we would need to spend less time in outrage and more time loosening the knots of political whiteness in ourselves and our politics’.⁴⁸ I wonder, however, how realistic are such calls for an

⁴⁵ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 137.

⁴⁶ Gould, p. 46.

⁴⁷ B. Zarkov and K. Davis, ‘Ambiguities and Dilemmas around #MeToo: #ForHow Long and #WhereTo?’, *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 25.1 (2018), 3–9 (p. 8).

⁴⁸ Alison Phipps, *Me, Not You: The Trouble with Mainstream Feminism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), p. 161.

ambivalent activism, considering what Sedgwick says about the role of ‘attributed motives, fearful contempt of opponents and collective fantasies of powerlessness and/or omnipotence’ which create the ‘propulsive energy of movements’. For example, the Harvey Weinstein case can be read as a moment of ‘moral shock’, producing such a vivid picture of wrongdoing that something collectively snapped. We can see some analogies with *Bowers vs. Hardwick*, which Gould argues produced the kind of ‘moral shock’ necessary to get Act Up off the ground. She argues that with gay couples denied such basic rights of privacy, even the most liberal-tending gays could not realistically hope for a government-led response to the crisis.⁴⁹ She argues that the moral shock of this case was enough to shake off residual ambivalence and unite gay people of quite different political tendencies who otherwise would have been unlikely to join together.

Similarly, it does not seem coincidental that the #MeToo movement jolted into action in relation to Harvey Weinstein and Hollywood celebrity. Here was evidence that *even* high profile, privileged media women who were supposed to “have it all” were still subject to harassment at work. As Hemmings notes, ‘part of the shared cultural horror of the #MeToo campaign is indeed that sexual abuse is both anachronistic and ever-present’. Here we have ‘the *one kind of feminism* that everyone can agree on’.⁵⁰ We might go so far as to say that #MeToo is a reaction against grey areas, with people coming together to say they did not want to live with the murky ambivalences that constitute everyday sexual harassment. Echoing the movement founder, Sara Jaffe reflected that:

The scariest part of #MeToo is the realization, as Tarana Burke notes, that “more often than not, the reality is we live in the gray areas around sexual violence.” There is a spectrum of abuses of power, some tiny and some huge, that all add up to a world where women’s voices, women’s work, and women’s sexual desires are ignored or devalued. What most of us who’ve told stories want is for that to stop happening.⁵¹

If it is correct that collective action requires the resolution of ambivalence, that a resolution of ambivalence is necessary for the sense of feeling joined together in a shared political horizon, then the argument that #MeToo overlooks nuance, but will be strengthened if it can incorporate it, is a difficult one to maintain. To my mind, a movement like #MeToo partly derives its energy as a counterpoint to and a rejection of the “complexity” of fine grain structural analysis. When it comes to how a movement like #MeToo is emotionally

⁴⁹ Gould, p. 134.

⁵⁰ Clare Hemmings, ‘Resisting Popular Feminisms: Gender, Sexuality and the Lure of the Modern’, *Gender, Place & Culture*, 25.7 (2018), 963–77 (p. 971).

⁵¹ S. Jaffe, ‘The Collective Power of #MeToo’, *Dissent*, 65.2 (2018), 80–87.

structured, moral ambiguity is arguably an anathema. In this context, my automatic and intrusive response to calls for a #MeToo of ambivalence is “Good Luck!”.

My argument here is not exactly, as others have argued, that scholarship and activism work to different temporalities.⁵² I agree that activism and academia may not always temporally coincide; however, what most captures my imagination about Sedgwick’s reflections on activism is the structural *similarity* it implicitly draws between activism and academic work. Sedgwick most famously makes precisely this argument with regards to scholarship; critique, to her mind, gains its propulsive and ambitious energy from the paranoid/schizoid position even if the motives of the depressive typically underly it. The implicit comparison perhaps stands out as unusual because theory and activism are mostly spoken of as if they represent two halves of a feminist whole. They work to different logics but need to be cojoined for successful praxis. However, Sedgwick implicitly here suggests their affective resemblance. We do not have to subscribe to the entire Kleinian framework to find this plausible. Indeed, Gould’s description of the necessity of active framing in activist movements works well as a description of critique. Gould writes that: ‘movements often counter the common sense, the habits of feeling and emoting, and the ways of living that prevail in a given time and place’, and they do this by ‘pointing out how power relations pervade our lives’ while insisting that ‘there is nothing inevitable about the given state of affairs’.⁵³ Or, as Heather Love puts it, ‘in critical contexts, ambivalence tends to resolve into critique and gestures towards political unity’.⁵⁴ Scholarship, then, like activism, requires that we take a step back to critique the experiences in which we are otherwise bogged down.

I do not want to suggest that splitting dynamics are always and inherently problematic. As I argued in Chapter 1, it is difficult to imagine giving up the relief effect of critique; its ability to promise something different from that which currently exists. These dynamics appear problematic because of the effects which they have on fragile knowledge traditions which are typically ‘fragmented, blocked, obfuscated and directed in particular ways due to the technical transmissive systems they are embedded within’.⁵⁵ It becomes a problem, I want to suggest, when there is a lack of space in which the dynamics are different enough to allow resources for those invested in identity knowledges to ‘interpret, understand, and *take care* of the process of transmission’.⁵⁶ As the above critiques of

⁵² See Robyn Wiegman, ‘On Being in Time with Feminism’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 65.1 (2004), 161–76 (p. 163).

⁵³ Gould, p. 178.

⁵⁴ Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 3.

⁵⁵ Withers, p. 11.

⁵⁶ Withers, p. 5.

#MeToo would suggest, academic work seems more likely to deliver ambivalence.

