



HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
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Opiskelijakirjaston verkkojulkaisu 2006

Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction is about You

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Julkaisija: Durham: Duke University Press, 1997

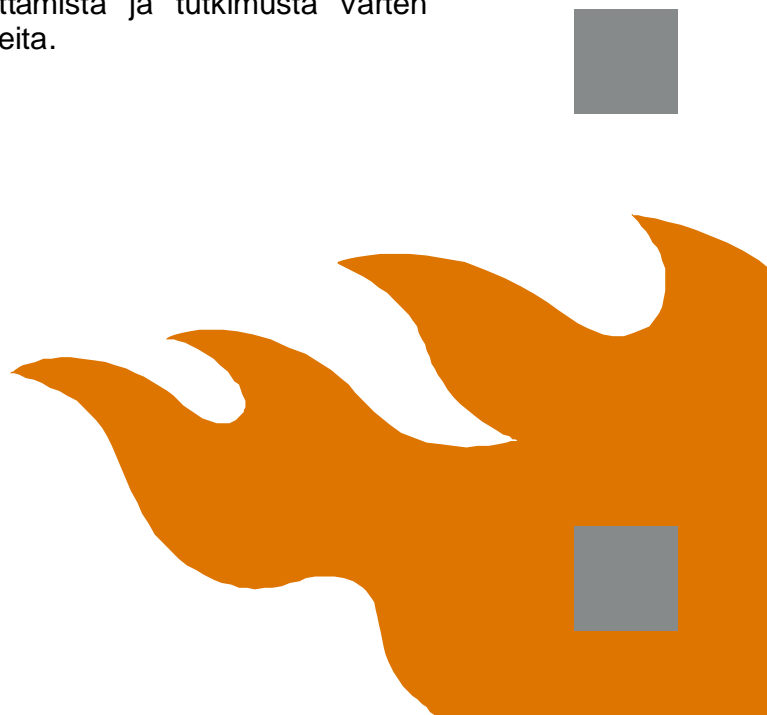
Julkaisu: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (ed.) *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*

ISBN 0-822-32040-1

s. 1-37

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PARANOID READING AND REPARATIVE READING; OR, YOU'RE SO PARANOID YOU PROBABLY THINK THIS INTRODUCTION IS ABOUT YOU

EVE KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK

Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction came together unprogrammatically. Invited by the journal *Studies in the Novel* to edit a special issue, I asked forty or so writers I admire whether they could find room on their agendas to write something that would, loosely speaking, convene the rubrics "novel" and "queer." I felt more than fortunate in the response, when these startlingly imaginative essays started tumbling in at a rate that soon overfilled the journal - and didn't slow down even then.

Unmistakably the essays pointed toward a book. But excited by the force, the originality, and in many cases the beauty of these pieces, I still found it difficult to articulate more than a negative sense of what kind of a moment they might collectively represent in queer theory or in literary criticism. Clearly and queerly enough, they share a relaxed, unseparatist hypothesis of the much to be gained by refraining from *a priori* oppositions between queer texts (or authors) and non-queer ones, or female ones and male. In fact, the list of damaging *a priori* oppositions to which these essays quietly, collectively find alternative approaches is very impressive: the authors transmit new ways of knowing that human beings are *also* machines, are *also* animals; that an ethic or aesthetic of truth-telling need not depend on any reified notion of truth; that the materiality of human bodies, of words, and of economic production may misrepresent but cannot simply eclipse one another; that pleasure, grief, excitement, boredom, satisfaction are the substance of politics rather than their antithesis; that affect and cognition are not very distant processes; that visual perception need not be conceptually isolated from the other four bodily senses; that gender differentiation is crucial to human experience but in no sense coextensive with it; that it's well to attend intimately to literary texts, not because their transformative energies either transcend or disguise the coarser stuff of ordinary being, but because those energies are the stuff of ordinary being.

If nothing else, the negative specifications of these essays do seem to add up to a surprising disciplinary generalization: given how queer theory and literary criticism are cur-

rently structured, it's notable that among seventeen diverse, psychologically searching, very real-world-oriented essays on texts from the past two centuries, not a single one is working directly from inside Freud or Lacan, and few, either, seem to owe much to the narrative and research protocols that typify the New Historicism. Though passionate, they are also not particularly polemical, and they don't greatly feature the disciplining of previous errors of theory or interpretation. If anything, the expansive length of several of the essays seems to reflect a distance from any of those master-figures or master-discourses to which theoretical appeals can today be made in shorthand.

I wouldn't, beforehand, have characterized this particular intellectual moment as likely to offer remarkable resources for a fresh, deroutinized sense of accountability to the real. Live and learn. By accountability to the real I mean in the first place the many, diverse, but very marked turns these essays take away from existing accounts of how "one" *should* read, and back toward a grappling with the recalcitrant, fecund question of how one *does*. It might even be true to say that the psychological/political ambitions of many of the essays take the form of a similar series of turns: from the nonsensical but seemingly uncircumnavigable question of how people *should feel* to the much harder ones of how they do and of how feelings change. Interestingly, it's also the repeated turn away from the deontological project of "ought" that seems to characterize the unmistakable, though often tacit, ethical gravity and specificity of this work.

As for its *queer* specificity, I will discuss below why that seems to emerge throughout the essays in such varied and radically contingent forms. I don't think any of these essays would have been writable - thinkable - before or without the gay/lesbian studies and queer theory movements in literary criticism; indeed almost all the authors, who range from current graduate students to foundational figures in these movements, are steeped in those problematics and sensibilities. Yet what seems least settled is any predetermined idea about what makes the queerness of a queer reading. Often these readings begin from or move toward sites of same-sex, interpersonal eroticism - but not necessarily so. It seems to me that an often quiet, but very palpable presiding image here - a kind of *genius loci* for queer reading - is the interpretive absorption of the child or adolescent whose sense of personal queerness may or may not (*yet?*) have resolved into a sexual specificity of proscribed object choice, aim, site, or identification. Such a child - if she reads at all - is reading for important news about herself, without knowing what form that news will take; with only the patchiest familiarity with its codes; without, even, more than hungrily hypothesizing to what questions this news may proffer an answer. The model of such reading is hardly the state of complacent adequacy that Jonathan Culler calls "literary competence," but a much more speculative, superstitious, and methodologically adventurous state where recognitions, pleasures, and discoveries seep in only from the most stretched and ragged edges of one's competence.¹

Aside from the deroutinizing methodologies of these essays, what seems most hauntingly to characterize them is how distant many of them are – from a certain stance of suspicion or paranoia that is common to the theoretical work whose disciplinary ambience surrounds them. If the collection can be said to embody anyone, primary premise, it would be that a closer, more respectful attention to past and present queer reading practices - the kind of attention these essays, in their different ways, all embody - will show how the reservoir of practices already in use crucially exceeds the theorizations of a consensual hermeneutic of suspicion. Many of these pieces are, rightly and productively, incisive in their use of a methodical suspicion; but what more unites them is a very different impulse and history, which would be badly misrecognized under the currently available rubrics. In the remainder of this essay - and, I must admit, at the risk of somewhat compromising the nonprogrammatic aesthetic of deontological reticence that otherwise seems to make the flavor of the volume - it is the issue of paranoia and its alternatives that I would like to explore more fully.

Sometime back in the middle of the first decade of the AIDS epidemic, I was picking the brains of a friend of mine, the activist scholar Cindy Patton, about the probable natural history of HIV. This was at a time when speculation was ubiquitous about whether the virus had been deliberately engineered, or spread; whether HIV represented a plot or experiment by the U.S. military that had gotten out of control, or perhaps that was behaving exactly as it was meant to. After hearing a lot from her about the geography and economics of the global traffic in blood products, I finally, with some eagerness, asked Patton what she thought of these sinister rumors about the virus's origin. "Any of the early steps in its spread could have been either accidental or deliberate:" she said. "But I just have trouble getting interested in that. I mean, even suppose we were sure of every element of a conspiracy: that the lives of Africans and African Americans are worthless in the eyes of the United States; that gay men and drug users are held cheap where they aren't actively hated; that the military deliberately researches ways to kill noncombatants whom it sees as enemies; that people in power look calmly on the likelihood of catastrophic environmental and population changes. Supposing we were ever so sure of all those things - what would we know then that we don't already know?"

In the years since that conversation, I've brooded a lot over this response from Patton. Aside from a certain congenial, stony pessimism, I think what I've found enabling about it is that it suggests the possibility of unpacking, of disentangling from their impacted and overdetermined historical relation to each other, some of the separate elements of the intellectual baggage that many of us carry around under a label like "the hermeneutic of suspicion." Patton's comment suggests that for someone to have an unmystified, angry view of large and genuinely systemic oppressions does not *intrinsically* or *necessarily* enjoin on that person any specific train of epistemological or narrative consequences. To know that the origin or spread

of HIV *realistically might* have resulted from a state-assisted conspiracy - such knowledge is, it turns out, separable from the question of whether the energies of a given AIDS activist intellectual or group might best be used in the tracing and exposure of such a possible plot. They might, but then again, they might not. Though ethically very fraught, the choice is not self-evident; whether or not to undertake this highly compelling tracing-and-exposure project represents a strategic and local decision, not necessarily a categorical imperative. Patton's response to me seemed to open a space for moving from the rather fixated question, "Is a particular piece of knowledge true, and how can we now?" to the further questions, "What does knowledge *do* - the pursuit of it, the having and exposing of it, the receiving-again of knowledge of what one already knows? *How*, in short, is knowledge performative, and how best does one move among its causes and effects?"

I suppose this ought to seem quite an unremarkable epiphany: that knowledge *does* rather than simply *is*, it is by now very routine to discover. Yet it seems that a lot of the real force of such discoveries has been blunted through the habitual practices of the same forms of critical theory that have given such broad currency to the formulae themselves. In particular, it may be that the very productive critical habits embodied in what Paul Ricoeur memorably called "hermeneutics of suspicion" - widespread critical habits indeed, perhaps by now nearly synonymous with criticism itself - may have had an unintentionally stultifying side-effect: they may have made it less rather than more possible to unpack the local, contingent relations between any given piece of knowledge and its narrative/epistemological entailments for the seeker, knower, or teller.

