Diversity Work and the Narcissisms of Affective Exits

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This article explores the use of affect by diversity workers as a vehicle of exit from the contemporary neoliberal University. I show that, in response to what Sara Ahmed calls feelings of depletion that result from institutions appropriating the diversity work that faculty of color and female- and LGBTQ-identified faculty perform, there is an impulse among faculty to make students into narcissistic objects in order to compensate for the injury of affective depletions the University inflicts. This mode of affective exit is actually a response that I claim the contemporary neoliberal University encourages, thus helping to perpetuate its institutional misogyny and racism. In order, then, to intervene in the neoliberal organization of the contemporary University, I argue that we need to engage in a form of institutional critique that makes visible the desires that encourage us to idealize students and make them into narcissistic objects as a substitute for forging a real exit from the contemporary neoliberal University's misogynist and racist project.

This essay is inspired by what I submit is an increasingly common scene in the contemporary neoliberal University. I read this scene as a site of affective exit, where affect itself is used as a compensatory resource in response to affective injuries incurred from the University's expanding neoliberal logic. I wish to use this scene to think about what happens when the affective strategies one might employ to sustain oneself within the University turn out to be not only forms of affective exits—of seeking an outside within the institution—but also narcissistic coping mechanisms. I especially want to ask what can be done when such mechanisms become appropriated in turn by the University as a means

to maintain the institution's own narcissism and, even more disturbingly, its perpetuation of institutional misogyny and racism. What are the ethical costs of this dynamic? What ethical possibilities remain open in spite of it?

But first, the scene:

On April 1, 2016, nine students occupied Duke University's Allen Building, which houses Duke's administrative offices, in order to protest the university's unacknowledged dependence on the racial and gendered division of paid reproductive labor. The incident that instigated this action was the university's response (or rather, lack thereof) to an alleged vehicular and verbal assault on a contracted parking lot attendant by one of the university's upper-level senior administrators. During a university sporting event held back in 2014, the attendant, Shelvia Underwood, asked the administrator, Executive Vice President Tallman Trask III, for his parking permit. According to Underwood (an African-American woman), Trask (a white man) became incensed, allegedly hit her with his car, and also allegedly called her a "dumb, dumb, stupid nigger." After the *Duke Chronicle*, Duke's student-run newspaper, ran a series of investigative articles exposing this incident, the protesting students occupied the Allen Building and demanded that Trask be fired. Seeing this incident as a symptom of how the university treats all of its workers of color within what the students termed "The Duke Plantation," they also demanded an increase in the minimum wage paid to workers and an impartial arbitration of workers' grievances.

The occupying students correctly recognized and critiqued the contradictions that make possible the workings of the contemporary neoliberal University, not just that of Duke. They also saw through the narcissistic reserve Duke's president at the time, Richard Brodhead, called upon when he defended Trask. Without speaking directly to the alleged vehicular assault, Brodhead nonetheless claimed it was not possible for Trask to have uttered the racial slur he was accused of calling Underwood, saying, in an email to the *Duke Chronicle*, "Dr. Trask has been an extraordinary servant of this university for over 20 years, and no one who works with him closely would find it believable that he would use such language" (Ramkumar and Chason 2016). As with most university administrations, it is enough to be Kantian: a good will and good intentions are all one needs to deny the lived experience of those who are subject to institutional misogyny and racism.

For the time being, however, my primary aim is not to critique Duke or its administration's narcissism, which is easy enough and does not require a scholarly article. More of a concern, and frankly more disturbing, is the narcissism of faculty who regard themselves as allies and mentors of student protestors such as the Allen Building occupiers. During a meeting of a faculty reading group on political theory I participated in while a visiting faculty member in women's studies at Duke that same academic year, the topic of the protests, which were underway at that moment, came up. A fellow faculty member broached the

possibility of our group issuing a statement supporting the student protesters. Already dismayed by the reactions of the full professors in the group who balked at the proposal, exhibiting what I can only describe as a fear of speaking out, I became astounded when other faculty seemed to climb over each other in order to be the first to be able to lay claim to one of the protestors spoken about as their student. Still other faculty competed in similar fashion, citing email exchanges they were having with the occupiers, as if to imply that they were the ones the students chose to communicate with in order to relay messages to the outside.

To me, it seemed like I was witnessing a performance in which these scholars—some extremely accomplished, I hasten to add—vied with one another in order to see who could win the most institutional recognition, to measure who had the most political influence, and to gauge who commanded the highest regard among the students. The students, in turn, were merely objects to be collected in order to bolster faculty members' narcissistic imaginaries. They were territories to be occupied, surfaces for cathexis.

I wish I could say this was the first time I witnessed such a scene. But sadly, it was not. It was quite familiar, something I had seen—and felt—at a number of universities, both large and small, wealthy and "tuition-driven," and in different pedagogical contexts. It conjured past instances of colleagues actively cultivating coteries of student disciples as a visual display of teaching "excellence." And it was even reminiscent of a time I watched another colleague groom an undergraduate student to be so much her intellectual equal that, without any hesitation, she encouraged him to masquerade as a professional academic and accept a request by a journal to serve as an anonymous peer reviewer. (The journal did not know the student had not even yet earned a bachelor's degree, much less a PhD, but my colleague did.)

Affectively, the Duke reading group moment also struck me as very much a "white" scene. Though there were faculty of color present (including myself), what predominated was a desire to manicure whiteness as a specific kind of affect—as an assured feeling of belonging cohered around an idealization of difference and an imagined intimate knowledge of it. Such constructions have already been exposed as part of the scholarly publishing machine (Mohanty 1984; Wyatt 1996), but here it was unfolding live before me.

In fact, the presence of faculty of color among the mostly white members of the reading group only bolstered the theater of white narcissism (Matias 2016) being staged. In addition to the anxious competition for recognition from the occupying students that recalled the appeals that Minnie Bruce Pratt gave voice to in her well-known essay "Identity: Skin Blood Heart" (1984),[1] our presence as faculty of color underscored the fact that the space of the reading group was already serving as a site for the manufacturing and maintenance of a certain white liberal academic identity: Without having to be confronted by the precarious working conditions of the university's contract workers in whose proximity we assembled, the group's participants (myself included) could display

their virtue by testifying to the precarious lives of the more distant populations of the Global South, while the white faculty could be seen in their beneficence welcoming us faculty of color. As a scholar with only a one-year position at Duke, and though tenured at my home institution, I certainly wanted to curry favor with those who were more established in the university, even if I did not want to admit it at the time (and still do not really want to now). But beyond that specific set of circumstances, the desire to participate in whiteness was and remains very real to me, a fact I only recently figured out when reflecting on my choice to try to gain professional entrance to the field of academic philosophy, if not to academia in general. If I am being truly honest, I, too, wanted the ability to claim one of the protesting students as my own so as to consolidate my belonging to the Duke scholarly community at large. Perhaps that is why my experience of this particular event—and especially my unease having found myself caught up in it—remains so palpable for me.