However, I would want to argue that it makes much more room for complexity that does activism, perhaps, but this is not the same as allowing for the kind of buzzing ambivalence that threatens to make thought impossible.⁵⁷ We can see this in Wiegman's comment that *Object Lessons* is:

a long meditation on the ways in which the field imaginary of identity knowledges situates us to be genuinely surprised every time we (re)discover not only [that the consequences of our political tactics are not ours to control] but the [discovery that this fact] leads to, which is that there is no secure place from which to claim alterity.⁵⁸

Part of the reason that the field imaginary situates us in this way is because, according to Wiegman, critical writing requires the fantasy of arrival; 'closure is, after all, necessary, not just for the academic professional in need of a recent publication', she writes, 'but also, more urgently, for the political demands implicit in left identity critique'.⁵⁹ A number of books have argued that queer and feminist scholarship can distance itself from polemics of the new. However, as compelling as these arguments are, there is nevertheless a difference between such calls for a scholarship that does not transform ambivalence and that which would actually enact that which it calls for.⁶⁰ As I explored with reference to the experiments of Judith Butler, it is excruciatingly difficult to create or even imagine an academic practice that would *not* distinguish itself from what already exists while at the same time making a real difference in the world.

To reiterate, this is not an argument that activism or scholarship needs to be structured differently. It is an argument for the creation of some space in which it is possible for those invested in identity knowledges to 'interpret, understand, and *take care* of the process of transmission' peculiar to what is already-there.⁶¹ These minor texts are finally of interest because they do not require the same resolution of ambivalence for their utility. This can then therefore provide the space to think about the technical infrastructure required for nurturing movement sustainability, and the kinds of depressive insights about the inexorable laws of unintended consequences, without that interfering with the heroic mode which can in simpler terms just be a way of saying critical thinking. Afterall, it is almost impossible to subvert the major text within an auxiliary genre which is

⁵⁷ Sedgwick, Halley, and Parker, p. 637.

⁵⁸ Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, p. 68.

⁵⁹ Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, p. 313.

⁶⁰ Notable examples include Sam McBean, *Feminism's Queer Temporalities* (London: Routledge, 2015) and Love, *Feeling Backward*. Love spoke of this irony, and the difficulty of doing otherwise, in her talk "Beginning with Stigma", at Queen Mary, University of London on 14th June 2018.

⁶¹ Withers, p. 5.

‘fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself’ and whose paratextual element is always subordinate to “its” text’.⁶² It can therefore preserve space of the heroic mode of intervention, while also pointing to something else; to a “what happens next”. I argued above that minor texts can offer a useful alternative for thinking about research impact because they belie closure and refocus the mind on the labour involved in keeping fragile identity knowledges in circulation. But, finally, I want to suggest that they can provide more than just a practical tool.

The work of Hemmings and Wiegman has inspired me to think not only about the objects of identity knowledge but also about how these texts produce a community of subjects through their mode of address and the desires for justice which they incite. Wiegman calls these subjects those of a ‘critical sensibility’; those ‘who are willing to stake the world, including its very future, on interpretation; and who find both pleasure and despair in what words do’.⁶³ Wiegman’s work has taught me that our subjectivity is at stake in these narratives. Therefore, the idea that we might simply give up on the patterns of hope and despair that critique continually inspires and frustrates is probably unrealistic. There is just too much that feels necessary to preserve with regards to how such texts position us as subjects who desire for justice. The promise that we might somehow get beyond complicity is what creates the propulsive energy around social justice cultures and their texts. However, this thesis has been an attempt to integrate minor texts – which utilise different temporal frameworks, and therefore mediate a different set of affects – into the stories we tell about identity knowledge. I want to suggest that these texts can offer a kind of “third space” which gets to the side of that otherwise bifurcated lens through which it appears that our politics is the sum total of our activism plus our scholarship. For me at least, an integration of the minor texts into my understanding of identity knowledges means that I am less genuinely taken by surprise, and therefore less likely to feel entirely burnt out, by that uncannily familiar rediscovery of a gap between interpretation and the arrival of social justice.

⁶² Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 12.

⁶³ Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, p. 306.

Bibliography

- Ahmed, Sara, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006)
- , *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014)
- , ‘Against Students’, *The New Inquiry*, (2015) <<https://thenewinquiry.com/against-students/>> [accessed 23 June 2019]
- , *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017)
- Åkerlind, Gerlese and Lynn McAlpine, ‘Supervising doctoral students: variation in purpose and pedagogy’, *Studies in Higher Education*, 42.9 (2017), 1686–98
- Albrecht-Crane, Christa, ‘Pedagogy as Friendship’, *Cultural Studies*, 19.4 (2005), 491–514 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380500219548>>
- Alcoff, Linda, ‘The Problem of Speaking for Others’, *Cultural Critique*, 20 (1991), 5–32
- Allen, Robert, ‘Bursting Bubbles: “Soap Opera” Audiences and the Limits of Genre’, in *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*, ed. by Ellen Seiter (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 44–55
- Amin, Kadji, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017)
- Anderson, Chris, ‘The End of Theory: The Data Deluge Makes the Scientific Method Obsolete’, *Wired*, (2008) <<https://www.wired.com/2008/06/pb-theory/>> [accessed 7 March 2019]
- Andrews, Kimberly Quioque, ‘Trade Secrets: Poetry in the Teaching Machine’, *New Literary History*, 49.1 (2018), 71–91 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2018.0003>>
- Angelides, Steven, ‘Historicizing (Bi)Sexuality’, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 52.1–2 (2006), 125–58 <https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v52n01_06>
- Anker, Elizabeth, and Rita Felski, ed., *Critique and Postcritique* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017)