Ricoeur introduced the category of the "hermeneutic of suspicion" to describe the position of Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and their intellectual offspring within a context that also included such alternative disciplinary hermeneutics as the philological and theological "hermeneutic of recovery of meaning."² His intent in offering the former of these formulations was descriptive and taxonomic rather than imperative. In the context of recent U.S. critical theory, however, where Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud by themselves are taken as constituting a pretty sufficient genealogy for the mainstream of New Historicist, deconstructive, feminist, queer, and psychoanalytic criticism, to apply a "hermeneutic of suspicion" is, I believe, widely understood as a mandatory injunction rather than a possibility among other possibilities. The phrase now has something like the sacred status of Fredric Jameson's "Always historicize" - and, like that one, it 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 common 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 the bumper of an automobile! The imperative framing will do funny things to a hermeneutic of suspicion.

Not surprisingly, the methodological centrality of suspicion to current critical practice has involved a concomitant privileging of the concept of paranoia. In the last paragraphs of Freud's essay on the paranoid Dr. Schreber, there is discussion of what Freud considers a "striking similarity" between Schreber's systematic persecutory delusion and Freud's own theory. Freud was indeed later to generalize, famously, that "the delusions of paranoiacs have an unpalatable external similarity and internal kinship to the systems of our philosophers" - among whom he included himself.³ For all his slyness, it may be true that the putative congruence between paranoia and theory was unpalatable to Freud; if so, however, it is no longer viewed as unpalatable. The articulation of such a congruence may have been inevitable, at any rate; as Ricoeur notes, "For Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, the fundamental category of consciousness is the relation hidden-shown or, if you prefer, simulated-manifested. . . . Thus the distinguishing characteristic of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche is the general hypothesis concerning both the process of false consciousness and the method of deciphering. The two go together, since the man of suspicion carries out in reverse the work of falsification of the man of guile."⁴ The man of suspicion double-bluffing the man of guile: in the hands of thinkers after Freud, paranoia has by now candidly become less a diagnosis than a prescription. In a world where no one need be delusional to find evidence of systemic oppression, to theorize out of anything *but* a paranoid critical stance has come to seem naive, pious, or complaisant. I myself have no wish to return to the use of "paranoid" as a pathologizing diagnosis; but it seems to me a great loss when paranoid inquiry comes to seem entirely coextensive with critical theoretical inquiry, rather than being viewed as one kind of cognitive/affective theoretical practice among other, alternative kinds.

Even aside from the prestige that now attaches to a hermeneutic of suspicion in critical theory as a whole, queer studies in particular has had a distinctive history of intimacy with the paranoid imperative. Freud, of course, traced every instance of paranoia to the repression of specifically same-sex desire, whether in women or in men. The traditional, homophobic psychoanalytic use that has generally been made of Freud's association has been to pathologize homosexuals as paranoid, or to consider paranoia a distinctively homosexual disease. In *Homosexual Desire*, however, a 1972 book translated into English in 1978, Guy Hocquenghem returned to Freud's formulations in order to draw from them a conclusion that would not reproduce this damaging non sequitur. If paranoia reflects the *repression* of same-sex desire, Hocquenghem reasoned, then paranoia is a uniquely privileged site for illuminating not homosexuality itself, as in the Freudian tradition, but rather precisely the mechanisms of homophobic and heterosexist enforcement against it.⁵ What is illuminated by an understanding of paranoia is not how homosexuality works, but how homophobia and heterosexism work - in'short, if one understands these oppressions to be systemic, how the world works.

Paranoia, thus, became by the mid-1980s a privileged *object* of antihomophobic theory. How did it spread so quickly from that status to being its uniquely sanctioned *methodology*? 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. Part of the explanation lies in a property of paranoia itself: simply put, paranoia tends to be contagious. More specifically, paranoia is drawn toward and tends to construct symmetrical relations, and in particular symmetrical epistemologies. As Leo Bersani writes, "To inspire interest is to be guaranteed a paranoid reading, just as we must inevitably be suspicious of the interpretations we inspire. Paranoia is an inescapable interpretive doubling of presence."⁶ It sets a thief (and if necessary, becomes one) to catch a thief; it mobilizes guile against suspicion, suspicion against guile; "it takes one to know one." A paranoid friend, who believes I am reading her mind, knows this from reading mine; also a suspicious writer, she is always turning up at crime scenes of plagiarism, indifferently as perpetrator or as victim; a litigious colleague as well, she not only imagines me to be as familiar with the laws of libel as she is, but eventually makes me become so. (All these examples, by the way, are fictitious.)

Given that paranoia seems to have a peculiarly intimate relation to the phobic dynamics around homosexuality, then, it may have been structurally inevitable that the reading practices that became most available and fruitful in antihomophobic work would often in turn have been paranoid ones. There must have been historical as well as structural reasons for this development, however, since it is less easy to account on structural terms for the frequent privileging of paranoid methodologies in recent non-queer critical projects such as feminist theory, psychoanalytic theory, deconstruction, Marxist criticism, or the New Historicism. One recent discussion of paranoia invokes "a popular maxim of the late 1960s: 'Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're *not* out to get you.'"⁷ And in fact it seems quite plausible to me that some version of this axiom (perhaps "Even a paranoid can have enemies," uttered by Henry Kissinger!)⁸ is so indelibly inscribed in the brains of us baby-boomers that it offers us the continuing illusion of possessing a special insight into the epistemologies of enmity. My impression, again, is that, we are liable to produce this constative formulation as fiercely as if it had a self-evident imperative force: the notation that even paranoid people have enemies is wielded as if its absolutely necessary corollary were the injunction, " - so *you can never be paranoid enough.* "

But the truth-value of the original axiom, assuming it to *be* true, doesn't actually make a paranoid imperative self-evident. Learning that "just because you're paranoid doesn't mean you don't have enemies," somebody might deduce that being paranoid is not an effective way to get rid of enemies. Rather than concluding " - so you can never be paranoid enough, " this person might instead be moved to reflect, " - but then, just because you have enemies doesn't mean you have to be paranoid." That is to say, once again: for someone to have an

unmystified view of systemic oppressions does not *intrinsically* or *necessarily* enjoin on that person any specific train of epistemological or narrative consequences. To be other than paranoid (and of course we'll need to define this term much more carefully) - to practice other than paranoid forms of knowing does *not*, in itself, entail a denial of the reality or gravity of enmity or oppression.

How are we to understand paranoia in such a way as to situate it as one kind of epistemological practice among other, alternative ones? Besides Freud's, the most usable formulations for this purpose would seem to be those of Melanie Klein and (to the extent that paranoia represents an affective as well as cognitive mode) Silvan Tomkins. In Klein, I find particularly congenial her use of the concept of *positions* – the schizoid/paranoid position, the depressive position - as opposed to, for example, normatively ordered *stages*, stable *structures*, or diagnostic *personality types*. As Hinshelwood writes in his indispensable *Dictionary of Kleinian Thought*, "The term 'position' describes the characteristic posture that the ego takes up with respect to its objects. . . [Klein] wanted to convey, with the idea of position a much more flexible to-and-fro process between one and the other than is normally meant by regression to fixation points in the developmental phases."⁹ The flexible to-and-fro movement implicit in Kleinian *positions* will be useful for my purpose of discussing paranoid and reparative critical *practices*, not as theoretical ideologies (and certainly not as stable personality types of critics), but as changing and heterogeneous relational stances.

The greatest interest of Klein's concept lies, it seems to me, in her seeing the paranoid position always in the oscillatory context of a very different possible one, the depressive position. For Klein's infant or adult, the paranoid position - understandably marked by hatred, envy, and anxiety - is a position of terrible alertness to the dangers posed by the hateful and envious part-objects that one defensively projects into, carves out of, and ingests from the world around one. By contrast, the depressive position is an anxiety-mitigating achievement that the infant or adult only sometimes, and often only briefly, succeeds in inhabiting: this is the position from which it is possible in turn to use one's own resources to assemble or "repair" the murderous part-objects into something like a whole - though not, and may I emphasize this, *not necessarily like any preexisting whole*. Once assembled to one's own specifications, the more satisfying object is available both to be identified with and to offer one nourishment and comfort in turn. Among Klein's names for the reparative process is love.¹⁰

Given the instability and mutual inscription built into the Kleinian notion of positions, I am also, in the present project, interested in doing justice to .the powerful reparative practices that, I am convinced infuse self-avowedly paranoid critical projects; as well as to the paranoid exigencies that are often necessary for non-paranoid knowing and utterance. For example, Patton's calm response to me about the origins of HIV drew on a lot of research, her own and other people's, much of which required to be paranoiacally structured.

For convenience's sake, I'll borrow my critical examples as I proceed from two influential studies of the past decade, one roughly psychoanalytic and the other roughly New Historicist - but I do so for more than the sake of convenience, since both are books (Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* and D. A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police*) whose centrality to the development of my own thought, and that of the critical movements that most interest me, are examples of their very remarkable force and exemplarity. Each, as well, is interestingly located in a tacit or ostensibly marginal, but in hindsight originary and authorizing, relation to different strains of queer theory. Finally, I draw a sense of permission from the fact that neither book is any longer very representative of the most recent work of either author, so that observations about the reading practices of either book may, I hope, escape being glued as if allegorically to the name of the author.

I would like to begin by setting outside the scope of this discussion any overlap between paranoia *per se* on the one hand, and on the other hand the states variously called dementia praecox (by Kraepelin), schizophrenia (by Bleuler), or more generally, delusionality or psychosis. As Laplanche and Pontalis note, the history of psychiatry has attempted various mappings of this overlap: "Kraepelin differentiates clearly between paranoia on the one hand and the paranoid form of dementia praecox on the other; Bleuler treats paranoia as a sub-category of dementia praecox, or the group of schizophrenias; as for Freud, he is quite prepared to see certain so-called paranoid forms of dementia praecox brought under the head of paranoia. . . . [For example, Schreber's] case of 'paranoid dementia' is essentially a paranoia proper [and therefore not a form of schizophrenia] in Freud's eyes."¹¹ In Klein's later writings, meanwhile, the occurrence of psychotic-like mental events is seen as universal in both children and adults, so that mechanisms such as paranoia have a clear ontological priority over diagnostic categories such as dementia. The reason I want to insist in advance on this move is, once again, to try and hypothetically disentangle the question of truth-value from the question of performative effect. I am saying that the main reasons for questioning paranoid practices are other than the possibility that their suspicions can be delusional.

Concomitantly, some of the main reasons for practicing paranoid strategies may be other than the possibility that they offer unique access to true knowledge. They represent a way, among other ways, of seeking, finding, and organizing knowledge. Paranoia knows some things well and others poorly. I'd like to undertake now something like a composite sketch of what I mean by paranoia in this connection - not as a tool of differential *diagnosis*, but anyway as a tool for better seeing differentials of practice. My main headings will be:

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*.