By reflecting on my own affective attachments that emerged in the reading group, I am trying to make it clear that my interest lies not in condemning those in attendance that day. I believe instead that the key to investigating that affective scene, which I want to theorize as a form of affective exit from the University, is to ask about the institutional conditions that cast such moments as viable forms of political engagement for those faculty committed to antiracist, antisexist, and antihomophobic projects. How does taking on that form of affective labor, which, I am suggesting, requires assuming a hegemonic form of whiteness and thus participation in institutional racism, come to count as an actual ethical-political intervention?

Within feminist, queer, and postcolonial theory, there are a number of thinkers who have written on the affective labor that is tacitly assigned to what Lauren Berlant refers to as "politically engaged faculty" (1997, 143). Such faculty, it is commonly known, is typically composed of female- and LGBTQ-identified professors and faculty of color, with whom female-and LGBTQ-identified students and students of color often feel a connection and whom institutions routinely regard as possessing a natural affective capacity for empathy and caretaking. Such labor falls under what Sara Ahmed calls "diversity work" (2012, 51). Ahmed refers to diversity work in two senses: the labor one *undertakes* in trying to "make" an institution more diverse (e.g., in terms of its overall demographic and/or its curriculum), and the labor one *undergoes* as part of being a member of groups that do not fit with an institution's prevailing norms (173–87). The affective labor one performs as "politically engaged faculty" falls under Ahmed's second designation. In addition to the labor of contingent workers like Shelvia Underwood, the contract parking attendant, institutions rely heavily on this uncompensated affective labor that both full-time and part-time faculty routinely perform for the University. However, unlike full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty, part-time adjunct female-identified faculty and faculty of color are particularly vulnerable to this form of exploitation, since they often

feel pressured to perform this uncompensated, "invisible" labor in order to be hired back again in their contingent roles.[2]

The circumstances surrounding Ahmed's resignation in May 2016 from her position as professor of race and cultural studies at Goldsmiths, University of London, illustrate her point about diversity work all too well. As Ahmed puts it, she resigned not only in protest against Goldsmiths' "failure to address the problem of sexual harassment" (2016b); her resignation was also in response to her realization that the university was using her work—and the work of Goldsmiths' Centre for Feminist Research in which she actively took part—as evidence of its institutional success addressing problems of diversity, sexual harassment, and so forth (2016a). In other words, Goldsmiths used her feminist, antiracist, material, and affective labor as an alibi for maintaining its own institutional misogyny and racism.

In her most recent work, Ahmed speaks of how such affective injuries incurred by diversity workers lead to a state of depletion (2017, 163–64). By this, she means less the idea that one's emotional reserves have been taxed to their limits (e.g., "compassion fatigue") and more the experience "of not having the energy to keep going in the face of what you come up against" (163). This is the experience of coming up against the repetition compulsion of the institution, in which the diversity worker is repeatedly subjected to—and expected to make up for, to labor over—the institution's structural inequities. "Feeling depleted" results from what she describes as "that sense of coming up against the same thing, whatever you say or do" (164). No matter what one says or does, the inequities of the institution remain in place. "Feeling depleted" seems like a mild characterization of what could just as easily be called despair.

Yet, at the same time that Ahmed works to draw attention to this experience of feeling depleted, she also takes note of "moments of relief," such as when one finds oneself suddenly "inhabit[ing] a sea of brownness as a person of color," which highlights the affective burdens one had been carrying in and for the institution (164). What Ahmed does not ask, however, is what happens when diversity workers, subjected to depletion, actively go out looking for relief, for psychic nourishment, or seek to replenish their affective reserves. If investment in the institution does not yield this nourishment, but only depletion, then in what else can one invest? To what other object can one cathect?

Here I arrive back at the scene I invoked at the beginning of my essay and of which I tried to outline the contours in both my description of the reading group I was participating in and Ahmed's account of her experience at Goldsmiths. To be clear, I am not saying students should not protest. Nor am I saying faculty should not serve as allies and mentors to students. And, of course, I am not advocating that one should eschew diversity work.[3] I am instead interested in using the example of the Duke reading group as an opportunity to pursue a discussion about the institutional conditions that invite faculty to claim students as narcissistic objects in order to get what they do not receive from the

University—in short, idealizing and fashioning students as vehicles of affective exit from the institution's affective demands, figuring students as an outside to the University's current neoliberalization.

Workers in the University, I argue, misrecognize this affective exit as constituting a voice in the institution when in fact it is a simulacrum of speech, an emblem of the loss of voice that masquerades as its opposite. In my work on the aesthetics of subjectivization in the University, I call this loss of voice institutional schizophasia, where faculty maintain hold on forms of speech that keep them locked in a subjugated position in the University (Eng 2012). While affective investment in students of the sort I have witnessed may appear attractive as an escape from the University's affective burdens, it only opens onto extensions of the institution's labyrinthine entanglements.

In what follows, I delve deeper into what I see as the connection between the contemporary University's neoliberalization and the narcissistic withdrawal that diversity workers in the University pursue in the mistaken belief it offers an escape from it. If it is not already clear, I am approaching these affectively charged institutional scenes and the narcissistic operations in them from a psychoanalytic perspective. I do so out of a conviction that psychoanalysis, specifically object relations theory, is needed in order to be able to reach the strata of desires keeping us locked into relations that hurt both ourselves and those whom we are entrusted to help become mature, reflective thinkers.

I begin by engaging further with Berlant's (1997) work on feminism's institutionalization in the academy, in particular her demonstration of the ways feminism's pedagogy of intimacy has been appropriated and deployed by the contemporary neoliberal University to offload risk onto individual faculty and students, encouraging phantasies about the institution and each other that no material conditions can satisfy.[4] Then I link Berlant's analysis of the feminist pedagogical scene to Robyn Wiegman's (2012, 2014) critique of the theoretical object, which she undertakes through a critical reassessment of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (2003) influential opposition between paranoid and reparative forms of reading. In revisiting Sedgwick's use of Melanie Klein's theories of object relations, Wiegman's critique makes it possible to see how students are figured by faculty as objects in need of repair and how they are thereby used in faculty's narcissistic phantasies as a means to manage the contemporary University's neoliberal assaults on their authority as critics.