- Anzaldúa, Gloria, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007)
- Austin, Ann, 'Preparing the Next Generation of Faculty: Graduate School as Socialization to the Academic Career', *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73.1 (2002), 94–122 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2002.11777132>>
- Bakhtin, M. M., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981)
- Ball, Stephen, 'The Teacher's Soul and the Terrors of Performativity', *Journal of Education Policy*, 18.2 (2003), 215–28 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043065>>
- Baraitser, Lisa, *Enduring Time* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017)
- Barber, Stephen, and David Clark, *Regarding Sedgwick: Essays on Queer Culture and Critical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2002)
- Barker, Meg-John, *Queer: A Graphic History* (London: Icon Books, 2016)
- Barnett, Ronald, *The Limits of Competence: Knowledge, Higher Education and Society* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994)
- Barounis, Cynthia, 'Witches, Terrorists, and the Biopolitics of Camp', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 24.2 (2018), 213–238
- Bartholomae, David, 'Inventing the University', *Journal of Basic Writing*, 5.1 (1986), 1–23
- Bayly, Simon, 'The End of the Project: Futurity in the Culture of Catastrophe', *Angelaki*, 18.2 (2013), 161–77 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2013.804997>>
- Bechdel, Alison, *The Indelible Alison Bechdel: Confessions, Comix, and Miscellaneous Dykes to Watch Out For* (Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1998)
- , *The Essential Dykes to Watch Out For* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009)
- , *Are You My Mother?: A Comic Drama* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2012)

- Lauren Berlant, 'Evidences of Masturbation', in *Questions of Evidence*, ed. by James Chandler, Arnold Davidson, and Harry Harootunian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 125-131
- , 'Feminism and the Institutions of Intimacy', in *The Politics of Research*, ed. by E. Kaplan and George Levine (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 143-61
- , 'Unfeeling Kerry', *Theory & Event*, 8.2 (2005), 1-9
<<https://doi.org/10.1353/tae.2005.0021>>
- , *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)
- , 'Preface: Reading Sedgwick, Then and Now', in *Reading Sedgwick*, ed. by Lauren Berlant (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), pp. 1-5
- Berlant, Lauren, and Elizabeth Freeman, 'Queer Nationality', in *Fear of a Queer Planet*, ed. by Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 193-229
- Berlant, Lauren, and Michael Warner, 'Guest Column: What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?', *PMLA*, 110.3 (1995), 343-49
- Best, Stephen, and Sharon Marcus, 'Surface Reading: An Introduction', *Representations*, 108.1 (2009), 1-21 <<https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2009.108.1.1>>
- Blanchot, Maurice, 'Everyday Speech', *Yale French Studies*, 73, (1987), 12-20
<<https://doi.org/10.2307/2930194>>
- Bloch, Ernst, *The Principle of Hope*. 3 vols (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995)
- Bollas, Christopher, *The Shadow of the Object Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989)
- Boltanski, Luc, and Laurent Thévenot, 'The Sociology of Critical Capacity', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2 (1999), 359-77 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/136843199002003010>>
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1977)
- Bourdieu, Pierre, *Homo Academicus* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988)

- , *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993)
- Bousquet, Marc, 'The Waste Product of Graduate Education: Toward a Dictatorship of the Flexible', *Social Text*, 20.1 (2002), 81–104 <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-20-1_70-81>
- Boyd, Richard, 'Reading Student Resistance: The Case of the Missing Other', *JAC*, 19.4 (1999), 589–605
- Bradway, Tyler, *Queer Experimental Literature: The Affective Politics of Bad Reading* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)
- Braudel, Fernand, *On History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982)
- , *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. 2 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996)
- Brennan, Teresa, *The Transmission of Affect* (London: Cornell University Press, 2004)
- Britta, Timm Knudsen, and Carsten Stage, ed., *Affective Methodologies: Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)
- Brown, Wendy, 'Resisting Left Melancholy', *Boundary 2*, 26.3 (1999), 19–27
- , *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)
- Browne, Victoria, *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)
- Budak, Özgür, 'Searching for Authenticity and Success: Academic Identity and Production in Neoliberal Times', in *Universities in the Neoliberal Era*, ed. by Hakan Ergül and Simten Cosar (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 41–59
- Butler, Judith, 'Contingent Foundations', in *Feminists Theorise the Political*, ed. by Judith Butler and Joan Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp 3–21
- , 'Critically Queer', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1.1 (1993), 17–32 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-1-17>>

- , 'Against Proper Objects', in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. by Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 1–30
- , *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997)
- , *Subjects of Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999)
- , 'What Is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue', *Eipcp*, (2001)
 <<http://eipcp.net/transversal/0806/butler/en/>> [accessed 11 April 2019]
- , 'Values of Difficulty', in *Just Being Difficult?: Academic Writing in the Public Arena*, ed. by Jonathan Culler and Kevin Lamb (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 199–215
- , *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004)
- , *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005)
- , 'On Never Having Learned How to Live', *Differences*, 16.3 (2005), 27–34
- , *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 2006)
- , *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 2011)
- Butler, Judith, and Bronwyn Davies, *Judith Butler in Conversation: Analyzing the Texts and Talk of Everyday Life* (New York: Routledge, 2008)
- Butt, Gavin, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005)
 <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/suss/detail.action?docID=1168382>>
 [accessed 6 March 2019]
- Cammaerts, Bart, 'Journalistic Representations of Jeremy Corbyn in the British Press', *LSE*, (2020) <<http://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/research/research-projects/representations-of-jeremy-corbyn>>
 [accessed 20 May 2020]
- Cappello, Mary, *Life Breaks In (a Mood Almanack)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016)

- Carver, Terrell, and Samuel Chambers, *Judith Butler's Precarious Politics: Critical Encounters* (London: Routledge, 2008)
- Cavell, Stanley, *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)
- Chandler, James, *England in 1819: Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999)
- Chaudhary, Zahid, 'Introduction', *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 129–34
<<https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0029>>
- Cho, Daniel, *Psychopedagogy: Freud, Lacan, and the Psychoanalytic Theory of Education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)
- Clough, Patricia, ed., *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007)
- Cocks, Joan, *The Oppositional Imagination: Feminism, Critique and Political Theory* (London: Routledge, 1989)
- Cohen, Cathy, 'Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 3.4 (1997), 437–65
<<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-3-4-437>>
- , 'The Radical Potential Of Queer?: Twenty Years Later', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 21.5 (2019), 140–44
- Corbman, Rachel, 'The Scholars and the Feminists: The Barnard Sex Conference and the History of the Institutionalization of Feminism', *Feminist Formations*, 27.3 (2015), 49–80
- Cotton, Jess, 'Interview with Maggie Nelson', *The White Review*, (2015)
<<http://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/interview-with-maggie-nelson/>>
[accessed 26 January 2019]