(1) That paranoia is anticipatory is clear from every account and theory of the phenomenon. The first imperative of paranoia is "*There must be no bad surprises,*" and indeed the aversion to surprise seems to be what cements the intimacy between paranoia and knowledge per se, including both epistemophilia and skepticism. D. A. Miller notes in *The Novel and the Police* that "Surprise. . . is precisely what the paranoid seeks to eliminate, but it is also what, in the event, he survives by reading as a frightening incentive: he can never be paranoid enough."¹²

The unidirectionally future-oriented vigilance of paranoia generates, paradoxically, a complex relation to temporality that burrows both backward and forward: because there must be no bad surprises, and because to learn of the possibility of a bad surprise would itself constitute a bad surprise, paranoia requires that bad news be always already known. As Miller's analysis also suggests, the temporal progress and regress of paranoia are, in principle, infinite. Hence perhaps, I would suggest, Butler's repeated and scouringly thorough demonstrations in *Gender Trouble* that there can have been no moment prior to the imposition of the totalizing Law of gender difference; hence her unrelenting vigilance for traces in other theorists' writing of nostalgia for such an impossible prior moment. No time could be too early for one's having-already-known, for its having already-been-inevitable, that something bad would happen; and no loss could be too far in the future to need to be preemptively discounted.

(2) In noting, as I have already, the contagious tropism of paranoia toward symmetrical epistemologies, I have relied on the double senses of paranoia as reflexive and mimetic. Paranoia seems to require to be imitated in order to be understood; and it, in turn, seems to understand only by imitation. Paranoia proposes both "*Anything you can do [to me] I can do worse,*" and "*Anything you can do [to me] I can do first*" - to myself. In *The Novel and the Police*, D. A. Miller is much more explicit than Freud in embracing the twin propositions that one understands paranoia only by oneself practicing paranoid knowing, and that the way paranoia has of understanding anything is by imitating and embodying it. That paranoia refuses to be only *either* a way of knowing *or* a thing known, but is characterized by an insistent tropism toward occupying both positions, is wittily dramatized from the opening page of this definitive study of paranoia: a foreword titled "But Officer. . ." begins with an always-already-second-guessing sentence about how "*Even the blindest (or bluffest) 'scholarly work' fears getting into trouble,*" including trouble "*with the adversaries whose particular attacks it keeps busy anticipating*" (vii; emphasis in original) . As the book's final paragraph notes about *David Copperfield*, Miller too "everywhere intimates a . . . pattern in which the subject constitutes himself 'against' discipline by assuming that discipline in his own name" (220), or even his own body (191).

It seems no wonder, then, that paranoia, once the topic is broached in a nondiagnostic context, would seem to grow like a crystal in a hypersaturated solution, blotting out any sense of the possibility of alternative ways of understanding or things to understand. I will say more later on about some implications of the status of paranoia as - in this sense - inevitably a "strong theory." What may be even more important is how severely the mimeticism of paranoia circumscribes its potential as a medium of political or cultural struggle. As I pointed out in a 1986 essay (in which my implicit reference was, as it happens, to one of the essays later collected in *The Novel and the Police*), "The problem here is not simply that paranoia is a form of love, for - in a certain language - what is not? The problem is rather that, of all forms of love, paranoia is the most ascetic, *the love that demands less t from its object*. . . . The gorgeous narrative work done by the Foucaulian paranoid, transforming the simultaneous chaoses of institutions into a consecutive, drop-dead-elegant diagram of spiralling escapes and recaptures, is also the paranoid subject's proffer of himself and his cognitive talent, now ready for anything *it* can present in the way of blandishment or violence, to an order-of-things *morcelé* that had until then lacked *only* narratability, a body, cognition."¹³

At the risk of offering a coarse reduction, I'd suggest that this anticipatory, mimetic mechanism may also shed light on a striking feature of recent feminist and queer uses of psychoanalysis. Lacan aside, few actual psychoanalysts would dream of being as rigorously insistent as are many oppositional theorists - of whom Butler is very far from the most single-minded - in asserting the inexorable, irreducible, uncircumnavigable, omnipresent centrality, at *every* psychic juncture, of the facts (however factitious) of "sexual difference" and "the phallus." From such often tautological work, it would be hard to learn that - from Freud onward, including for example the later writings of Melanie Klein - the history of psychoanalytic thought offers richly divergent, heterogeneous tools for thinking about aspects of personhood, consciousness, affect, filiation, social dynamics, and sexuality that, while relevant to the experience of gender and queerness, are often not centrally organized around "sexual difference" at all. Not that they are necessarily prior to "sexual difference": they may simply be conceptualized as somewhere to the side of it, tangentially or contingently related or even rather unrelated to it.

Seemingly, the reservoir of such thought and speculation could make an important resource for theorists committed to thinking about human lives otherwise than through the prejudicious gender reifications that are common in psychoanalysis, as in other projects of modern philosophy and science. What has happened instead, I think, is something like the following. First, through what might be called a process of vigilant scanning, feminists and queers have rightly understood that no topic or area of psychoanalytic thought can be declared *a priori* immune to the influence of such gender reifications. Second, however - and it seems to me, unnecessarily and often damagingly - the lack of such *a priori* immunity, the absence of any guaranteed-nonprejudicial point of beginning for feminist thought within psy-

choanalysis, has led to the widespread adoption by some thinkers of an anticipatory mimetic strategy whereby a certain, stylized violence of sexual differentiation must always be *presumed* or *self-assumed* - even, where necessary, imposed - simply on the ground that it can never be finally *ruled out*. (I don't want to suggest, in using the word "mimetic," that these uses of psychoanalytic gender categories need be either uncritical of, or identical to, the originals: Judith Butler, among others, has taught us a much less deadening use of "mimetic.") But, for example, in this post-Lacanian tradition, psychoanalytic thought that is not in the first place centrally organized around phallic "sexual difference" must seemingly be translated, with however distorting results, into that language before it can be put to any other theoretical use. The contingent possibilities of thinking otherwise than through "sexual difference" are subordinated to the paranoid imperative that, if the violence of such gender reification cannot be definitively halted in advance, it must at least never arrive on any conceptual scene *as a surprise*. In a paranoid view, it is more dangerous for such reification ever to be unanticipated than often to be unchallenged.

(3) It is for reasons like these that, in the systems-theory-influenced work of the psychologist Silvan Tomkins, paranoia is offered as the example par excellence of what Tomkins refers to as "strong affect theory" - in this case, a strong humiliation or humiliation-fear theory. His use of the term "strong theory" - indeed, his use of the term "theory" at all - has something of a double valence. Tomkins goes beyond Freud's reflection on possible *similarities between*, say, paranoia and theory; by Tomkins's account, which is strongly marked by early cybernetics' interest in feedback processes, all people's cognitive/affective lives are organized according to alternative, changing, strategic and hypothetical affect theories. As a result, there would be from the start no ontological difference between the theorizing acts of a Freud and those of, say, one of his analysands. Tomkins does not suggest that there is no meta-level of reflection in Freud's theory, but rather that affect itself, ordinary affect, while irreducibly corporeal, is also centrally shaped, through the feedback process, by its access to just such theoretical meta-levels. In Tomkins, there is no distance at all between affect theory in the sense of the important explicit theorizing some scientists and philosophers do around affects, and affect theory in the sense of the largely tacit theorizing all people do in experiencing and trying to deal with their own and others' affects.

To call paranoia a "strong theory" is, then, at the same time to congratulate it as a big achievement - it's a strong theory rather as, for Harold Bloom, Milton is a strong poet - but also to classify it. It is one kind of affect theory among other possible kinds, and by Tomkins's account, a number of interrelated affect theories of different kinds and strengths are likely to constitute the mental life of any individual. Most pointedly, the contrast of strong theory in Tomkins is with weak theory, and the contrast is not in every respect to the advantage of the strong kind. The reach and reductiveness of strong theory - that is, its conceptual economy or elegance - involve both assets and deficits. What Characterizes strong theory in Tomkins

is not, after all, how well it avoids negative affect or finds positive affect, but the size and topology of the domain that it organizes. "Any theory of wide generality," he writes,

is capable of accounting for a wide spectrum of phenomena which appear to be very remote, one from the other, and from a common source. This is a commonly accepted criterion by which the explanatory power of any scientific theory can be evaluated. To the extent to which the theory can account only for "near" phenomena, it is a weak theory, little better than a description of the phenomena which it purports to explain. As it orders more and more remote phenomena to a single formulation, its power grows. . . . A humiliation theory is strong to the extent to which it enables more and more experiences to be accounted for as instances of humiliating experiences on the one hand, or to the extent to which it enables more and more anticipation of such contingencies before they actually happen."¹⁴

As this account suggests, far from becoming stronger through obviating or alleviating humiliation, a humiliation theory becomes stronger exactly insofar as it fails to do so.¹⁵ Tomkins's conclusion is not that all strong theory is ineffective - indeed, it may grow to be only too effective - but that "*affect theory must be effective to be weak*":

We can now see more clearly that although a restricted and weak theory may not always successfully protect the individual against negative affect, it is difficult for it to remain weak unless it does so. Conversely, a negative affect theory gains in strength, paradoxically, by virtue of the continuing failures of its strategies to afford protection through successful avoidance of the experience of negative affect. . . . It is the repeated and apparently uncontrollable spread of the experience of negative affect which prompts the increasing strength of the ideo-affective organization which we have called a strong affect theory. (2:323-24)

An affect theory is, among other things, a mode of *selective* scanning and amplification; for this reason, any affect theory risks being somewhat tautological, but because of its wide reach and rigorous exclusiveness, a strong theory risks being strongly tautological.

We have said that there is over-organization in monopolistic humiliation theory. By this we mean not only that there is excessive integration between sub-systems which are normally more independent, but also that each sub-system is over-specialized in the interests of minimizing the experience of humiliation. . . . The entire cognitive apparatus is in a constant state of alert for possibilities, imminent or remote, ambiguous

or clear.

Like any highly organized effort at detection, as little as possible is left to chance. The radar antennae are placed wherever it seems possible the enemy may attack. Intelligence officers may monitor even unlikely conversations if there is an outside chance something relevant may be detected or if there is a chance that two independent bits of information taken together may give indication of the enemy's intentions. . . . But above all there is a highly organized way of interpreting information so that what is possibly relevant can be quickly abstracted and magnified, and the rest discarded. (2:433)

This is how it happens that an explanatory structure that a reader may see as tautological, in that it can't help or can't stop or can't do anything other than proving the very same assumptions with which it began, may be experienced by the practitioner as a triumphant advance toward truth and vindication.