In my final section, I track the ethical and political costs of willingly contributing these phantasies to the University by looking to Rey Chow's (1998) critique of how discourses of diversity and multiculturalism have become vehicles for what she calls "the fascist longings in our midst." As a conclusion, I return to my remarks concerning institutional schizophasia in a call to take up Jean Oury's (2007) and Félix Guattari's (1984) interventions in institutional therapeutics as a way to short-circuit the narcissistic desires that nourish the contemporary neoliberal University's misogynist and racist project.

Individual Responsibility and the Institution of Intimacy

In her essay "Feminism and the Institutions of Intimacy," Berlant (1997) maps a correspondence between the intimacy expectations placed upon "politically engaged faculty" and the rise of the neoliberal University; in her telling, it is not a coincidence that these expectations have increased with the neoliberal University's advent. Whether or not "the current downsizing of universities" is informed by populist critiques of professors' alleged "easy and self-indulgent lives," this organizing strategy, prevalent in many contemporary university settings, regularly translates into situations that, in Berlant's words, "[obligate] faculty to meet ever greater demands for pedagogical, administrative, financial, and intellectual productivity" (143).

Like Ahmed, Berlant is particularly attuned to the effects the University's transformation under neoliberalism has for female- and LGBTQ-identified faculty, whose research and teaching are often strongly connected to their social identities and who work in departments centered on identity knowledges. It is noteworthy that Berlant's essay was originally written as part of the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of women's studies at Cornell University. Her remarks thus attend to the institutional fate of that politically engaged and interdisciplinary field following its legitimation in the University.

But it is especially vital to note that Berlant does not just pick up these themes because she happens to be a worker in the University or a queer feminist scholar in the field of women's studies. Though she does not dismiss the potential value of waging a public complaint, she insists that is not her primary aim (1997, 143). Rather, she seeks to trouble the story of feminism's institutionalization in the contemporary University with a scene from her own personal intellectual journey, one that is imbued with a poignant sense of loss and mourning. Hers is a striking account of the damage incurred from accepting the institutional imperative to engage in the narcissistic idealizations of the teacher and student relation. It therefore resonates with the Duke reading group scene for those reasons.

During her undergraduate years at Oberlin College from 1975 to 1979, Berlant made a formative connection with a feminist teacher in the English department there. As the first feminist teacher she had ever had, this faculty member introduced Berlant to what was possible both academically and politically in the pedagogical spaces of the university. Berlant emphasizes the way her teacher "looked at you warmly and sincerely when she talked to you, holding on to your arm as she did it, to make you feel included in the insider talk and utopian scene we were developing" (1997, 144). From her, Berlant absorbed the ethos of feminist pedagogy as something that is less an exhibition of one's individual brilliance (either the teacher's or the student's) and more the cultivation of a collective project, of a shared vision of being in the world.

Berlant applied these lessons in her teaching in the student-led Experimental College at Oberlin, remaining in contact with her former professor and

keeping her updated on her future aspirations. At one point during Berlant's senior year, and then again while in her English graduate program at Cornell, Berlant's former professor confessed to feelings of failure in both her teaching and writing. In the later conversation, she told Berlant that due to a nervous breakdown she had stopped teaching altogether. "Shortly thereafter," writes Berlant, "she killed herself" (1997, 145).

While Berlant admits that she of course does not know the whole story behind her mentor's suicide, she is convinced she suffered from laboring under an unattainable feminist ideal of having to "attend constantly to the nurturing/ facilitating project in every domain of her commitment" (1997, 145). Achieving anything less than that would, in her mentor's mind, constitute a failure, and since that was an impossible goal, that is how she experienced her life and work in the academy—as a failure.

Berlant does not shy away from tying her mentor's fate to the fate of women's studies in the academy, particularly as it appears in its current neoliberal manifestation. The institutionalization of women's studies, as Berlant and Wiegman have each discussed elsewhere (Berlant 1994; Wiegman 2002), has become a double-edged sword. On the one hand, women's studies' institutionalization has helped brand the field as a legitimate body of knowledge. On the other hand, being recognized—and the imperative to maintain recognition—as a legitimate body of knowledge dilutes the political potency of the field. To understand the costs women's studies has incurred from its institutionalization, Berlant leads us through the trials the field—and by extension, its scholars, such as her former mentor—has experienced as part of the University's neoliberal transformations.

Many, for example, will recognize the neoliberal University's ethos of austerity as standard capitalist fare; the creation of a lack of resources induces stress and competition among those vying for such resources. Friedrich Engels (2009) was one of the first to describe how this dynamic works in his study of Manchester's slums from 1842–44, where he observed that the proletariat was given just enough to survive, yet so little that they regarded one another as their main antagonists, not the capitalists and property owners who determined their wages. The slums the proletariat inhabited also helped sustain the property values of the wealthier neighborhoods of the urban landscape Engels surveyed.

Berlant classifies this phenomenon under the general category of uneven development. A characteristic of capitalist expansion and a keyword of Marxist urban theory, uneven development names the strategy in which certain regions are actively economically depressed through the withholding of resources so that other regions receive and maintain a higher value (Harvey 2005; Smith 2008). Subsequently, once its value is depressed, that area can be purchased at a low price (i.e., raided), developed (i.e., gentrified/civilized), and sold at a profit. This extremely successful strategy becomes scalable from the neighborhood, to the city, to the nation, to the hemisphere, and so forth. But it is also quite effective at the level of departments and programs within a university. Anyone who works

in a field other than STEM in the contemporary University has experienced the sharp end of uneven development and the imperative to bear the now almost daily burden of arguing for the value of one's (disciplinary) existence.

As Berlant notes, women's studies' institutionalization requires it to be subjected to the logic of uneven development and the legitimation exercises that accompany it (1997, 156). But it also subjects the field's faculty, like that of humanities and interpretive social sciences faculty generally, to the logic of flexible accumulation. Citing David Harvey's (1989) work on the phenomenon, specifically his indictment of contemporary calls for flexibility as naked yearnings to be at one with the perpetual flows of capital, Berlant describes how the contemporary neoliberal University has appropriated the essential "improvisatory," adaptive pragmatics of progressive political projects such as feminism and turned them against those with utopian aspirations. "Flexibility," she writes, "appears as a theoretical virtue; as an ethical and radical necessity of feminist and counterhegemonic world building; and as an administrative demand by panicking administrators" (1997, 156). Part of the cost of incorporating women's studies into the University, then, is its provision of discursive support for the University's larger project of becoming comfortably installed in the systems of neoliberal capitalist reproduction.