- Crangle, Sara and Peter Nicholls, 'Introduction', in *On Bathos: Literature, Art, Music*, ed. by Sara Crangle and Peter Nicholls (London: Continuum, 2012)
- Crimp, Douglas, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004)
- Cusset, Francois, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008)
- Cvetkovich, Ann, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003)
- Davis, Kathy, 'Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful', *Feminist Theory*, 9.1 (2008), 67–85
<<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700108086364>>
- Davis, Murray, "'That's Classic!'" The Phenomenology and Rhetoric of Successful Social Theories', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 16.3 (1986), 285–301
- Dean, Tim, *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009)
- Dean, Tim, and Robyn Wiegman, 'What Does Critique Want? A Critical Exchange', *English Language Notes*, 51.2 (2013), 107–22
- Derrida, Jacques, *Dissemination* (London: Athlone, 1981)
- , *The Work of Mourning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001)
- , *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004)
- Dimock, Wai Chee, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008)
- Dinshaw, Carolyn, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999)
- Dinshaw, Carolyn et al., 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 13.2–3 (2007), 177–95

- Douglas, Mary, *How Institutions Think* (London: Routledge, 1987)
- Doyle, Jennifer, *Hold It Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013)
- Duggan, Lisa, *The Twilight of Equality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003)
- , 'Love and Anger: Scenes from a Passionate Career', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 17.1 (2011), 145–53 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2010-025>>
- Eakin, Paul, *Touching the World: Reference in Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)
- Edelman, Lee, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004)
- Edwards, Jason, *Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick* (London: Routledge, 2008)
- Elliott, Jane, 'The Currency of Feminist Theory', *PMLA*, 121.5 (2006), 1697–1703
- Ellsworth, Elizabeth, *Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy and the Power of Address* (New York: Teachers' College Press, 1997)
- Eng, David, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002)
- Eng, David, Judith Halberstam, and José Muñoz, 'Introduction: What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?', *Social Text*, 23.3–4 (2005), 1–17
- , ed., Special Issue: What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?, *Social Text*, 23.3–4 (2005)
- English, James, and Ted Underwood, 'Shifting Scales: Between Literature and Social Science', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 77.3 (2016), 277–295 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/00267929-3570612>>
- Fawaz, Ramzi, and Shanté Paradigm Smalls, 'Queers Read This! LGBTQ Literature Now', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 24.2 (2018), 169–87

Fawaz, Ramzi, 'Introduction "An Open Mesh of Possibilities": The Necessity of Eve Sedgwick in Dark Times', in *Reading Sedgwick*, ed. by Berlant Lauren (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), pp. 6–33

Felman, Shoshana, *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010)

Felski, Rita, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2000)

———, 'Introduction', *New Literary History*, 33.4 (2002), 607–22

———, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015)

———, 'Response', *PMLA*, 132.2 (2017), 384–91

Felski, Rita and Susan Fraiman, 'Introduction: Are You in the Mood?', *New Literary History*, 43.3 (2012), v–xii (p. v) <<https://doi.org/doi:10.1353/nlh.2012.0029>>

Ferguson, Roderick, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012)

Fineman, Joel, *The Subjectivity Effect in Western Literary Tradition: Essays toward the Release of Shakespeare's Will* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991)

Fish, Stanley, *Winning Arguments: What Works and Doesn't Work in Politics, the Bedroom, the Courtroom, and the Classroom* (New York: Harper, 2016)

Fisher, Gary, *Gary In Your Pocket: Stories and Notebooks of Gary Fisher*, ed. by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996)

Flatley, Jonathan, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008)

———, 'Unlike Eve Sedgwick', *Criticism*, 52.2 (2010), 225–34
<<https://doi.org/10.1353/crt.2010.0041>>

Foucault, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1974)

- , ‘The Life of Infamous Men’, in *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*, ed. by Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton (Sydney: Feral Publications, 1979), pp. 76–91
- , *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. by Donald Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980)
- , *The History of Sexuality*. 3 vols (London: Penguin, 1988-1998)
- , *The Politics of Truth* (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2007)
- Fournier, Lauren, ‘Sick Women, Sad Girls, and Selfie Theory: Autotheory as Contemporary Feminist Practice’, *A/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, 33.3 (2019), 643–62
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/08989575.2018.1499495>>
- François, Anne-Lise, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007)
- Frank, Adam, *Transferrential Poetics, from Poe to Warhol* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctt9qds3q>> [accessed 23 June 2019]
- Franklin, Cynthia, *Academic Lives: Memoir, Cultural Theory, and the University Today* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009)
- Freccero, Carla, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006)
- Freeman, Elizabeth, ‘Packing History, Count(Er)Ing Generations’, *New Literary History*, 31.4 (2000), 727–44 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2000.0046>>
- , ‘Still After’, in *After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory*, ed. by Janet Halley and Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 27–33
- , *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)
- Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000)
- Frow, John, *Genre* (London: Routledge, 2006)

Fuss, Diana, 'Reading like a Feminist', in *The Essential Difference*, ed. by Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 98–115

———, *Identification Papers* (London: Routledge, 1995)

Gallagher, Catherine, and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)

Gallop, Jane, *Anecdotal Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002)

———, 'Close Reading in 2009', *ADE Bulletin*, 149 (2010), 5–19

———, *The Deaths of the Author: Reading and Writing in Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)