More usually, however, the roles in this drama are more mixed or more widely distributed. I don't suppose that too many readers - nor, for that matter, perhaps the author - would be too surprised to hear it noted that the main argument or "strong theory" of *The Novel and the Police* is entirely circular: everything can be understood as an aspect of the carceral, therefore the carceral is everywhere. But who reads *The Novel and the Police* to find out whether its main argument is true? In this case, as also frequently in the case of the tautologies of "sexual difference," the very breadth of reach that makes the theory strong also offers the space - of which this book takes every advantage - for a wealth of tonal nuance, attitude, worldly observation, performative paradox, aggression, tenderness, wit, inventive reading, *obiter dicta*, and writerly panache. These rewards are so local and frequent that one might want to say that a plethora of only loosely related weak theories has been invited to shelter in the hypertrophied embrace of the book's overarching strong theory. In many ways, such an arrangement is all to the good - suggestive, pleasurable, and highly productive; an insistence that everything means one thing somehow permits a sharpened sense of all the ways there are of meaning it. 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 of this unarticulated relation between strong and weak theories. As strong theory, and as a locus of reflexive mimeticism, paranoia is nothing if not teachable. The powerfully ranging and reductive force of strong theory can make tautological thinking hard to identify, even as it makes it compelling and near-inevitable; the result is that both writers and readers can damagingly misrecognize whether and where real conceptual work is getting done, and precisely what that work might be.

(4) While Tomkins distinguishes among a number of qualitatively different affects, he also for some purposes groups affects together loosely as the positive and the negative

ones. In these terms, paranoia is characterized not only by being a strong theory as opposed to a weak one, but by being a strong theory of a negative affect. This proves important in terms of the overarching affective goals Tomkins sees as potentially conflicting with each other in each individual: he distinguishes in the first place between the general goal of seeking to minimize negative affect and that of seeking to maximize positive affect. (The other, respectively more sophisticated goals he identifies are that affect inhibition be minimized, and that the power to achieve the preceding three goals be maximized.) In most practices - in most lives - there are small and subtle (though cumulatively powerful) negotiations between and among these goals; but the mushrooming, self-confirming strength of a monopolistic strategy of anticipating negative affect can have, according to Tomkins, the effect of entirely blocking the potentially operative goal of seeking positive affect. "The only sense in which [the paranoid] may strive for positive affect at all is for the shield which it promises against humiliation," he writes. "To take seriously the strategy of *maximizing* positive affect, rather than simply enjoying it when the occasion arises, is entirely out of the question" (2:458-59).

Similarly, in Melanie Klein's writings from the 1940s and 1950s, it again represents an actual achievement - a distinct, often risky positional shift - for an infant or adult to move toward a sustained *seeking of pleasure* (through the reparative strategies of the depressive position), rather than continuing to pursue the self-reinforcing because self-defeating strategies for *forestalling pain* offered by the paranoid/schizoid position. It's probably more usual for discussions of the depressive position in Klein to emphasize that that position inaugurates ethical possibility - in the form of a guilty, empathetic view of the other as at once good, damaged, integral, and requiring and eliciting love and care. Such ethical possibility is, however, founded on and coextensive with the subject's movement toward what Foucault calls "care of the self," the often very fragile concern to provide the self with pleasure and nourishment in an environment that is perceived not particularly to offer them.

Klein's and Tomkins's conceptual moves here are more sophisticated and, in an important way, less tendentious than the corresponding assumptions in Freud. To begin with, Freud subsumes pleasure-seeking and pain-avoidance together under the rubric of the supposedly primordial "pleasure principle," as though the two motives could not themselves radically differ.¹⁶ Second, it is the pain-forestalling strategy alone in Freud that (as anxiety) gets extended forward into the developmental achievement of the "reality principle." This leaves pleasure-seeking as an always presumable, unexaminable, inexhaustible underground wellspring of supposedly "natural" motive, one that presents only the question of how to keep its irrepressible ebullitions under control. Perhaps even more problematically, this Freudian schema silently installs the anxious paranoid imperative, the impossibility but also the supposed necessity of forestalling pain and surprise, as "reality" - as the only and inevitable mode, motive, content, and proof of true knowledge.

In Freud, then, there would be no room - except as an example of self-delusion - for the Proustian epistemology whereby the narrator of *A la recherche*, who feels in the last volume "jostling each other within me a whole host of truths concerning human passions and character and conduct," recognizes them as truths insofar as "*the perception of [them] caused me joy.*"¹⁷ In the paranoid Freudian epistemology, it is implausible enough to suppose then that truth could be even an accidental occasion of joy; inconceivable to imagine joy as a guarantor of truth. And indeed, from any point of view it is circular, or something, to suppose that one's pleasure at knowing something could be taken as evidence of the truth of the knowledge. But a strong theory of positive affect, such as the narrator seems to move toward in *Time Regained*, is no *more* tautological than the strong theory of negative affect represented by, for example, his paranoia in *The Captive*. (Indeed, to the extent that the pursuit of positive affect is far less likely to result in the formation of very strong theory, it may tend rather less toward tautology.) Allow each theory its own, different prime motive, at any rate - the anticipation of pain in one case, the provision of pleasure in the other - and neither can be called more realistic than the other. It's not even necessarily true that the two make different judgments of "reality": it isn't that one is pessimistic and sees the glass as half empty, while the other is optimistic and sees it as half full. In a world full of loss, pain, and oppression, both epistemologies are likely to be based on deep pessimism - the reparative motive of seeking pleasure, after all, arrives, by Klein's account, only with the achievement of a depressive position. But what each looks for - which is again to say, the motive each *has for looking* - is bound to differ widely. Of the two, however, it is only paranoid knowledge that has so thorough a practice of disavowing its affective motive and force, and masquerading as the very stuff of truth.

(5) Whatever account it may give of its own motivation, paranoia is characterized by placing, in practice, an extraordinary stress on the efficacy of knowledge per se - knowledge in the form of exposure. Maybe that's why paranoid knowing is so inescapably narrative. Like the deinstitutionalized person on the street who, betrayed and plotted against by everyone else in the city, still urges on you the finger-worn dossier bristling with his precious correspondence, paranoia for all its vaunted suspicion acts as though its work would be accomplished if only it could finally, this time, somehow get its story truly known. That a fully initiated listener could still remain indifferent or inimical, or might have no help to offer, are hardly treated as possibilities.

It's strange that a hermeneutic of suspicion would appear so trusting about the effects of exposure, but Nietzsche (through the genealogy of morals), Marx (through the theory of ideology), and Freud (through the theory of ideals and illusions) already represent, in Ricoeur's phrase, "convergent procedures of demystification" (34), and therefore a seeming faith - inexplicable in their own terms - in the effects of such a proceeding. In the influential final pages of *Gender Trouble*, for example, Butler offers a programmatic argument in favor

of demystification as "the normative focus for gay and lesbian practice,"¹⁸ with such claims as that "drag implicitly *reveals* the imitative structure of gender itself" (137); "we see sex and gender *denaturalized* by means of a performance" (138); "gender parody *reveals* that the original identity. . . is an imitation" (138); "gender performance will *enact and reveal* the performativity of gender itself" (139); "parodic repetition. . . *exposes* the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity" (141); "the parodic repetition of gender *exposes*. . . the illusion of gender identity" (146); and "hyperbolic exhibitions of 'the natural' . . . *reveal* its fundamentally phantasmatic status" (147) as well as "*exposing* its fundamental unnaturalness" (149; all emphases added).

What marks the paranoid impulse in these pages is, I would say, less the stress on reflexive mimesis than the seeming faith in exposure. The arch-suspicious author of *The Novel and the Police* also speaks, in this case, for the protocols of many less interesting recent critics when he offers to provide "the 'flash' of increased visibility necessary to render modern discipline a problem in its own right" (ix) -as though to make something visible as a problem were, if not a mere hop, skip, and jump away from getting it solved, at least self-evidently a step in that direction. In this respect at least, though not in every one, Miller in *The Novel and the Police* writes as an exemplary New Historicist. For to a startling extent, the articulations of New Historicist scholarship rely on the prestige of a single, overarching narrative: exposing and problematizing hidden violences in the genealogy of the modern liberal subject.

With the passage of time since the New Historicism was new, it's becoming easier to see ways in which such a paranoid project of exposure may be more historically specific than it seems. "The modern liberal subject": in the latter 1990s it seems, or at least ought to seem, anything but an obvious choice as the unique *terminus ad quem* of historical narrative. Where *are* all these supposed modern liberal subjects? I daily encounter graduate students who are dab hands at unveiling the hidden historical violences that underlie a secular, universalist liberal humanism. Yet these students' sentient years - unlike the formative years of their teachers - have been spent entirely in a xenophobic Reagan-Bush-Clinton America where "liberal" is, if anything, a taboo category; and where "secular humanism" is routinely treated as a marginal religious sect, while a vast majority of the population claims to engage in direct intercourse with multiple invisible entities such as angels, Satan, and God.

Furthermore, the force of any interpretive project of *unveiling hidden violence* would seem to depend on a cultural context, like the one assumed in Foucault's early works, in which violence would be deprecated and hence hidden in the first place. Why bother exposing the ruses of power in a country where, at any given moment, 40 percent of young black men are enrolled in the penal system? In the United States and internationally, while there is plenty of hidden violence that requires exposure, there is also, and increasingly, an ethos where forms of violence that are hyper-visible from the start may be offered as an exemplary

spectacle, rather than remaining to be unveiled as a scandalous secret. Human rights controversy around, for example, torture and disappearances in Argentina, or the use of mass rape as part of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, marks - not an unveiling of practices that had been hidden or naturalized - but a wrestle of different frameworks of visibility. That is, violence that was *from the beginning* exemplary and spectacular, pointedly addressed, meant to serve as a public warning or terror to members of a particular community, is combated by efforts to *displace and redirect* (as well as simply expand) its aperture of visibility.

A further problem with these critical practices: what does a hermeneutic of suspicion and exposure have to say to social formations in which visibility itself constitutes much of the violence? The point of the move to reinstate chain gangs in several Southern states is less that convicts be required to perform hard labor than that they be required to do so under the gaze of the public; and the enthusiasm for Singapore-style justice that was popularly expressed in the United States around the caning of Michael Fay reveals a growing feeling that well-publicized shaming stigma is just what the doctor ordered for recalcitrant youth. Here is one remarkable index of historical change: it used to be opponents of capital punishment who argued that, if practiced at all, executions should be done in public so as to shame state and spectators by airing of the previously hidden judicial violence. Today it is no longer opponents but death-penalty cheerleaders, flushed with triumphal ambitions, who consider that the proper place for executions is on television. What price now the cultural critics' hard-won skill at making visible, behind permissive appearances, the hidden traces of oppression and persecution?