Accompanying the jargon of flexibility is the neoliberal process of increased individualization. One of the neat—and by "neat," I mean "insidious"—things about withdrawing resources is that the institution protects itself against exposure to risk and transfers that risk to the individual. Neoliberalism then rebrands this risk under the banner of "individual responsibility." Loïc Wacquant (2009) describes this trope of individual responsibility as part of the contradictory logic of neoliberalism: everyone is condemned to be free in every aspect of life due to the inexorable laws of the free market, which are apparently natural and permit no resistance. In turn, institutions can appeal to the Reality principle of the market, assign responsibility to individuals for making up for what the market does not provide, and evade any responsibility of their own.

Berlant's remarks regarding the ever-increasing administrative and affective workload universities assign faculty call attention to yet another instance of the trope of individual responsibility having seeped into the contemporary University. As universities today continue to raise costs with the help of subsidization from federal and private student loans, and as students, not coincidentally, readily internalize the imperative to assume the role of venture capitalists with respect to their courses of study in the hope of being able to free themselves from their debt before they die, it is easy to see that the contemporary neoliberal University provides a supportive environment for the magical fiction of individual responsibility.

In fact, Berlant's chief worry—the worry that gives impetus to her melancholic portrayal of her former mentor's suicide—concerns faculty members' unwitting embrace of the magical fiction of individual responsibility in the form

of what she calls "the charismatic mentorship model of pedagogical practice" (1997, 143). This model, she asserts, "tends to decredentialize students and make faculty seem falsely magical" (143). Casting students as dependent objects, Berlant goes on to say that this model is really a phantasy, shared by both teachers and students, of "rescue and identity" (159); the ideology of "sentimental education reform" that arose at the turn of the twentieth century, to which Berlant traces this model, posits a vulnerable student in need of saving and a teacher who has the talent and power to save by making it possible for her to attain an authentic identity (153–54).

As the scene of faculty creating and consuming the imaginary of the student protestors unfolded before me in the Duke reading group, I was called back to these passages in Berlant's essay. I thought of how this creative, consumptive imaginary plays out in terms of gender, and I also began to think about how race factors into what she describes. Berlant emphasizes the female student because the genre of sentimental education differs from the scene of heroic masculine pedagogy—à la *Dead Poets Society* (dir. Peter Weir, 1989)—in which the male pedagogue simply aids young men in realizing the upper-class white male privilege they are destined to inherit (1997, 151). Within sentimental education, however, there is no such prescribed destiny; instead, the vulnerable student posited in need of salvation is targeted for "uplift" and then directed to assume a position of performing sentiment in the home—what these days we call of course affective labor (154). The value of Berlant highlighting the presence of these genres in the space of the contemporary University is that it exposes both the roles that the University's cast of characters unquestioningly occupy and the scripts they—that is to say, we—all too often mindlessly parrot.

The genealogy Berlant traces is thus quite sobering, for this is the model of pedagogy women's studies inherits and typically promotes. "Deep in the ambitions and socialization of the feminist teacher," she writes, "is the promise of women's studies to make learning personal, socially transformative, and generationally supportive" (1997, 153). While Berlant of course does not condemn the ambition of feminist pedagogy, and still insists on the necessity of its counterhegemonic project, she suggests that the institution capitalizes on the teacher's unreflective desire—and especially her donated labor—to embody this pedagogical model as part of "generat[ing] amnesias of what [the institution] cannot do" (150). By participating in this scenography of feminist pedagogy, both faculty and students embrace the premise of the University as a site for triumphant personal transformation. In so doing, they also end up embodying the ethos of neoliberal individualism, taking on the risks and burdens for which the institution is actually responsible. Meanwhile, the University appropriates this labor that faculty willingly donate so that it can market itself as a site of liberating transformation. In reality, there is no way the University can give rise to something "socially transformative" as long as it obeys the imperative to serve as merely another node in the network of capitalist reproduction.

The model of the charismatic mentor thus belongs to the institution's bait-and-switch tactic, presenting a false promise of what it can make possible. Either way, it's a win-win scenario for the University: if the teacher succeeds, then, in the parlance of our times, the University has produced "excellence."[5] If the student fails to become excellent (or, rather, since everyone starts out always-already excellent these days, *more* excellent, *the most* excellent!), then this is because it is the teacher, not the institution, who failed to be "innovative," "transformative," "disruptive," and so forth. The risk is transferred to individual teachers and students. This is yet another example of what Nick Mitchell (2016) has described as the merging of risk management with brand management in the contemporary University. All decisions in the contemporary University have one goal in mind: to protect the institution's brand identity, not the production of knowledge, and certainly not the pursuit of social justice, no matter what is portrayed in its marketing material.[6]

Objective Attachments

Berlant never uses the term "narcissism" in her article on feminism and intimacy, although she does refer to the notion in her book *Cruel Optimism* as part of a discussion she undertakes of Eve Sedgwick's work (2011, 124). That brief connection is suggestive. For not only is it clear (at least to me) that narcissism is at stake in the pedagogical scenes with which she is concerned, but her treatment of Sedgwick, specifically Sedgwick's engagement with Melanie Klein and the theme of affective attachment to objects, places her in the same orbit of Wiegman's recent preoccupations with the problem of affective attachment to the theoretical object (2012, 2014). Together, their interventions suggest that narcissism appears within a general, desperate struggle to survive in the contemporary neoliberal University. In this section, I want to connect Wiegman's conceptualization of the affective attachment to the theoretical object, which she undertakes through her own critical engagement with Sedgwick and Klein, to Klein's theorization of narcissism in order to think of how narcissism appears on an institutional level. Specifically, Wiegman's critique of Sedgwick's concept of reparative reading helps us see a reparative impulse driving the scenes in which both Berlant and I are interested, which I argue informs the institutional narcissistic imaginary.

As I work toward the connection between the reparative impulse and narcissism, I would like to stress that the formulation of narcissism I am pursuing is not strictly technical (for example, a Kleinian one over a Freudian one), but based in the general psychoanalytic perspective that regards narcissism as a defense response by the ego. Here I am concerned with the institutional ego—as in the institution's identity, but also the egos of those who identify with the institution.