Garber, Linda, *Identity Poetics: Race, Class, and the Lesbian-Feminist Roots of Queer Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001)

Genette, Gerard, *Narrative Discourse* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980)

———, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Geraghty, C., 'Continuous Serial - a Definition', in *Coronation Street*, ed. by R. Dyer (London: B.F.I. Publishing, 1981), pp. 9–26

Giffney, Noreen, *Clinical Encounters in Sexuality: Psychoanalytic Practice and Queer Theory*, ed. by Eve Watson (Goleta: Punctum Books, 2017)

Gill, Rosalind, and Ngaire Donaghue, 'Resilience, Apps and Reluctant Individualism: Technologies of Self in the Neoliberal Academy', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 54 (2016), 91–99 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.06.016>>

Gordon, Avery, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008)

Gould, Deborah, *Moving Politics: Emotion and Act up's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009)

Grady, Constance, '2017 Was the Year of Women's Anger, Onscreen and Off', *Vox*, (2017) <<https://www.vox.com/2017-in-review/2017/12/21/16776708/2017->

womens-anger-womens-march-reckoning-handmaids-tale-alias-grace-big-little-lies-three-billboards> [accessed 7 May 2020]

Graff, Gerald, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018)

Grant, Barbara, 'Mapping the Pleasures and Risks of Supervision', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 24.2 (2003), 175–90
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300303042>>

———, 'Fighting for Space in Supervision: Fantasies, Fairytales, Fictions and Fallacies', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 18.3 (2005), 337–54
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390500082483>>.

Green, Bill, 'Unfinished Business: Subjectivity and Supervision', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 24.2 (2005), 151–163 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360500062953>>

Green, Pam, and Robin Usher, 'Fast Supervision: Changing Supervisory Practice in Changing Times', *Studies in Continuing Education*, 25.1 (2003), 37–50
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/01580370309281>>

Greenblatt, Stephen, 'Writing as Performance', *Harvard Magazine*, (2007)
<<https://harvardmagazine.com/2007/09/writing-as-performance.html>> [accessed 6 March 2019]

Guignon, Charles, 'Moods in Heidegger's Being and Time', in *What Is an Emotion?*, ed. by Cheshire Calhoun and Robert Solomon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 230–43

Halberstam, Judith, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998)

———, 'Reflections on Queer Studies and Queer Pedagogy', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 45.2–4 (2003), 361–64 <https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_22>

———, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, ed. by Julia Kasdorf and Michael Tyrell (New York: New York University Press, 2005)

Hall, Donald, *Queer Theories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003)

———, *Reading Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 2009)

Hall, Stuart, 'Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies', in *Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 277–94

Halley, Janet, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006)

Halley, Janet, and Wendy Brown, ed., *Left Legalism/Left Critique* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002)

Halley, Janet, and Andrew Parker, ed., *After Sex?: On Writing since Queer Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)

Halperin, David, 'The Normalization of Queer Theory', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 45.2–4 (2003), 339–43 <https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_17>

———, *How to Be Gay* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2012)

Hark, Sabine, 'Contending Directions. Gender Studies in the Entrepreneurial University', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 54 (2016), 84–90
<<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.06.009>>

Hawkins, Katy, 'Woven Spaces: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's Dialogue On Love', *Omen & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 16.2 (2006), 251–67
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/07407700600744568>>

Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1962)

———, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001)

Hemmings, Clare, 'Invoking Affect: Cultural Theory and the Ontological Turn', *Cultural Studies*, 19.5 (2006), 548–67

———, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)

- , 'Is Gender Studies Singular? Stories of Queer/Feminist Difference and Displacement', *Differences*, 27 (2016), 79–102
- , 'Resisting Popular Feminisms: Gender, Sexuality and the Lure of the Modern', *Gender, Place & Culture*, 25.7 (2018), 963–77
- Henderson, Lisa, 'Sexual Healing', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 17.1 (2011), 125–34 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2010-023>>
- Hensley, Nathan, 'Novel Violence: A Narratography of Victorian Fiction by Garrett Stewart', *Criticism*, 54.2 (2012), 329–42
- Hesford, Victoria, *Feeling Women's Liberation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013)
- Highmore, Ben, *The Everyday Life Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002)
- , *Ordinary Lives* (London: Routledge, 2010)
- , *Cultural Feelings: Mood, Mediation and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2017)
- , 'Feeling Our Way: Mood and Cultural Studies', *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 10.4 (2013), 427–38 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2013.840387>>
- hooks, bell, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994)
- , *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (London: Pluto Press, 2000)
- Horowitz, Helen, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)
- Hughes, Linda, and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1991)
- Jaffe, S., 'The Collective Power of #MeToo', *Dissent*, 65.2 (2018), 80–87
- Jagose, Annamarie, *Lesbian Utopics* (New York: Routledge, 1995)
- , 'Feminism's Queer Theory', *Feminism & Psychology*, 19.2 (2009), 157–74
- Jameson, Fredric, *The Antinomies of Realism* (London: Verso, 2013)