The paranoid trust in exposure seemingly depends, in addition, on an infinite reservoir of naïveté in those who make up the audience for these unveilings. What is the basis for assuming that it will surprise or disturb - never mind motivate - anyone to learn that a given social manifestation is artificial, self-contradictory, imitative, phantasmatic, or even violent? As Peter Sloterdijk points out, cynicism or "enlightened false consciousness" - false consciousness that knows itself to be false, "its falseness already reflexively buffered" - already represents "the universally widespread way in which enlightened people see to it that they are not taken for suckers."¹⁹ How television-starved would someone have to be to find it shocking that ideologies contradict themselves, that simulacra don't have originals, or that gender representations are artificial? My own guess would be that such popular cynicism, while undoubtedly widespread, is only one among the heterogeneous, competing theories that constitute the mental ecology of most people. Some exposes, some demystifications, some bearings of witness do have great effectual force (though often of an unanticipated kind). Many that are just as true and convincing have none at all, however; and as long as that is so, we must admit that the efficacy and directionality of such acts reside somewhere else than in their relation to knowledge per se.

Writing in 1988 - that is, after two full terms of Reaganism in the United States - D. A. Miller proposes to follow Foucault in demystifying "the intensive and continuous 'pastoral' care that liberal society proposes to take of each and everyone of its charges" (viii). As if! I'm a lot less worried about being pathologized by my shrink than about my vanishing mental health coverage - and that's given the great good luck of having health insurance at all. Since the beginning of the tax revolt, the government of the United States - and, increasingly, those of other so-called liberal democracies - has been positively rushing to divest itself of answerability for care to its charges (cf. "entitlement programs") - with no other institutions proposing to fill in the gap. This development is the last thing anyone could have expected from reading New Historicist prose, which constitutes a full genealogy of the secular welfare state that peaked in the 1960s and 1970s, along with a watertight proof of why things must become more and more like that forever. No one can blame a writer in the 1980s for not having foreseen the effects of the Republicans' 1994 Contract with America. But if, as Miller says, "Surprise. . . is precisely what the paranoid seeks to eliminate," it must be admitted that, as a form of paranoia, the New Historicism fails spectacularly. While its general tenor of "things are bad and getting worse" is immune to refutation, any more specific predictive value - and as a result, arguably, any value for making oppositional strategy - has been nil. Such accelerating failure to anticipate change is moreover, as we've discussed, entirely in the nature of the paranoid process, whose sphere of influence (like that of the New Historicism itself) only expands as each unanticipated disaster seems to demonstrate more conclusively that, guess what, *you can never be paranoid enough*.

To look from a 1990s vantage at Richard Hofstadter's immensely influential 1963 essay, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," is to see the extent of a powerful discursive change. Hofstadter's essay is a prime expression of the complacent, coercive liberal consensus that practically begs for the kind of paranoid demystification in which, for example, D. A. Miller educates his readers. Its style is mechanically evenhanded: Hofstadter finds paranoia on both left and right (among abolitionists, anti-Masons and anti-Catholics and anti-Mormons, nativists and Populists and those who believe in conspiracies of bankers or munitions-makers; in anyone who doubts that *JFK* was killed by a lone gunman, "in the popular left-wing press, in the contemporary American right wing, and on both sides of the race controversy today") .²⁰ Although these categories would seem to cover a lot of people, there remains nonetheless a presumptive "we" - apparently still practically everyone - that can agree to view such extremes from a calm, understanding, and encompassing middle ground, where "we" can all agree that, for example, while "innumerable decisions of. . . the cold war can be faulted," they represent "simply the mistakes of well-meaning men" (36). Hofstadter has no trouble admitting that paranoid people or movements can perceive true things, though "a distorted style is. . . a possible signal that may alert us to a distorted judgment, just as in art an ugly style is a cue to fundamental defects of taste" (6).

A few simple and relatively non-controversial examples may make [the distinction between content and style] wholly clear. Shortly after the assassination of President Kennedy, a great deal of publicity was given to a bill . . . to tighten federal controls over the sale of firearms through the mail. When hearings were being held on the measure, three men drove 2,500 miles to Washington from Bagdad, Arizona, to testify against it. Now there are arguments against the Dodd bill which, however unpersuasive one may find them, have the color of conventional political reasoning. But one of the Arizonans opposed it with what might be considered representative paranoid arguments, insisting that it was "a further attempt by a subversive power to make us part of one world socialistic government" and that it threatened to "create chaos" that would help "our enemies" to seize power. (5)

I won't deny that a person could get nostalgic for a time when paranoid gun-lobby rhetoric sounded just plain nutty - a "simple and relatively non-controversial" example of "distorted judgment" - rather than representing the uncontested platform of a dominant political party. But the spectacular datedness of Hofstadter's example isn't only an index of how far the American political center has shifted toward the right since 1963. It's also a sign of how normative such paranoid thinking has become at every point in the political spectrum. In a funny way, I feel closer today to that paranoid Arizonan than I do to Hofstadter - even though (or do I mean *because?*) I also assume that the Arizonan is a homophobic whitesupremacist Christian Identity militia member who would as soon blow me away as look at me. Peter Sloterdijk does not make explicit that the wised-up popular cynicism or "enlightened false consciousness" that he considers now to be near-ubiquitous is, specifically, paranoid in structure; but that conclusion seems inescapable. Arguably, such narrow-gauge, everyday, rather incoherent cynicism is what paranoia looks like when it functions as weak theory rather than strong theory. To keep arriving on this hyper-demystified, paranoid scene with the "news" of a hermeneutic of suspicion, at any rate, is a far different act than such exposures would have been in the 1960S.

Subversive and demystifying parody, suspicious archaeologies of the present, the detection of hidden patterns of violence and their exposure: as I have been arguing, these infinitely doable and teachable protocols of unveiling have become the common currency of cultural and historicist studies. If there is an obvious danger in the triumphalism of a paranoid hermeneutic, it is that the broad consensual sweep of such methodological assumptions, the current near-profession-wide agreement about what constitutes narrative or explanation or adequate historicization, may, if it persists unquestioned, unintentionally impoverish the gene pool of literary-critical perspectives and skills. The trouble with a narrow gene pool, of course,

is its diminished to environmental (for instance, political) change.

Another, perhaps more nearly accurate way of describing the present paranoid consensus, however, is that rather than entirely displacing, it may simply have required a certain disarticulation, disavowal, and misrecognition of other ways of knowing - ways less oriented around suspicion - that are actually being practiced, often by the same theorists and as part of the same projects. The monopolistic program of paranoid knowing systematically disallows any explicit recourse to reparative motives, no sooner to be articulated than subject to methodical uprooting. Reparative motives, once they become explicit, are inadmissible within paranoid theory both because they are about pleasure ("merely aesthetic") and because they are frankly ameliorative ("merely reformist") .²¹ What makes pleasure and amelioration so "mere"? Only the exclusiveness of paranoia's faith in demystifying exposure: only its cruel and contemptuous assumption that the one thing lacking for global revolution, explosion of gender roles, or whatever, is people's (that is, *other* people's) having the painful effects of their oppression, poverty, or deludedness sufficiently exacerbated to make the pain conscious (as if otherwise it wouldn't have been) and intolerable (as if intolerable situations were famous for generating excellent solutions).

Such ugly prescriptions are not seriously offered by most paranoid theory; but a lot of contemporary theory is nonetheless regularly *structured as if* by them. The kind of aporia we have already discussed in *The Novel and the Police*, where readers are impelled through a grimly monolithic structure of strong paranoid theory by successive engagement with quite varied, often apparently keenly pleasure-oriented, smaller-scale writerly and intellectual solicitations, appears in a lot of other good criticism as well. I certainly recognize it as characterizing a fair amount of my own writing. Does it matter when such projects misdescribe themselves or are misrecognized by readers? I wouldn't suggest that the force of any powerful writing can ever attain complete transparency to itself, or is likely to account for itself very adequately at the constative level of the writing. But suppose one takes seriously a notion - like the one articulated by Tomkins, but also like other available ones - that everyday theory qualitatively affects everyday knowledge and experience; and suppose that one doesn't want to draw much ontological distinction between academic theory and everyday theory; and suppose that one has a lot of concern for the quality of other people's and one's own practices of knowing and experiencing. In these cases, it would make sense - if one had the choice - not to cultivate the necessity of a systematic, self-accelerating split between what one is doing and the reasons for which one does it.

To change one's understanding of the reasons for one's practice, or the meanings of one's practice - is it, or is it not, under this understanding of theory, to change one's practice? I ask this question seriously, and I take it to be a productive, overarching rubric under which to approach the essays in the present volume. There's a built-in gracelessness to the expectation that *any* essay will end with an explanation of exactly what it is that the writer is "calling

for." ("Calling for," as if critical practices were ready-made consumer items among which one had only to choose - "Mabel, Black Label!" Or maybe as if one were a doctor, whose expensive expertise goes into the writing of the right prescription, leaving to some commercial functionary the work of filling it as ordered.) That gracelessness can only be amplified when the essay in question is an introduction to other essays by other writers: as if any one person either had all along anticipated, or were now in a position to sum up and adjudicate, so rich a diversity of projects. My prescription - or really, I think, my proposition - here is very modest: that our work grows more interesting, more responsive, more truthful, and more useful as we try to account for its motives in a less stylized fashion than we have been. Perhaps the unpacking, above, of several different elements of paranoid thought can suggest several specific, divergent dimensions in which alternative approaches may also be available - may indeed be in practice in these pages.

While paranoid theoretical proceedings both depend upon and reinforce the structural dominance of monopolistic "strong theory," there may also be benefit in exploring the extremely varied, dynamic, and historically contingent ways that strong theoretical constructs interact with weak ones in the ecology of knowing - an exploration that obviously can't proceed without a respectful interest in weak as well as strong theoretical acts. Tomkins offers far more models for approaching such a project than I've been able to summarize. But the history of literary criticism can also be viewed as a repertoire of alternative models for allowing strong and weak theory to interdigitate. One notable feature of *Novel Gazing*, for example, is the centrality in so many of these essays of an unhurried, undefensive, theoretically galvanized practice of close reading. What could better represent "weak theory, little better than a description of the phenomena which it purports to explain" than this devalued and nearobsolescent New Critical skill?²² But what was already true in Empson and Burke is true in a different way in these essays: there are important and theoretical tasks that can be accomplished only local theories and nonce taxonomies; the potentially innumerable mechanisms of their relation to stronger theories remains the matter and speculative thought.