Wiegman interrogates what she calls "identity knowledges—Women's Studies, Ethnic Studies, Queer Studies, Whiteness Studies, and American Studies—in order to consider what they have wanted from the objects of study they assemble in their self-defining critical obligation to social justice" (2012, 3). Her central premise is that critical projects place a demand upon the object with which either they identify (e.g., ethnic studies), or which they oppose (e.g., whiteness studies) (4), and this demand brings with it an ethical cost to the object. Wiegman deploys the term "object" with both its psychoanalytic and Foucauldian inflections. On the one hand, the object is a vehicle of phantasy and desire (20); on the other hand, it is what a disciplinary discourse formulates as proper to it as part of constituting the proper subject authorized to know it (329). In both senses, the subject utilizes the object—uses it and uses it up—in order to consolidate its position as subject (Wiegman 2014, 18).

Wiegman makes it clear in her critiques that the subjects at issue are contemporary critics, particularly their existence (or lack thereof) in the contemporary neoliberal University. The reparative turn, which Wiegman identifies in what she calls queer feminist criticism, is linked to the affective and new materialist turns that now occupy the current theoretical horizon, but it names a specific itinerary within these turns that, in Wiegman's words, tries to recover sustenance from "what hurts" (2014, 11). Wiegman reconstructs the distinction that Sedgwick, drawing on Klein, makes between reparative reading, which seeks a position of reparation in relation to the injuries of the past, and paranoid reading, a mode of interpretation that constantly has its antennae up for what The Real Issue is, perpetually fearful (paranoid, really) that it (and, by extension, the paranoid critic) is getting duped.[7]

In order to understand how Wiegman constructs her critique of disciplinary desire through a critique of Sedgwick and her readers, I want to sketch briefly the main contours of Klein's theory of the paranoid/schizoid and depressive positions. Then, after I describe Sedgwick's reception of Klein, I return to Wiegman's critique.

In Klein's developmental schema, the infant responds to the external world internally by creating imaginary objects onto which it alternately projects feelings of anxiety and feelings of love and adoration. Anxiety arises as a response to the possibility of being abandoned, for example, and love and adoration are responses to those things that nourish and comfort it, as in the mother's breast. This is the process Klein calls introjection and projection (Klein 1946; Segal 1973, 24–38). In its imaginary, the infant labels "bad" those objects that cause it anxiety, and that therefore, in the infant's psyche, hurt it. Those objects that the infant regards as nourishing and comforting are imagined as "good." The infant uses this stark "splitting" of good and bad objects as a psychic map with which to navigate the external world. At the same time, it is via these internal objects that the infant also manages its feelings of love (the life instinct) and

aggression (the death instinct). "Good" and "bad" are the aspects of itself that the infant cannot yet accept; thus, it projects those qualities onto external objects in the world. Together, the movements of introjection and projection form "projective identification" (Klein 1946, 11), in which the object serves as a screen for the subject to appear to itself.

Initially, the infant idealizes its good objects and feels persecuted by its bad ones. However, Klein also argues that the infant soon turns against its good objects as well. This is because it decides that the good object is not sharing its goodness entirely with the infant, as in the case of the mother's breast, which the infant feels is hoarding the milk it gives. Klein names this the paranoid/schizoid position; it grounds what she calls "narcissistic states," such as the paranoid/schizoid's "narcissistic withdrawal" away from the external world and retreat into its psychic interior as a defense against the objects that it perceives as persecuting it (Klein 1952, 51; 1946, 11; Segal and Bell 2012, 162).

According to Klein, by the second quarter of its first year, the infant begins to feel guilt at the aggression it has directed against the good object (i.e., the mother) and seeks to repair the injury it has inflicted on it (Klein 1946, 14–15; Klein 1948, 35). Along with guilt and mourning, this reparative mode constitutes what Klein names the depressive position (Klein 1946, 14). Though this sounds negative, it is actually an important step in the infant's development, helping to fortify the ego and integrate it by allowing it to discover that the world it has split into good and bad objects does not really exist as such. The world is populated with objects—that is, people—that are neither good nor bad, but both. Yet, since the splitting of the world into good and bad objects is actually the result of the subject projecting qualities that it could not tolerate of itself onto the outside world instead, the ego's discovery of objects in their ambivalence allows the subject to realize that *it* also is actually neither good nor bad, but both, thus leading to a more integrated ego formation.

Klein's decision to categorize the paranoid/schizoid and depressive states as "positions" rather than "stages" is not insignificant. Where the Freudian language of stages implies their developmental overcoming, Klein's terminology of positions "suggest[s] patterns and groupings of anxieties and defenses" (Greenberg and Mitchell 1983, 143). It thus also supports Klein's contention that one can later return to and occupy the different positions in adult life (Greenberg and Mitchell 1983, 126–27). It is this feature of the paranoid/schizoid and depressive positions that Sedgwick draws on in her distinction between paranoid and reparative forms of reading, and that Wiegman also reflects on in her critical assessment of Sedgwick and in her diagnosis of the critic's position in the contemporary neoliberal University.

Sedgwick inventively deploys Klein to assess the state of contemporary critical scholarship, subjecting the reigning critical practices of the day—namely, queer theory, but also what she categorizes as "nonqueer critical projects such as feminist theory, psychoanalytic theory, deconstruction, Marxism, [and] New

Historicism" (2003, 127)—to the charge that they are carrying forth into adult-hood the drama of infantile development. She was concerned initially with the way a paranoid form of critique had come to define critical practice as such instead of being seen as constituting simply one kind of critical engagement among others (2003, 126). For Sedgwick, Klein's theorization of the paranoid/schizoid and depressive positions as "changing and relational stances" that one moves in and out of through adulthood opens the possibility for nonparanoid, reparative modes of critique, but she worries that such a possibility is eclipsed by the ubiquity of the paranoid stance. Since, as she puts it, the paranoid position is "marked by hatred, envy, and anxiety," Sedgwick wonders about the cost of identifying and adopting such a posture for critical practice (2003, 128). Among those costs is a wholly aggressive relation to one's chosen disciplinary object, a relation that requires the critical subject to orient him- or herself defensively toward the object, always anticipating the onslaught of negative affects and thus closing the critic off from the possibility of surprise and hence (sociopolitical) change (2003, 136–38, 130).[8]

One text from the queer feminist archive that Sedgwick identifies as exemplifying the paranoid position is Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990). Sedgwick diagnoses *Gender Trouble* as so paranoid about "the totalizing Law of gender difference" that she argues Butler's book makes sure it is never caught perpetuating what it takes to be the naïve belief in a time prior to the subject's interpellation by gender norms (2003, 130–31). According to Sedgwick, such an "unresting vigilance" is symptomatic of the paranoid position's defense against negative affect (130). Yet, it is also what animates paranoid reading's splitting of the critical landscape into good theories that are "never paranoid enough" (127) and bad theories that cut short their paranoia and therefore abdicate their responsibility to protect against the negative affect waiting around the critical corner.