- Jaschik, Scott, 'Judith Butler Discusses Being Burned in Effigy and Protested in Brazil', *Inside Higher Ed*, (2017)
 <<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/11/13/judith-butler-discusses-being-burned-effigy-and-protested-brazil>> [accessed 9 February 2018]
- Johnson, E., "'Quare' Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know about Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 21.1 (2001), 1–25
 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10462930128119>>
- Johnson, Lesley, Alison Lee, and Bill Green, 'The PhD and the Autonomous Self: Gender, Rationality and Postgraduate Pedagogy', *Studies in Higher Education*, 25.2 (2000), 135–47 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/713696141>>
- KC, 'Academy, Autotheory, and the Argonauts', *Aminotfemme*, (2016)
 <<https://aminotfemme.wordpress.com/2016/04/22/the-academy-autotheory-and-the-argonauts/>> [accessed 21 May 2020]
- Kegerreis, Sue, "'When I Can Come on Time I'll Be Ready to Finish": Meanings of Lateness in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy', *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 29 (2013), 449–65 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjp.12053>>
- Kelly, Frances, *The Idea of the PhD* (London: Routledge, 2017)
- Kernberg, Otto, 'The Influence of Joseph Sandler's Work on Contemporary Psychoanalysis', *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 25.2 (2005), 173–83
 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/07351692509349126>>
- Kimball, Roger, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education* (New York: Scott Foresman, 1990)
- Kirby, Vicki, *Judith Butler: Live Theory* (London: Continuum, 2006)
- Koestenbaum, Wayne, 'Wilde's Hard Labour and the Birth of Gay Reading', in *Readers and Reading*, ed. by Andrew Bennet (Harlow: Longman, 1995), pp. 164–80
- , 'Forward: The Eve Effect', in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), pp. ix–xvi

Kuhn, Thomas, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012)

Laity, Paul, 'Maggie Nelson Interview: "People Write to Me to Let Me Know That, in Case I Missed It, There Are Only Two Genders"', *The Guardian*, (2016)
 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/02/books-interview-maggie-nelson-genders>> [accessed 26 January 2019]

Lefebvre, Henri, *Critique of Everyday Life* (London: Verso Books, 2014)

———, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016)

Levine, Caroline, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015)

———, 'Revaluing Repetition: John Clare's Verse-Thinking', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 77.1 (2016), 65–80 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/00267929-3331595>>

Likierman, Meira, *Melanie Klein: Her Work in Context* (London: Continuum, 2002)

Littau, Karin, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies, and Bibliomania* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006)

Livingstone, Sonia, *Making Sense of Television: The Psychology of Audience Interpretation* (London: Pergamon, 1990)

Love, Heather, "'Oh, the Fun We'll Have': Remembering the Prospects for Sexuality Studies', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 10.2 (2004), 258–61
 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-10-2-258>>

———, 'Dwelling in Ambivalence', *The Women's Review of Books*, 22.2 (2004), 18–19
 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/4024445>>

———, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009)

———, 'Close but Not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn', *New Literary History*, 41.2 (2010), 371–91 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2010.0007>>

———, 'Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading', *Criticism*, 52.2 (2010), 235–41

- , 'Queer -- This', in *After Sex?: On Writing since Queer Theory*, ed. by Janet Halley and Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 180–91
- , 'Introduction', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 17.1 (2011), 1–14
<<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2010-014>>
- , ed., Special Issue: Rethinking Sex, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 17.1 (2011) <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2010-014>>
- , 'Small Change: Realism, Immanence, and the Politics of the Micro', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 77.3 (2016), 419–45 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/00267929-3570678>>
- Luhmann, Susanne, 'Queering/Querying Pedagogy? Or, Pedagogy Is a Pretty Queer Thing', *Queer Theory in Education*, (2015)
<<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f789/3c95e540f1f2c10981adee807e2b56cec767.pdf>> [accessed 28 January 2019]
- Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Conditions: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984)
- Mance, Henry, 'Britain Has Had Enough of Experts, Says Gove', *The Financial Times*, (2016)
<<https://www.ft.com/content/3be49734-29cb-11e6-83e4-abc22d5d108c>>
[accessed 7 May 2020]
- Martin, Biddy, 'Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias', *Diacritics*, 24.2/3 (1994), 104–21 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/465167>>
- , 'Extraordinary Homosexuals and the Fear of Being Ordinary', in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. by Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 109–35
- Massumi, Brian, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002)
- McBean, Sam, *Feminism's Queer Temporalities* (London: Routledge, 2015)
- McCallum, E., and Mikko Tuhkanen, *Queer Times, Queer Becomings* (Albany: Suny Press, 2011)

- McCloud, Scott, *Understanding Comics* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994)
- McCrary, Micah, 'Riding the Blinds', *Los Angeles Review of Books*, (2015)
 <<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/riding-the-blinds/>> [accessed 28 January 2019]
- McDonough, John, 'Using and Misusing Anecdote in Policy Making', *Health Affairs*, 20.1 (2001), 207–12 <<https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.20.1.207>>
- McLaughlin, J, 'The Return of the Materials', in *Intersections between Feminist and Queer Theory*, ed. by D. Richardson et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 59–77
- McWilliams, Erica, *Pedagogical Pleasures* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989)
- Mewburn, I., 'Troubling Talk: Assembling the PhD Candidate', *Studies in Continuing Education*, 33.3 (2011), 321–332
 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2011.585151>>
- Miller, D. A., *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000)
- , *Jane Austen, or The Secret of Style* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)
- Miller, Nancy, *Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts* (New York: Routledge, 1992)
- , *But Enough about Me: Why We Read Other People's Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002)
- Milner, Andrew, 'Cultural Materialism, Culturalism and Post-Culturalism: The Legacy of Raymond Williams', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 11.1 (1994), 43–73
- Mitchell, Nick, 'The Object of "Object Lessons": Thoughts and Questions', *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 180–89 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0044>>
- Moffatt, Michael, *Coming of Age in New Jersey: College and American Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989)

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Boundary 2*, 12/13.3 (1984), 333–58

<<https://doi.org/10.2307/302821>>

Moi, Toril, *Sex, Gender, and the Body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Moraga, Cherrie and Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., *This Bridge Called My Back* (New York: Suny Press, 2015)

Moran, Joe, 'The University: A Guide for Depressives', *Times Higher Education*, (2018)

<<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/university-guide-depressives#>> [accessed 9 May 2020]

Muñoz, José, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and The Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999)

———, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009)

———, 'Race, Sex and the Incommensurate', in *Queer Futures: Reconsidering Ethics, Activism, and the Political*, ed. by Elahe Haschemi Yekani, Eveline Kilian, and Beatrice Michaelis (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 103–16

National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 'The Dearing Report: Higher Education in the Learning Society' (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1997)