Paranoia, as we have pointed out, represents not only a strong affect theory but a strong *negative* affect theory. A strong theory (that is, a wideranging and reductive one) that was not mainly organized around anticipating, identifying, and warding off the negative affect of humiliation would resemble paranoia in some respects, but differ from it in others. I think, for example, that that might be a fair characterization of the preceding section of the present essay. The question of the strength of a given theory (or that of the relations between strong and weak theory) may be orthogonal²³ to the question of its affective *quale*, and each may be capable of exploration by different means. It does seem to me that the most powerful pieces in this collection - even profoundly sad pieces skill readers at attending to, rather than having to disavow, the workings of positive affect in projects where only negative affect theories have so far had much structuring force.

Since even the specification of paranoia as a theory of negative affect leaves open the distinctions between or among negative affects, there is the additional opportunity of experimenting with a vocabulary that will do justice to a wide affective range. Again, not only with the negative affects: it can also be reifying and, indeed, coercive to have only one, totalizing model of positive affect always in the same featured position. A disturbingly large amount of theory seems explicitly to undertake the proliferation of only one affect or maybe two, of whatever kind - whether ecstasy, sublimity, self-shattering, *jouissance*, suspicion, abjection, knowingness, horror, grim satisfaction, or righteous indignation. It's like the old joke: "Comes the revolution, Comrade, everyone gets to eat roast beef every day." "But Comrade, I don't like roast beef." "Comes the revolution, Comrade, you'll like roast beef." Comes the revolution, Comrade, you'll be tickled pink by those deconstructive jokes; you'll faint from ennui every minute that you're not smashing the state apparatus; you'll definitely want hot sex twenty to thirty times a day. You'll be mournful *and* militant. You'll never want to tell Deleuze and Guattari, "Not tonight, dears, I have a headache."

To recognize in paranoia a distinctively rigid relation to temporality, at once anticipatory and retroactive, averse above all to surprise, is also to glimpse the lineaments of other possibilities. Here, perhaps, Klein is of more help than Tomkins: to read from a reparative position is to surrender the knowing, anxious paranoid determination that no horror, however apparently unthinkable, shall ever come to the reader *as new*: to a reparatively positioned reader, it can seem realistic and necessary to experience surprise. Because there can be terrible surprises, however, there can also be good ones. Hope, often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates.²³ Because she has room to realize that the future may be different from the present, it is also possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did.²⁴

Where does this argument leave projects of queer reading, in particular? With the relative deemphasis of the question of "sexual difference" and sexual "sameness," and with the possibility of moving from a Freudian, homophobia-centered understanding of paranoia to other understandings of it, like Klein's or Tomkins's, that are not particularly Oedipal and are less drive-oriented than affect-oriented, I am also suggesting that the mutual inscription of queer thought with the topic of paranoia may be less necessary, less definitional, less completely constitutive than earlier writing on it, very much including my own, has assumed. A more ecological view of paranoia wouldn't offer the same transhistorical, almost automatic conceptual privileging of gay/lesbian issues that is offered by a Freudian view.

On the other hand, I think it will leave us in a vastly better position to do justice to a wealth of characteristic, culturally central practices, many of which can well be called reparative, that emerge from queer experience but become invisible or illegible under a paranoid optic. As Joseph Litvak writes, for example,

It seems to me that the importance of "mistakes" in queer reading and writing. . . has a lot to do with loosening the traumatic, inevitable-seeming connection between mistakes and humiliation. What I mean is that, if a lot of queer energy, say around adolescence, goes into what Barthes calls "le vouloir-etre-intelligent" (as in "If I have to be miserable, at least let me be brainier than everybody else") , accounting in large part for paranoia's enormous prestige as the very signature of smartness (a smartness that smarts), a lot of queer energy, later on, goes into. . . practices aimed at taking the terror out of error, at making the making of mistakes sexy, creative, even cognitively powerful. Doesn't reading queer mean learning, among other things, that mistakes can be good rather than bad surprises?²⁵

It's appropriate, I think, that these insights would be contingent developments, rather than definitional or transhistorical ones - they aren't things that would inevitably inhere in the experience of every woman-loving woman or man-loving man, say. For if, as we've shown, a paranoid reading practice is closely tied to a notion of the inevitable, there are, as this demonstrates, other features of queer reading that can attune it exquisitely to a heartbeat of contingency.

The dogged, defensive narrative stiffness of a paranoid temporality, after all, in which yesterday can't be allowed to have differed from today and tomorrow must be even more so, takes its shape from a generational narrative that's characterized by a distinctly Oedipal regularity and repetitiveness: it happened to my father's father, it happened to my father, it is happening to me, it will happen to my son, and it will happen to my son's son. But isn't it a feature of queer possibility - only a contingent feature, but a real one, and one that in turn strengthens the force of contingency itself - that our generational relations don't always proceed in this lockstep ?

Think of the epiphanic, extravagantly reparative final volume of Proust, in which the narrator, after a long withdrawal from society, goes to a party where he at first thinks everyone is sporting elaborate costumes pretending to be ancient - then realizes that they *are* old, and so is he - and is then assailed, in half a dozen distinct mnemonic shocks, by a climactic series of joy-inducing "truths" about the relation of writing to time. The narrator never says so, but isn't it worth pointing out that the complete temporal disorientation that initiates him into this revelatory space would have been impossible in a heterosexual *pere de famille*, in one who had meanwhile been embodying, in the form of inexorably "progressing" identities

and roles, the regular arrival of children and grandchildren?

And now I began to understand what old age was - old age, which perhaps of all the realities is the one of which we preserve for longest in our life a purely abstract conception, looking at calendars, dating our letters, seeing our friends marry and then in their turn the children of our friends, and yet, either from fear or from sloth, not understanding what all this means, until the day when we behold an unknown silhouette. . . which teaches us that we are living in a new world; until the day when a grandson of a woman we once knew, a young man whom instinctively we treat as a contemporary of ours, smiles as though we were making fun of him because it seems that we are old enough to be his grandfather- and I began to understand too what death meant and love and the joys of the spiritual life, the usefulness of suffering, a vocation, etc. (3 : 354-55)²⁶

A more recent and terrible contingency, in the brutal foreshortening of so many queer lifespans, has deroutinized the temporality of many of us in ways that only intensify this effect. I'm thinking, as I say this, of three very queer friendships I have. One of my friends is sixty; the other two are both thirty, and I, at forty-five, am exactly in the middle. All four of us are academics, and we have in common a lot of interests, energies, and ambitions; we have each had, as well, variously intense activist investments. In a "normal" generational narrative, our identifications with each other would be aligned with an expectation that in another fifteen years, I'd be situated comparably to where my sixty-year-old friend is, while my thirty-year-old friends would be situated comparably to where I am.

But we are all aware that the grounds of such friendships today are likely to differ from that model. They do so in inner cities, and for people subject to racist violence, and for people deprived of health care, and for people in dangerous industries, and for many others; they do for my friends and me. Specifically, living with advanced breast cancer, I have little chance of ever being the age my older friend is now. My friends who are thirty years old are similarly unlikely ever to experience my present, middle age: one is living with an advanced cancer caused by a massive environmental trauma (basically, he grew up on top of a toxic waste site); the other is living with HIV. The friend who is a very healthy sixty is the likeliest of us to be living fifteen years from now.

It's hard to say, hard even to know, how these relationships are different from those shared by people of different ages on a landscape whose perspectival lines converge on a common disappearing-point. I'm sure ours are more intensely motivated: whatever else we know, we know there isn't time to bullshit. But what it means to identify with each other must also be very different. On this scene, an older person doesn't love a younger as someone who will someday be where she now is, or vice versa. No one is, so to speak, carrying for-

ward the family name; there's a sense in which our life narratives will barely overlap. There's another sense in which they slide up more intimately alongside one another than can any lives that are moving forward according to the regular schedule of the generations. It is one another immediately, one another as the present fullness of a becoming whose arc may extend no further, whom we each must learn best to apprehend, fulfill, and bear company.

At a textual level, it seems to me that related practices of reparative knowing may lie, barely recognized and little explored, at the heart of many histories of gay, lesbian, and queer intertextuality. The queeridentified practice of camp, for example, may be seriously misrecognized when it is viewed, as Butler and others view it, through paranoid lenses. As we've seen, camp is currently understood as uniquely appropriate to the projects of parody, denaturalization, demystification, and mocking exposure of the elements and assumptions of a dominant culture; and the degree to which camping is motivated by love seems often to be understood mainly as the degree of its self-hating complicity with an oppressive status quo. By this account, the X-ray gaze of the paranoid impulse in camp sees through to an unfleshed skeleton of the culture; the paranoid aesthetic on view here is one of minimalist elegance and conceptual economy.

The desire of a reparative impulse, on the other hand, is additive and accretive. Its fear, a realistic one, is that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture; it wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self. To view camp as, among other things, the communal, historically dense exploration of a variety of reparative practices is to be able to do better justice to many of the defining elements of classic camp performance: the startling, juicy displays of excess erudition, for example; the passionate, often hilarious antiquarianism, the prodigal production of alternate historiographies; the "over"-attachment to fragmentary, marginal, waste, or leftover products; the rich, highly interruptive affective variety; the irrepressible fascination with ventriloquistic experimentation; the disorienting juxtapositions of present with past, and popular with high culture. As in the writing of D. A. Miller, a glue of surplus beauty, surplus stylistic investment, unexplained upwellings of threat, contempt, and longing cements together and animates the amalgam of powerful part-objects in such work as that of Ronald Firbank, Djuna Barnes, Joseph Cornell, Kenneth Anger, Charles Ludlam, Jack Smith, John Waters, Holly Hughes.

The very mention of these names, some of them attaching to almost legendarily "paranoid" personalities, confirms, too, Klein's insistence that it is not people but mutable positions - or, I would want to add, practices - that can be divided between the paranoid and the reparative; it is sometimes the most paranoid-tending people who are able to, and need to, develop and disseminate the richest reparative practices. And if the paranoid or the depressive positions operate on a smaller scale than the level of individual typology, they operate also on a larger, that of shared histories, emergent communities, and the weaving of in-

tertextual discourse.

At the beginning of this introduction, I undertook a list of some influential dichotomies and reifications that the essays collected here, individually and cumulatively, seem to suggest exciting ways of doing without. The organization of the book - perhaps appropriately contingent - is meant to dramatize what could, in another connection, seem a series of oxymoronic conjunctions: digitality with physical touch, affect with economics, pedagogy with wild animals, mama's boys with fatherlands, desire with cognition.