Though Sedgwick clearly advocates for a reparative mode of reading, she does not engage in her own splitting and insist that it is good while paranoid reading is bad. Instead, she draws on "the instability and mutual inscription built into the Kleinian notion of positions" in order to recover what she holds is a reparative impulse at the heart of even the most paranoid critical practices (2003, 128–29). Sedgwick's desire is consistent with what Klein states is the ideal goal of the infant's development: to achieve a more accurate perception of reality. However, the subject with whom Sedgwick is concerned is the future critic. While the methodologies of paranoid reading are "infinitely doable and teachable," and while paranoid reading's "triumphalism" is attractive and contagious, its hegemony, Sedgwick holds, may give way to a general critical impoverishment, "diminish[ing critics'] ability to respond to environmental (e.g. political) change" (143–44). Her ultimate worry is that since the paranoid position only nourishes its aggressive defenses against what it perceives as an infinitely hostile world, paranoid reading quickly becomes a critical paralysis,

and that it is both this aggression and paralysis that we primarily bestow unto our students.[9]

As I summarize above, Wiegman takes up Sedgwick's use of Klein as part of her attention to the discursive production of the theoretical object in disciplinary discourse. She is less interested in assessing the nature of different theoretical objects than in asking about the set of desires and affective attachments animating their formations. For Wiegman, a discipline does not just choose any object by chance; an object is chosen because it satisfies the desires of the disciplinary subjects who seek to secure their status as knowing subjects around that object. As Wiegman contends, the vicissitudes of a discipline's object identifications (another word for "choice") reflect that discipline's response to a specific historical present, though the discipline is seldom aware it is doing this.

Sedgwick's critique of paranoid reading is thus useful for Wiegman because it opens onto a consideration of how the group subject we call a discipline responds to its historical *Umwelt* or environment, is similar to Klein's infant. Like Sedgwick, Wiegman argues for a less-than-rigid opposition between paranoid and reparative modes. However, Wiegman pushes back against Sedgwick's privileging of the reparative position and the ethical imperative that privileging implies. She particularly wants to trouble the ways Sedgwick's original intervention encouraged the production of a queer feminist archive composed of microdevotions to objects (seen as) in need of repair. And she is highly skeptical that such devotion was not posited as a way to manage anxieties about the historical present that gave rise to those writings. Some of the figures Wiegman identifies as hearkening to Sedgwick's call for reparative reading and as comprising that queer feminist archive she analyzes include Ann Cvetkovich (2003, 2012), Heather Love (2007), and Elizabeth Freeman (2010).[10]

In her reconstruction of the genealogy of reparative reading, Wiegman reminds us that, no matter which stance one occupies, the paranoid or reparative, one does not escape the dynamic of introjection and projection: with the paranoid/schizoid position, the "bad" object is really a surface onto which the infant projects and disavows the disturbing aggression it possesses so that it can believe that it itself is not bad; in the depressive/reparative position, the infant's perception of the object is a projection of what it has idealized/internalized of the "good" object so that it can think of itself as good. In both scenarios, the subject makes use of the object in order to shape its self-perception. Even in the reparative mode when one is comported in a more caring way toward the object, what is at stake is the subject's phantasy of itself.[11] Thus, Wiegman emphasizes that the reparative mode is still a relation in which the subject places a demand on the object (2014, 18). In the case of the microattentive care performed in queer feminist criticism, the repair is "bound up in the drama of self-definition; to love [the object] is to repair damaging versions of the self" (17). Like Berlant's object of sentimental education, the object of reparative reading is recruited to play an idealized role in the subject's imaginary. As a result, "the reparative

turn," according to Wiegman, "quite significantly rewrites the critic's value as the consequence of the object's need" (16). It was this objectification and writing of value that I believe I saw taking place in the Duke reading group meeting.

So, the question is: Why would critics in the contemporary neoliberal University need to rewrite their value via the object?

That's a joke, of course. As we all know, the humanities and humanistic social sciences continue to be subjected to relentless attacks as to their value. The remarks I made on uneven development above in the context of Berlant's essay on the institutionalization of intimacy presents an account of the structural forces subtending the imperative for the humanities to defend themselves. But as Wiegman also reminds us, many of these attacks accuse us of bringing about our own irrelevance, what with our supposed celebration, during the heyday of poststructuralism and identity knowledges, of the groundlessness of social construction, the dismantling of "people," "nation," and "culture," not to mention the deconstruction of the human itself (2014, 18).

What is it, then, that hurts in the contemporary neoliberal University? It is probably more expedient to ask instead about what does not hurt. The point is that, in "the times we're in," there is no shortage of threatening objects in the academy that we can phantasize as plotting "our" undoing. Klein tells us it does not matter whether it is self-imposed or coming from without, for in the end, there is no telling the difference. At the same time, Wiegman notes that critics' negotiation of the University's neoliberalization is not without ambivalence (2014, 18). Those who invite and rely on the continuous flow of graduate students into their withering fields in order to guarantee, for at least one more year, their continued existence in the academy know (even if they claim not to) their complicity in the precaritization of future generations.

By identifying an object in need (as in the occupying Duke students of my opening story), and also identifying *with* that "good" object, the reparative gesture gives critics their own positions of occupation: to be *the* ones who alone can attend to those needs. By carving out such a space, faculty can defend against the University's neoliberal incursions, "rescu[e] one's self from condemnation" for their participation in such incursions, and fortify their institutional egos (Wiegman 2014, 12).

Of course, the object's need does not have to be an actual one. We are dealing with an imaginary, after all, with phantasy. Did the Duke students in the scene I described actually need a statement of support from the faculty? If so, then why all the backroom conferencing? In the age of social media, where protest movements can brand themselves in advance on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the like all at once, why would the students not have simply made a post that self-identified progressive faculty could "like," thereby satisfying any desire for recognition they may have wanted? Repair more likely serves as a vehicle for the construction and maintenance of a narcissistic defense, and it is this defense that I name an affective exit, the construction of an escape while still

remaining within the University. It is not the objects (the students) that are in need, but the subjects—the faculty—that attend to them. Because we are dealing with phantasy and the defenses one enacts in response to an environment one perceives as either threatening or nourishing, this applies even to faculty who are "in reality" quite privileged. Everyone is capable of feeling persecuted.