<<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/dearing1997/dearing1997.html>> [accessed 19 October 2019]

Namaste, Ki, 'Tragic Misreadings: Queer Theory's Erasure of Transgender Subjectivity', in *Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Anthology*, ed. by Brett Beemyn and Michele Eliason (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 183–203

Nelson, Maggie, *Women, the New York School, and Other True Abstractions* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011)

———, 'Finishing Touches', *Los Angeles Review of Books*, (2012)

<<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/finishing-touches/>> [accessed 26 January 2019]

- , 'Writing With, From, and For Others', *Tin House*, (2012)
 <<https://tinhouse.com/writing-with-from-and-for-others/>> [accessed 26 January 2019]
- , *The Argonauts* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2015)
- Newton, Ester, 'Role Models', in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject—a Reader*, ed. by Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 96–109
- Ngai, Sianne, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007)
- , *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (London: Harvard University Press, 2015)
- Nussbaum, M., 'Professor of Parody', *The New Republic*, (1999)
 <<http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Nussbaum-Butler-Critique-NR-2-99.pdf>> [accessed 17 June 2018]
- Ohi, Kevin, *Dead Letters Sent: Queer Literary Transmission* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015)
- , 'Revision, Origin and the Courage of Truth: Henry James's New York Edition Prefaces' in *After Queer Studies: Literature, Theory and Sexuality in the 21st Century*, ed. by Tyler Bradway and E. McCallum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 102–21 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108627832>> [accessed 10 April 2019]
- Olson, Liesl, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)
- O'Rourke, Kristen, and Mark Kerr, 'Sedgwick Sense and Sensibility: An Interview with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick', *Nideffer*, (1995)
 <<http://nideffer.net/proj/Tvc/interviews/20.Tvc.v9.intrvws.Sedg.html>>
 [accessed 30 March 2020]
- O'Rourke, Michael, 'The Afterlives of Queer Theory', *Continent*, (2011)
 <<http://continentcontinent.cc./index.php/continent/article/view/32>> [accessed 12 March 2020]

———, 'Objects, Objects, Objects (and Some Objections)', *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 190–201 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0038>>

Palmer, Parker, *The Courage to Teach Guide for Reflection and Renewal* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017)

Parker, Jan, 'Academics' Virtual Identities', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 14.2 (2009), 221–224 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510902757310>>

Pereira, Maria do Mar, *Power, Knowledge and Feminist Scholarship: An Ethnography of Academia* (New York: Routledge, 2017)

Perez, Harim, 'You Can Have My Brown Body and Eat It, Too!', *Social Text*, (2005) <http://socialtext.dukejournals.org/content/23/3-4_84-85/171> [accessed 1 December 2016]

Petersen, Eva, 'Negotiating Academicity: Postgraduate Research Supervision as Category Boundary Work', *Studies in Higher Education*, 32.4 (2007), 475–87

Phipps, Alison, 'Whose Personal Is More Political? Experience in Contemporary Feminist Politics', *Feminist Theory*, 17.3 (2016), 303–21 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700116663831>>

———, *Me, Not You: The Trouble with Mainstream Feminism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020)

Plantinga, Carl, 'Art Moods and Human Moods in Narrative Cinema', *New Literary History*, 43.3 (2012), 455–75 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2012.0025>>

Postema, Barbara, *Narrative Structure in Comics: Making Sense of Fragments* (Rochester: RIT Press, 2013)

Pratt, Lloyd, 'Close Reading the Present', in *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, ed. by E. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (Albany: Suny Press, 2011), pp. 183–204

Probyn, Elspeth, *Sexing the Self: Gendered Positions in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1993)

———, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005)

- Prosser, Jay, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998)
- Puar, Jasbir, 'Queer Times, Queer Assemblages', *Social Text*, 23.3-4 (2005), 121–39
<https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-23-3-4_84-85-121>
- Readings, Bill, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996)
- Reid-Pharr, Robert, 'Tarrying with the 'Private Parts'', *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 149–53
- Richards, I., *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgement* (New York: Hancourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929)
- Rohy, Valerie, 'Busy Dying', in *Sex, Gender and Time in Fiction and Culture*, ed. by B. Davies and J. Funke (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 205–19
- Roth, Benita, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- Rubin, Gayle, 'Blood Under the Bridge: Reflections on "Thinking Sex"', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 17.1 (2011), 15–48 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2010-015>>
- , *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)
- Rubin, Gayle, and Judith Butler, 'Sexual Traffic. Interview', in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. by Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 68–108
- Russo, Maria, 'The Reeducation of a Queer Theorist', *Salon*, (1999)
<<http://www.salon.com/1999/09/27/sedgwick/>> [accessed 25 September 2017]
- Said, Edward, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996)
- , *The Edward Said Reader* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000)
- , 'Thoughts on Late Style', *London Review of Books*, 26.15 (2004), 3–7

———, *On Late Style* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006)

Salih, Sara, *Judith Butler* (London: Routledge, 2002)

Schulman, Sarah, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013)

———, *Conflict Is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility and the Duty of Repair* (London: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016)

Scott, David, 'The Temporality of Generations: Dialogue, Tradition, Criticism', *New Literary History*, 45.2 (2014), 157–81 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2014.0017>>

———, *Stuart Hall's Voice: Intimations of an Ethics of Receptive Generosity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017)

Scott, Joan Wallach, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry*, 17.4 (1991), 773–797

———, 'Against Eclecticism', *Differences*, 16.3 (2005), 114–137
<<https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-16-3-114>>

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)

———, 'Queer Performativity: Henry James's 'The Art of the Novel'', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1.1 (1993), 1–16 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-1-1>>

———, *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994)

———, *A Dialogue on Love* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000)

———, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003)

———, 'Teaching/Depression', *Se&F Online*, (2006)
<http://sfonline.barnard.edu/heilbrun/sedgwick_03.htm> [accessed 28 January 2020]

———, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008)

———, *The Weather in Proust*, ed. by Jonathan Goldberg and Michael Moon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, and Adam Frank, ed., *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995)

Sedgwick, E. K., J. Halley, and A. Parker, 'Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 106.3 (2007), 625–42

Seltzer, Mark, 'The Offical World', *Critical Inquiry*, 37.4 (2011), 724–53

Sewell, William, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

Shapiro, Stephen, 'Marx to the Rescue! Queer Theory and the Crisis of Prestige', *New Formations*, 53.1 (2004), 77–90

Shields, David, *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto* (London: Penguin, 2011)

Sholock, Adale, 'Queer Theory in the First Person Academic Autobiography and the Authoritative Contingencies of Visibility', *Cultural Critique*, 66 (2007), 127–52

Shore, Cris, 'Beyond the Multiversity: Neoliberalism and the Rise of the Schizophrenic University', *Social Anthropology*, 18.1 (2010), 15–29
<<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8676.2009.00094.x>>

Showalter, Elaine, *Teaching Literature* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002)

Silverstone, Roger, *Television and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 1994)

Sinfield, Alan, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment* (London: Cassell, 1994)

Skorczewski, Dawn, *Teaching One Moment at a Time: Disruption and Repair in the Classroom* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005)

Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010)

- Solomon, Robert, *What Is an Emotion? Classic and Contemporary Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)
- Stacey, Jackie, 'On Being a Good-Enough Reader of the Argonauts', *Angelaki*, 23.1 (2018), 204–08 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2018.1435402>>
- Stewart, Kathleen, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007)
- Stockman, Farah, 'Women's March on Washington Opens Contentious Dialogues About Race', *New York Times*, (2017)
<<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/09/us/womens-march-on-washington-opens-contentious-dialogues-about-race.html>> [accessed 15 May 2020]
- Stryker, Susan, and Stephen Whittle, ed., *The Transgender Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006)
- Summa-Knoop, Laura Di, 'Critical Autobiography: A New Genre?', *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 9.1 (2017), 1–12 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/20004214.2017.1358047>>
- Sword, Helen, *Stylish Academic Writing* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012)
- Taylor, Charles, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004)
- Terada, Rei, *Looking Away: Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction, Kant to Adorno* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009)
- Terry, Jennifer, 'Theorizing Deviant Historiography', *Differences*, 3.2 (1999), 53–71
- Thwaites, Tony, Lloyd Davis, and Warwick Mules, *Tools for Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994)
- Tomkins, Silvan, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, ed. by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995)
- Traub, Valerie, 'The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies', *PMLA*, 128.1 (2013), 21–39
<<https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2013.128.1.21>>
- Turner, William, *A Genealogy of Queer Theory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000)

- Vance, Carole, ed., *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (New York: Pandora Press, 1992)
- Veesser, H. Aram, ed., *Confessions of the Critics* (New York: Routledge, 1996)
- Viego, Antonio, 'The Madness of Curing', *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 154–59
<<https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0036>>
- Vitae, 'Demonstrating Research Impact', *Vitae*, (2020) <<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/leadership-development-for-principal-investigators-pis/intellectual-leadership/demonstrating-research-impact>> [accessed 27 August 2020]
- Warhol, Robyn, *Having a Good Cry: Effeminate Feelings and Pop-Culture Forms* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002)
- Warhol, Robyn, and Susan Lanser, *Narrative Theory Unbound: Queer and Feminist Interventions* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2015)
- Warner, Michael, ed., *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993)
- , 'Uncritical Reading', in *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*, ed. by Jane Gallop (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 13–38
- , 'Queer and Then?', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, (2012)
<<https://www.chronicle.com/article/QueerThen-/130161>> [accessed 27 May 2019]
- Watkins, Megan, 'Pedagogic Affect/Effect: Embodying a Desire to Learn', *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 1.4 (2006), 269–82
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/15544800701341533>>
- Weed, Elizabeth, 'Introduction', in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. by Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. vii–xiii
- Weed, Elizabeth, and Naomi Schor, ed., *Feminism Meets Queer Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997)

Wiegman, Robyn, 'On Being in Time with Feminism', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 65.1 (2004), 161–76

———, *Object Lessons* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012)

———, 'Wishful Thinking', *Feminist Formations*, 25.3 (2013), 202–13
<<https://doi.org/doi:10.1353/ff.2013.0038>>

———, 'Eve's Triangles, or Queer Studies Beside Itself', *Differences*, 26.1 (2015), 48–73
<<https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2880600>>

———, 'In the Margins with the Argonauts', *Angelaki*, 23.1 (2018), 209–13
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2018.1435403>>

Wiegman, Robyn, and Elizabeth Wilson, 'Introduction: Antinormativity's Queer Conventions', *Differences*, 26.1 (2015), 1–25 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2880582>>

———, ed., Special Issue: Queer Theory without Antinormativity, *Differences*, 26.1 (2015)
<<https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2880582>>

Williams, Raymond, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1983)

———, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984)

———, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

———, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: Verso, 2015)

Wilson, Elizabeth, *Gut Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015)

Winnicott, Donald, 'Hate in the Countertransference', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 30.2 (1949), 69–74

Withers, Deborah, *Feminism, Digital Culture and the Politics of Transmission: Theory, Practice and Cultural Heritage* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015)

Wittig, Monique, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992)

Woloch, Alex, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)

Woodward, Kathleen, *Statistical Panic: Cultural Politics and Poetics of the Emotions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009)

Zarkov, B., and K. Davis, 'Ambiguities and Dilemmas around #MeToo: #ForHow Long and #WhereTo?', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 25.1 (2018), 3–9

Zhang, Dora, 'Notes on Atmosphere', *Qui Parle*, 27.1 (2018), 121–55
<<https://doi.org/10.1215/10418385-4383010>>