The title of this book's first part, "Digital Senses," can oddly seem both oxymoron *and* tautology. With what, for example, would one think to exercise one's senses if not with fingers? Yet the still-popular use of human fingers as a cheap and user-friendly computational technology has also come to seem the very definitional opposite of the disembodied, infinitely abstract realm now called digital. To begin this collection with Kathryn Bond Stockton's essay, "Prophylactics and Brains: *Beloved* in the Cybernetic Age of AIDS," is however to be invited by a universe of speculation and feeling in which the parasitic demand of "information" to be transmitted, of codes to be decoded, and thought to be thought, is entirely interfolded with the yearning and mortification of the skin, and the imperious bodily structurations of grievous memory and historic trauma.

With the next essay, Joseph Litvak turns from touch toward taste. In "Strange Gourmet: Taste, Waste, Proust," he undertakes to delineate something like "an object-relations theory" of sophistication, "a theory that will explain how sophistication maps out a certain fantasmatic way of circulating in and around the world - not, as may seem to be the case, of simply rising above it but, at least in Proust's case, of connecting the 'high' and the 'low' so as to short-circuit the middle." In proper Kleinian fashion, Litvak approaches Proust through a narrative of the gullet, emphasizing good and bad mouth-objects and complex inner pleasures (the "stranger" or gamier - that is to say, the "higher"- the better). If you aren't squeamish about digestive processes, then there's always a sense in which you *can* eat your cake and have it, too; "re-senting, re-tasting, re-finding the badness of the bad object, saving that badness from falling into the mere banality of the merely deidealized, [has] the additional virtue, in other words, of helping one save oneself."

Returning to the fingers, "Outing Texture," Renu Bora's deeply original essay on *The Ambassadors*, offers theoretical tools at once for an erotics and a metaphysics of texture. Occupying "the borders of properties of touch and vision," texture dramatizes both the disjunctures and displacements between the two senses (as in certain traditions of understanding fetishism), and their common materialities. Another tension: texture, as surfacial, can signify the exact opposite of structure; while texture, as structure (think of sand, brick, feces), can also offer the most graphic sensual manifestation of the immanence of production processes and histories. Bora touches both on the objects in James - fabrics and bibelots, as well

as erotic objects - and on the narrative touch of "James" himself: what, Bora finally asks, is the texture of innuendo?

In "The 'Sinister Fruitiness' of Machines: *Neuromancer*, Internet Sexuality, and the Turing Test," Tyler Curtain returns us to the airier digitality of cyberspace. His essay frames newly the question, What kind of crisis is it that the digital revolution makes for understandings of personhood? In the fiction of William Gibson, in the cruisy salons of the Internet, and - most explosively - in the benchmark Turing test itself, Curtain explores ways that gender as well as sexuality may drive definitional wedges between the two terms, "humanness" and "intelligence."

Jeff Nunokawa's essay, "The Importance of Being Bored: The Dividens of Ennui in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*," introduces "The Affective Life of Capital," the second part of *Novel Gazing*. While no one would be surprised to learn that capitalism depends on generating interest, Nunokawa's project here is to show how fully it also depends on generating tedium. More specifically, it is consumer culture whose relation to boredom is articulated through a (paradoxically fascinating) reading of "the intimacy between advertising and aesthetics" in Wilde - and between both of these and a centuries-long, sublimatory tradition of male intergenerational desire.

Michael Lucey points out early in his essay, "Balzac's Queer Cousins and Their Friends," that Balzac is one of the novelists who can seem most to fuse into one totalizing, seamless whole the "two projects" of hegemonic power: "portraying a world, and helping suture us to it." Lucey's essay, however, while it is interested in such "parallels," is most interested in maintaining them as parallel - that is, in attending to and making use of the irreducible distances that live between the lines. Between the needs of a system called "family" and the needs of a system of capital accumulation there are also such parallels, condensed for instance in the Foucauldian concept of "alliance." Lucey is drawn to *Cousin Bette* and *Cousin Pons* because the novels center on "bachelor and spinster cousins, family misfits and remainders," "parasitic on the family, yet also radically other to it." He is also, however, sharply yet ambivalently drawn into Balzac's disavowed solicitations for the reader to interpret Bette's and Pons's ontologies precisely *as sexual*. "The slack in the cord that links sentiment or affect or sexuality to family structure" is, as he shows, the place of a crucially contingent crossing between perverse sexual itineraries and circuitous economic trajectories.

"Teacher's Pet" is the rubric for the book's third part; I wish there were an easy technology for wafting into its pages the strains of the song as Doris Day performs it. That pedagogy can be a very sexy matter was no more news to Rousseau than to Plato or Dante. But as Anne Chandler shows in her essay about an influential disciple of Rousseau's, "Defying 'Development': Thomas Day's Queer Curriculum in *Sandford and Merton*," the desires that cement a teacher to his job may not consort intelligibly with the developmental narrative that implicitly underwrites such intimacy. *Sandford and Merton* was not only as famous a book in

its time as *Emile*, but, improbably, an even weirder one. Chandler's patient closeness to this text, at once dry, playful, and erotically generous, seems to offer a new model of how one might respect the alterity of a distant moment without reifying temporal distance as alterity: without reinscribing wishful or oversimplifying presumptions about what the present is like, and without disavowing the unexpected currents that may jolt between present and past.

As I've suggested above, there may be resonant homologies between this queer way of risking historical "anachronism," on the one hand, and on the other hand that intimate anachronism by which a queer grown-up can sometimes keep drawing on the energies, incredulities, and discoveries of an earlier moment of passionate, incompetent reading and recognition. For many queer readers of the latter twentieth century, I think, the Arthurian narratives of T. H. White, especially *The Once and Future King* (dramatized in *Camelot*), condense the two modes of anachronism in an almost unbearably piquant way. Barry Weller returns to these formative childhood texts in "Wizards, Warriors, and the Beast Glissant in Love." He discusses the remarkably wide range of invitations (to identify, to desire) that White offers the young reader. While some of these - I want to call them "versions of pastoral," but by that I would still mean "versions of queerness" - are frankly homoerotic and/or pederastic, the ones that prove most productive are, unexpectedly, those that dramatize the crossing between species. "What Arthur's excursions into the animal kingdom offer him," Weller observes, "is an open-ended variety of erotic connections and political regimes, with the corollary that no single ordering of human affairs is right or final."

In "Forged in Crisis: Queer Beginnings of Modern Masculinity in a Canonical French Novel," James Creech also returns (reparatively?) to the moment of a younger reader's queer recognition. Here his focus is not, like Weller's, on what he *didn't* know about a children's book, but rather on what "as a gay reader I have always 'known'" - even as "it has been impossible to find an explanation or an expression" for such out-of-place or premature knowledge - about one of the classic texts of French studies, Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe*. That "these frightened and fragile gestures of queer self-recognition . . . be taken seriously," and even come to be supported by "a rich texture of spontaneous presumption," is part of Creech's project; another part is to suggest a queer male genealogy alternative to the popular narrative of the eternal smother-mother. One of the most dystopian of T. H. White's twentieth-century versions of pastoral, as Barry Weller notes, is a quasi-incestuous overstress of the bond between mother and son. Creech shows that at Constant's earlier, post-Revolutionary European moment, "the maternal term is not yet the given onto which primary homosexual incest can be displaced or projected. In this period, the crisis of masculinity can still be located, conceptually, within a male context, and the crisis of heterosexual experience emerges as its extension."

I wonder whether in these introductory notes, as I've several times invoked moments or flashes of queer *recognition*, such invocations may not have implicitly borrowed a certain

humanistic, Buberian or Winnicottian gravity from the moral prestige of the face - and in particular, of the encounter between one face and another. Yet the recognitions implicit in queer pedagogy do not always conform to the missionary position. One Victorian headmaster, for example, was famous for being unable to recognize his former students when he could see only their faces. "The traffic between and among faces and butts stimulates meaning production while troubling what it means to be legible," notes John Vincent in his extraordinarily suggestive essay, "Flogging is Fundamental: Applications of Birch in Swinburne's *Lesbia Brandon*." Charting the many ways that an erotics of flogging can be misrecognized - swept out of sight and mind, for example, under the more familiar rubrics of masochism, of anality, of pederasty, or even just of "pain" - Vincent applies himself vigorously to the surfaces of Swinburne's writing, stimulating the sense of both the specificity and the wild dilativeness of the topic.

The fourth part of the book, "Men and Nations," is the only one that specifies a gender in its emphasis on the political bearings of a masculinity marked by the historical particularization of sexuality. The tour de force performed by Jacob Press in his essay, "Same-Sex Unions in Modern Europe: *Daniel Deronda*, *Altneuland*, and the Homoerotics of Jewish Nationalism," is a thoroughgoing, novelistic reading of early Zionism as and through a European crisis of masculine sexuality. It hasn't been widely appreciated, for example, that Max Nordau, inventor of a theory of "degeneration" whose anti-Semitic as well as homophobic bearings have reached so gruesomely into the present century, was himself not only Jewish but in fact an important Zionist founder. Through readings of and around *Daniel Deronda* and Theodor Herzl's visionary Zionist novel, *Altneuland*, Press makes it possible to understand such juxtapositions less as paradoxical than as axiomatic.

In a bravura reading of *Gentlemen's Agreement*, a best-selling American middlebrow novel (1946) and film (1947), Cindy Patton returns to the topic of Jewish masculinity as a crossing-point between sexuality and national citizenship. The then-new postwar genre of the "problem" novel/film, Patton shows, characteristically treated homophobia and anti-Semitism as interchangeable "problems." The title of Patton's essay, "To Die For," evokes the question suggested by Benedict Anderson, the theorist of nationality: what are the affective mechanisms by which "dying for one's country, which usually one does not choose, assumes a moral grandeur which dying for the Labour Party, the American Medical Association, or perhaps even Amnesty International cannot rival"? Patton discusses how the prescribed structures of empathetic vicariation in the "problem" genres may have inflected the developing relationship between sexual identity and national identity; such skilled affective processes, she argues, may offer both a truer and a more radical postwar genealogy for gay politics than does the usual explanatory recourse to McCarthyite repression.