One inflection I am therefore adding to Wiegman's revision of Sedgwick's engagement with Klein is Klein's emphasis on narcissism as a state of withdrawal, which, like the paranoid/schizoid and depressive positions, one passes in and out of (Klein 1952, 51). As a state of withdrawal, the narcissistic reparative gesture of idealizing students as objects-in-need would not be a new feminist exit but just its latest incarnation as part of feminism's developing institutionalization in the University.[12] What are the implications, then, for the objects we faculty use to secure the integrity of our institutional identities?

The Tiny Fascism of Transitional Objects

In my view, the ready availability of The Student as an object of idealization, and therefore as an avenue of affective exit for faculty in the contemporary academy, has not drawn the attention it deserves. With this idealization of the student-as-good-object comes the comforting affect of nourishing the object-in-need, for it defends against the bad object and, as Wiegman states, "compensate[s] for [the critic's] increasingly damaged authority" (2014, 7). Idealizing the student-as-good-object thus constitutes the narcissistic (self-)idealization of the teacher-as-subject who alone has the power to nourish. I am sure one could interview the protesting students from the Duke story and receive confirmation that they felt they were being nourished. But in order to accept their self-reporting as evidence, we would have to forget that students, too, are subjects with their own personal dramas of introjection and projection. This is to say, students, too, are players in the theater of subjectivity.

To verify that this theater takes shape in moments other than simply the scenes that Berlant and I recount, and that it appears in other university structures that extend beyond undergraduate students, we can look to Rey Chow's (1998) argument that links a certain manifestation of multiculturalism to what she characterizes as "the fascist longings in our midst." (For those readers not old enough to remember, "multiculturalism" was the name for "diversity" before that also gave way in recent years to the jargon of "inclusive excellence.") By "our," Chow means we politically committed faculty, with "midst" referring to the state of the academy at the time of the text's writing. Beginning with the question of what it means to call someone or something fascist in a general, ahistorical sense (i.e., to refer to an attitude or mode of comportment that has no direct connection to the historical fascisms of "Hitler's Germany or Mussolini's Italy" [14]), Chow's aim is to conceive of how fascism works not just negatively, but also positively. For example, instead of defining fascism as form of aggression

stemming from an internal feeling of lack, an explanation of historical fascism popularized by Wilhelm Reich, Chow asks, can we understand it as a desire to project an ideal, to present an image of one's "good intentions shining forth in dazzling light" (25)? In other words, can fascism be conceived as a narcissistic image that we consume and ask others to consume as well?

To illustrate her point, Chow offers a "fictional scenario" of an "imaginary heroine" named "O" (1998, 27–28). O is a "'person of color' from a 'third world' country" (today, we would say "the Global South") enrolled in a North American graduate program. Though she is from an "upper-class background," O masquerades as a member of the subaltern classes (28). And despite lackluster skills and a failure to produce any real work of consequence, O becomes a rising star fetishized by "well-established academics across the United States" (28).

Chow's fictional account is sarcastic and derisive—not just with respect to O, who "fak[es] her way through graduate school" (1998, 28). She seems to reserve most of her contempt for those white faculty who prop up O in the first place and foster an institutional climate of "facile attitudes, pretentious credentials, and irresponsible work habits" (28). (None of these white faculty, reports Chow, "can, when asked, say what [O's] project really is apart from repeating the vague generalities that O habitually recites" [28].)

When I initially read Chow's scenario back when it was first published, I have to admit I found myself enjoying her send-up of the contemporary academy. To me, it was not so much fiction as reportage. But I was still in graduate school at the time and was already taking note that the tenure-track jobs being advertised were mostly targeted, at least in continental philosophy and comparative literature (my areas of training), at the image Chow's O embodied. Thinking my enjoyment of Chow's mocking take on academia was really just a feeling of *ressentiment*, I became embarrassed and tried to shut that reaction away. Now, after somehow emerging on the other side of the struggle to become a tenured faculty member, and after witnessing the scene I described at my paper's outset, I was jarred back to Chow's tale. *Ressentiment* or not, it is clear that we are dealing with an image—that, indeed, the constellation of images we could call an imaginary is *the matter* of our current conjuncture in the University.

I emphasize once more the term "imaginary" because, let's be honest, these are not just any students one might be pulled toward as part of our politically committed identifications in the academy; they are students who mirror back our most cherished values of social justice. It does not hurt that they are typically students of color, LGBTQ-identified, and so forth—in other words, supposedly self-evident images of difference. By being linked to us, by becoming our intellectual property (for example, as "our students"), they serve as unimpeachable evidence of our commitment to difference. We can use our imaginary ownership of them as security blankets against the feeling that we might have some share in the structural misogyny and racism of the University. Conversely, they make the daily depletions we suffer fighting the structural misogyny and racism in

the University all worthwhile. By laying claim to such students-as-image, and by consuming this imaginary in order to feed our self-image, we can distract ourselves from the possibility that we perpetuate the very injustices we fight in the University.

Chow captures this dynamic with her imaginary heroine O in the following way:

> By seeing a student of color, no matter how pretentious and fraudulent, as self-evidently correct and deserving of support, these supporters receive an image of *themselves* that is at once enlightenedly humble ("I submit to you, since you are a victim of our imperialism") and beautiful ("Look how decent I am by submitting to you"), and thus eminently gratifying. (1998, 28)

With this, Chow thus describes the racist, narcissistic imaginary at the heart of diversity discourse. It is interesting that Chow characterizes this dynamic as "another kind of seeing" (28), for I would characterize it as a form of not-seeing, much in the way that Herman Gray (2013) has indicted the politics of recognition in diversity discourse as a neoliberal manifestation of invisibility, a politics that distracts from and blocks calls for corrections to structural inequalities. "Will seeing more frequently and recognizing more clearly and complexly members of excluded and subordinate populations increase their social, political, and economic access to life chances?" asks Gray (773). Or will more representation—representation as an end in itself—simply offer instead a mode of affective exit, allowing us to see our good souls in the images of those objects we have saved in the name of diversity?

All this mirroring and self-affirmation may work well for affective states and careers—both faculty's and students' alike—but can we say that they constitute anything approximating the social justice for which fields such as women's studies stand, or for which students like those of the Duke protestors call? If not, then what are we doing when we pursue affective exits, besides maintaining the images we have of ourselves, which has the added implication of feeding a misogyny at the heart of our antisexist projects and a racism at the heart of our antiracist ones?

I will say that one thing we are *not* doing is interrupting the myth institutions tell of being able to fulfill our desires. In order to do this, I propose turning to Jean Oury's and Félix Guattari's work on institutional therapeutics.[13] Guattari's engagement with D. W. Winnicott's concept of the transitional object would help clarify the particular use to which we might put students in the attempt to get from the institution what it, by design, withholds—namely, a relation to speech attuned to an unconscious that is directed toward the future, not one that overturns without end the losses of the past. It is precisely this futurity that Guattari saw missing in Klein's theorization of object relations but made possible in Winnicott's thought. For Winnicott, the transitional object—of which the teddy bear is an exemplar—is that which a child makes

use of as a means to mediate the relation between its *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt* (its interior psychic life and environment, respectively). Key to the child's development, in Winnicott's view, is the ability for the child to recognize its objects as transitional, that is, as phantasies to help him or her integrate into the social sphere. A child's development becomes suspended or blocked when he or she is unable to achieve this realization and relinquish its objects.

Like the child, groups also have transitional objects, according to Guattari, which he calls "institutional objects" (1984, 39). They constitute the landscape of the group phantasy in which a group participates and to which it subscribes in order to form its identity within an institution. Also like the child, when a group fails to become aware of its institutional objects as transitional, when it fails to see the group phantasy in which it participates, its development is stalled. The group remains hostage to the institutional unconscious, believing that its objects are necessary to its positing of its identity. Its desire, fixed on one object or set of objects that it takes to be sacred and immutable, shackles a group to a single destiny—most immediately, that of being subjugated to the institution's reproduction.

What, then, might it take for us to entertain the idea that students serve far too often as transitional objects for faculty, and that one of the more direct ethical interventions we can make in the institution is to interrupt the desire for them to perform our phantastic idealizations? How do we hold the University accountable for eliciting such desire as part of the maintenance of its structural misogyny and racism? Here I think Sedgwick's turn to Klein remains an important moment, as well as an opportunity, for any critical project devoted to dismantling the obstinate and mutually reinforcing structures of misogyny and racism in the University, and especially the narcissistic desires that I argue breathe life into these structures. For, in addition to underscoring the continuing value of psychoanalysis for institutional critique in the ways I suggest just above, Sedgwick's engagement with Klein provokes a consideration of how psychoanalysis has been employed by other scholars to undo the role idealization plays in institutional racism and to intervene in the figurations of race and gender in the symbolic order generally.[14] Furthering our critique in such directions might help us start to conceive of a feminist exit that is not simply a narcissistically sustaining affective one, and that is also not simply an extension of the institutional narcissism from which we seek escape.

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Acknowledgments

Notes

1. I think in particular of Pratt's poignant descriptions of her travels around her Washington, DC, neighborhood looking for recognition from her black neighbors while simultaneously feeling the weight of her whiteness acting as a barrier between them (1984, 12–13). I thank one of the anonymous reviewers of my article for suggesting this connection.

2. See, for example, Duncan (2014) and June (2015). Indeed, as in the case of Margaret Mary Vojtko, there are some adjunct professors who are regarded as having given their lives for the so-called "love" of teaching (Ellis 2013).

3. Even here, though, we need to be vigilant regarding the provenance of our critical categories, for as Ahmed points out, institutional championing of "diversity" typically appears in a reactive manner once a lack of diversity has been exposed. In other words, it is a marketing term, or what Ahmed describes as a public relations strategy. Today we might categorize it under brand management. See Ahmed 2012, 143–52. Cf. also Ferguson (2012, 1–19) on the "incorporation" of radical minority politics by the configuration he calls "state, capital, and academy." My thanks to an anonymous reviewer of this essay for this suggestion.

4. I have chosen to spell phantasy with a "ph" in order to be consistent with the Kleinian concept. See Hanna Segal (1973) for a discussion of the significance of spelling phantasy with a "ph" in Klein's work.

5. It is in this context that I note that one of the people to whom Berlant dedicates her essay is Bill Readings, who in his book *The University in Ruins* (1997) undertook one of the earliest critiques of the trope of excellence in the administrative University.

6. Mitchell's focus in this text was the 2014 controversy involving the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's revocation of Steven Salaita's job offer following the media attention drawn to his tweets that critiqued Israel's treatment of Palestinians, which many judged to be anti-Semitic.

7. See Sedgwick (2003), though it is important to note that a main part of Wiegman's analysis is to restore the writing and publication history of Sedgwick's formulation of the distinction between paranoid and reparative reading in order to rewrite the received version of queer theory's genealogy (Wiegman 2014, 12).

8. It is worth noting here the idiosyncrasies of Sedgwick's reading of Klein in the 2003 version of the essay: First, though earlier versions of the text (Sedgwick 1996, 1997) feature direct citations of Klein's writings, they are not carried forward in the 2003 version. The 2003 version instead relies exclusively on a critical dictionary of

Klein's thought for presenting the distinction between the paranoid and depressive positions. None of these versions, however, feature a sustained textual engagement with Klein's work. That would only appear in a later essay (see Sedgwick 2007). Secondly, as with the other chapters making up *Touching Feeling*, affect theorist Silvan Tompkins is a consistent presence in the 2003 version. It is his theory of affect that functions as a lens through which Sedgwick characterizes the paranoid position as simultaneously drawn toward and defending against negative affect, and of the depressive position as oriented toward positive affect.

9. In my own experience, I find it deeply troubling how readily even undergraduate students now have adopted the attitude that the only aim of reading is to identify the ways a given text is "problematic"—in other words, all the ways it fails to live up to their expectations. By the time these students reach graduate school, it becomes extremely difficult to un-train them in this attitude and to get them to read a text charitably.

10. The recent new materialist turn in critical theory is another tendency Wiegman associates with microattention to objects. She distinguishes it from the critical affective projects of Cvetkovich, Love, and Freeman insofar as their taking up of affect includes a temporal inflection absent in new materialist criticism (2014, 13–14).

11. Or rather, for Klein, the subject's world is composed of phantasy, not opposed to it.

12. See Wiegman (2014, 5) for a rehearsal of what she describes as Ellen Messer-Davidow's "apocalyptic" argument in *Disciplining Feminism* (2002) regarding the institutionalization of feminism in the US academy.

13. The following remarks are based on my work on Guattari's concept of tranversality. See Eng (2012) for specific references to Guattari's and Oury's writings.

14. See, for example, Spillers (1987, 1996) and Tate (1996).

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