Robert F. Reid-Pharr is concerned with liminal and mythic, as well as with historically local manifestations of crisis, possession, and scapegoating in "Tearing the Goat's Flesh:

Homosexuality, Abjection, and the Production of a Late-Twentieth-Century Black Masculinity." Like Patton, however, he sets his sights toward the politics of a specific construction of positive affect: in this case the joy and excitement (far more than simply the functionalist restoration of equilibrium) that circulate around the process of abjecting the bodies and souls of African American gay men. Through new framings of Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets*, and James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, Reid-Pharr reads through the far lenses of the texts' absences, in search of the "perverse" ghosts that will "parallel[] the absence of the black from Western notions of rationality and humanity while at the same time pointing to the possibility of escape from this same black-exclusive system of logic."

The title of the final part of this book, "Libidinal Intelligence: Shocks and Recognitions," comes from Joseph Litvak's earlier essay, in which he discusses the potential uses of Proustian anachronism as one seeks "a model for recapturing not so much a lost world as a lost *libidinal intelligence*, a capacity for having more than a blandly routinized relation to *any* world. Reading Proust can induce a fantasy of *being* Proust. That fantasy keeps faith with a fantasmatic faculty itself: with, to amend Adorno, a childhood potential not so much for unimpaired experience as for making bad-that is to say, as Proust himself would say, good - object choices." The shock of the *strange*, as it is denominated by Jonathan Goldberg's essay-title as well as Litvak's own, records the shape of a need for fantasy to "keep[] faith with a fantasmatic faculty itself." The uncanny shock of strangeness is only one step to the side of what we have been calling the shock of queer recognition; but the epithet "strange" also marks a stubborn Taurean refusal to accede to the requirement that objects be designated "bad" or "good" at all.

"Dancing books" is the generic designation Maurice Wallace coins to describe Melvin Dixon's *Vanishing Rooms*; the phrase, the entire inquiry, seem to open realms. Kinesthetic habits, rhythms, shocks, and explorations have a mind and indeed a memory of their own. The project of Wallace's essay, "The Autochoreography of an Ex-Snow Queen: Dance, Desire, and the Black Masculine in Melvin Dixon's *Vanishing Rooms*," is to do justice to a certain kinesthetic challenge in and around Dixon's novel. It suggests that under the heavy, distorting ether of homophobic Pressure and racist hyperembodiment, human movement through space may be the *only* form of truth-telling about the misrecognitions - indeed as well the veritable recognitions -involved in the loves, betrayals, and desires between an African American man and a white man.

It might make sense to describe as a "dancing essay" Stephen Barber's discussion of *The Years* and *Between the Acts* in "Lip-Reading: Woolf's Secret Encounters." If this is dancing, however, it is secret and for that matter strange dancing: the dance of lips, fingers, eyes. Digital dancing maybe, it signifies the brush of recognitions that both strain toward language and systematically elude it. Specifically these "unnarrativizable miracles" are the slantwise

recognitions that pass between women and gay men, which, as Barber shows, became critical for Virginia Woolf as the loss of Lytton Strachey steadily deepened for her in the decade after his death. "He was so good to me / Who's going to make me gay, now?" Barber quotes Nina Simone; in an essay whose ethical bearing is shockingly frontal, he also quotes Gayatri Spivak: "Ethics is the experience of the impossible."

"The deftness of a woman's fingers on ivory" is only one of the pungent images with which, in "The Female World of Exorcism and Displacement (Or, Relations between women in Henry James's Nineteenth-Century *The Portrait of a Lady*)," Melissa Solomon marks "the growing telepathy of sensual reading" between Isabel Archer and Madame Merle in *The Portrait of a Lady*. As the title of her essay suggests, Solomon is interested in how utterly "the sharpened pincers" of characters' and readers' "subliminal" lesbian insight can reorganize both a received, heterosexist view of the novel's performative space, and a received, anodyne view of the eroticism and promise that pulse between women. "Within this ontology," Solomon points out, "perception itself. . . is frightfully at stake, and one scrambles to employ the finely calibrated senses of taste, touch, and smell."

In "Strange Brothers," finally, Jonathan Goldberg feels his way back to the shock of a first encounter with the prose of Willa Cather - "as if, somehow, the novels were written in a language which I could not myself articulate and yet in which I found myself articulated." In retroactive explanation, Goldberg invokes a famous phrase from Cather's manifesto on "The Novel D meubl "; and it is as if his essay, a reading of *The Professor's House*, were itself a meditation on, and in the beautiful mode of, unfurnishedness. Goldberg forges instruments for registering the recognitions that vibrate through certain quiet vicariations and spare identifications: those, for example, through which the love of Edith Lewis narrates Cather's "strange" at-homeness with a challenging anachronistic space.

What Joseph Litvak, in his essay, refers to as "gay alchemy" represents a wild, cunning, and flamboyant refusal of the either/or. Like Proust, the reader "helps himself again and again"; as all these essays show, it is not only important but *possible* to find ways of attending to such reparative motives and positionalities. The vocabulary for articulating any reader's reparative motive toward a text or a culture has long been so sappy, aestheticizing, defensive, anti-intellectual, or reactionary that it's no wonder few critics are willing to describe their acquaintance with such motives. The prohibitive problem, however, has been in the limitations of present theoretical vocabularies rather than in the reparative motive itself. No less acute than a paranoid position, no less realistic, no less attached to a project of survival, and neither less nor more delusional or fantasmatic, the reparative reading position undertakes a different range of affects, ambitions, and risks. What we can best learn from such practices are, perhaps, the many ways in which selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture – even a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them.

NOTES

This introductory essay was inspired. and in very different ways. by the examples of Michael Moon, Eric Dishman. and Stephen Barber.

¹ Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975). pp. 113-30.

² Paul Ricoeur, *De l'interprétation: Essai sur Freud* (1964).

³ Sigmund Freud. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey and trans. James Strachey et al., 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-), 12:79, 17:261.

⁴ Paul Ricoeur. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 33-34.

⁵ Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*, trans. Daniella Dangoor, preface by Jeffrey Weeks, introduction by Michael Moon (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993).

⁶ Leo Bersani, *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990). p. 188.

⁷ James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Manhood* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 15.

⁸ *Concise Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*, Microsoft Bookshelf, 1992.

⁹ R. D. Hinshelwood, *A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought*, 2d ed. (Northvale, N.J.: Aronson, 1991), p. 394.

¹⁰ Melanie Klein. *Envy and Gratitude* (London: Tavistock, 1957).

¹¹ J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 297.

¹² D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 164. Further citations from this work will be incorporated in the text.

¹³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1986), p. xi.

¹⁴ *Affect, Imager, Consciousness*, vol. 2 (New York: Springer, 1963), pp. 433-34. Further citations from this work will be incorporated in the text.

¹⁵ Tomkins's recurrent example of a weak theory is one that allows many of us to cross streets often without fear: those sets of actions summed up in the phrase "look both ways before you cross," which enable an individual to act as if afraid so as to avoid the actual experience of fear - "affect acting at a distance." What is weak about this theory is its restricted domain, perhaps initially understood to include only walking across the street where one first learned the rule as a child, analogically expanded to include walking across other streets or street-like passages, then expanded more to include riding a bicycle or driving a car. Consider the case where this weak theory gets strong: "If the individual cannot find the rules whereby he can cross the street without feeling anxious [because of a series of unfortunate accidents, say], then his avoidance strategies will necessarily become more and more diffuse. Under these conditions the individual might be forced, first, to avoid all busy streets and then to go out only late at night when traffic was light; finally, he would remain inside, and if his house were to be hit by a car, he would have to seek refuge in a deeper shelter" (2:320). A strong theory is not more successful at preventing the experience of negative affect, here fear, than a weak theory; in this case, quite the opposite. Both the cognitive antennae of the theory and the preventive strategies have changed. This individual has learned to count many more things as a street: this strong fear theorist is always ready to draw the line that expands his theory's domain. (This explanation is borrowed from the introduction to the volume edited by me and Adam Frank, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* [Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995] pp. 27-28.)

¹⁶ Laplanche and Pontalis, in their entry under "Pleasure Principle" (*Language*, pp. 322-325), show that Freud was long aware of this problem. They paraphrase: "Must we therefore be content with a purely economic definition and accept that pleasure and unpleasure are nothing more than the translation of quantitative changes into qualitative terms? And what then is

the precise correlation between these two aspects, the qualitative and the quantitative? Little by little, Freud came to lay considerable emphasis on the great difficulty encountered in the attempt to provide a simple answer to this question" (p. 323). In our introduction to *Shame and Its Sisters*, Adam Frank and I describe Tomkins's work on affect in terms that respond very directly to this way of posing the problem (pp. 8-11).

¹⁷ Marcel Proust. *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. Andreas Mayor and Terence Kilmartin, revised by D. J. Enright (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 3:303; emphasis added.

¹⁸ Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990). p. 124. Further citations from this work will be incorporated in the text.

¹⁹ Peter Sloterdijk. *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. Michael Eldred, foreword by Andreas Huyssen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 5.

²⁰ Richard Hofstadter. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), p. 9. Further citations from this work will be incorporated in the text.

²¹ The barely implicit sneer with which Leo Bersani wields the term "redemption," throughout *The Culture of Redemption*, might be one good example of the latter kind of usage -except that Bersani's revulsion seems to attach, not quite to the notion that things could be ameliorated, but rather to the pious reification of Art as the appointed agent of such change.

²² Thanks to Tyler Curtain for pointing this out to me.

²³ I am thinking here of Timothy Gould's interpretation (in a personal communication) of Emily Dickinson's poem that begins "'Hope' is the thing with feathers - / That perches in the soul -". Gould suggests that the symptoms of fluttering hope are rather like those of post-traumatic stress syndrome - with the difference that the apparently absent cause of perturbation lies in the future, rather than in the past. Thomas H. Johnson, ed., *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1960), p. 116, poem no.254.

²⁴ I don't mean to hypostatize, here, "the way it actually did" happen, or to deny how constructed a thing this "actually did" may be - within certain constraints. The realm of what *might have happened but didn't* is, however, ordinarily even wider and less constrained, and it seems conceptually important that the two not be collapsed; otherwise, the entire possibility of things' *happening differently* can be lost.

²⁵ Personal communication.

²⁶ It is not only in time that the narrator's being outside of the generational process permits a slippage that finally amounts to transmutative free-fall. There is also a gender slippage that goes with it:

Gilberte de Saint-Loup said to me: "shall we go and dine together by ourselves in a restaurant?" and I replied: "Yes, if you don't find it compromising to dine alone with a young man." As I said this, I heard everybody round me laugh, and I hastily added: "or rather, with an old man." I felt that the phrase which had made people laugh was one of those which my mother might have used in speaking of me, my mother for whom I was still a child. And I realised that I judged myself from the same point of view as she did. (3:354)