THE *MIS*DIAGNOSIS OF CRITIQUE

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I. 301.0,[1] or, The Invention of the "Paranoid" Reader

It is an enduring irony to find in Eve Sedgwick's essays on "reparative reading" the figure of Melanie Klein representing more benevolent, less shame-inducing interpretive practices since, as a clinical modality, the single most distinctive feature of Kleinian technique is its relentlessly confrontational approach to identifying, without equivocation, the essential, infantile, "true" meaning of a patient's behavior. So, whereas a patient's tardiness to a session might prompt the Freudian analyst to say, "You were late today, what do you make of that?" a Kleinian analyst might say instead, "You are attacking the treatment because you are enraged at me." Although there is extensive clinical rationale for this approach and substantial evidence of its technical utility, for present purposes we might observe how the aggressive attribution of unambiguous unconscious intent that is a hallmark of Kleinian technique ought to register as wildly at odds with the enlarged interpretive freedom that Sedgwick invokes Klein to represent. While the deracination of clinical ideas from their clinical context is a regular feature of cultural critique, this particular dissonance between theory and technique foreshadows other confusions that organize Sedgwick's formulation of criticism's symptomatology. To the extent this powerful incoherence does not threaten Sedgwick's overall message (that affects are central to psychic life, and we need a hermeneutic approach that can attend to their centrality), it is perhaps because, as Sedgwick says of her relation to ideas, "I like them pretty chunky." Comparing her childhood preference for a "chunkier" doll than the one her sister enjoyed, Sedgwick announces that "as an adult that's the way I am about ideas. . . . Not dramatic or caricatural, certainly not dualistic (never dualistic), but big, big and palpable."[2] The bracing charisma of Sedgwick's self-description renders, in advance, any fastidious parsing of her concepts as somehow fussy and unplayful—who, that is, wouldn't feel deterred from scrutinizing the contours of her "big" ideas on the grounds that doing so is tantamount to interrupting Little Sedgwick's pleasure and therefore seeming

Criticism Spring 2019, Vol. 61, No. 2, pp. 191–217. ISSN 0011-1589. doi: 10.13110/criticism.61.2.0191

both tone deaf and intrusive? Indeed, the critic-reader dynamic might be stalled in this position were it not for Sedgwick's additional proviso that "big ideas" should be available for "active daily use." Although here again Sedgwick juxtaposes precision with utility by characterizing "usable" ideas as those that "aren't too complex or delicate," what prevents the antinomy (between precision and utility) from being ultimately disabling is the demand—evident throughout Sedgwick's varied oeuvre—that "ideas" be continuously evaluated according to the possibilities they generate.[3]

Indeed, if the generativity of an idea were to be measured by quantity alone, then the "active daily use" of "paranoid" reading readily confirms its value. Although published in several different iterations beginning in 1995,[4] the term has since been utilized to authorize a range of critical interventions, including the most recent call by Rita Felski to organize a variety of methodological impulses as expressions of the broader progression toward a new era of "postcritique."[5] The status of Sedgwick's essay in shaping contemporary discourse—"arguably the origin of the reading debates"[6]—is perhaps most evident in how thoroughly the terms of Sedgwick's argument have shaped the current discourse, as when, for example, Anker and Felski declare that "the association of critique with self-questioning . . . is heightened and intensified in the 'dramas of exposure' that characterize contemporary forms of interpretation" (8). The phrase "dramas of exposure" derives from Sedgwick's essay, and it functions here—without any citation—as veritable *proof* of the established *fact* that interpretation is indubitably dysfunctional and pathogenic. Consistent with the complete appropriation of "paranoid" reading by the current reading debates is the total absence of the essay's context in Queer Theory and, specifically, its unique role, along with Sedgwick's essay on Silvan Tomkins published two years earlier, in reorienting the field away from sexuality and toward affect, in what would eventually develop into the separate and robust critical discourse known as Affect Theory.[7] The absence of attention to the "queer" context[8] of Sedgwick's essay is significant for how it facilitates the habitual misreading of Sedgwick's critique. However, rather than attributing strategic decontextualization to the agenda of contemporary postcritical readers alone and suggesting, as Bruce Robbins recently has, that "Felski misreads Sedgwick, who is well worth taking back from Felski,"[9] my own inquiry is interested in how *Sedgwick* misreads her own intervention and, specifically, the ways in which Sedgwick's particular framing of the problem—as between "paranoid" and non-"paranoid" reading—fatally constrains any useful hypostatization of critique's limitations.

This essay begins by questioning Sedgwick's introduction of "paranoid" reading as a diagnostic category that ushers in a new identity—the "paranoid" reader—and with it a disciplinary regime that derives constant validation from the anti-reparative reading it purports to recognize everywhere. Contrary to Sedgwick's self-proclaimed alignment of "chunky" ideas with capaciousness and multiplicity, the deployment of "paranoid" as a "type" of reader is neither a plush heuristic that enriches critical relations nor a harmless metaphor that is "big, big and palpable" but a powerful mechanism for obfuscating the complex relations between contingent theoretical concepts and practical techniques. In addition to the visceral queasiness any Foucauldian might feel at the production of a new identitarian regime, it is worth considering who, after all, *isn't* a "paranoid" reader? That is, just as the title of the essay, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading: Or, You're So Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay Is About You," performs the truth of its claims by automatically interpellating *every* reader, ("you," who *reads* this essay, are *the* "paranoid" reader) so too the comprehensive range of disparate critical activities to which the psychopathological diagnosis of "paranoid" is said to refer (unmasking, deconstructing, interpreting, psychoanalyzing, exposing) liquidates the term of any specifiable connections to particular ideological conceits or inclinations. Here, "identity" does what "identities" do: converts an array of discrete "practices" into a coherent and observable psychological "type."[10] The results of this construction are immediately visible in recent articulations of critique as "a matter of affect and rhetoric," "mood and method,"[11] that do not strictly correspond to "symptomatic reading, ideology critique, Foucauldian historicism, various techniques of scanning texts for signs of transgression or resistance"[12] but appear more generally as a *style* that one can somehow "catch," become addicted to, and reproduce unknowingly.[13]

As Amanda Anderson brilliantly observes, "Characterological terms appear with a kind of regularity across many debates in theory; at the least, they form part of the adjectival and adverbial arsenal that enlivens any richly descriptive analytical critique. We have become accustomed to hearing pragmatists called smug, or rationalists depicted as defensive and uptight. The hermeneut of suspicion is paranoid; the p.c. brigade is oppressively pious."[14] Indeed, while using a pathological formation to designate certain kinds of readers has the benefit of instantiating a teleology of cure—and certainly one way to interpret the recent pitch of many manifestos is as a competition for which mood-enhancing treatments offer the afflicted reader "better" results—the considerable damage of this formulation includes the systematic conflation of critical theory with

practical techniques, the total occlusion of the particular links between specific theoretical precepts and popularity of particular hermeneutic methodologies, and the overall failure to stage a substantive encounter between the tenets of a given theory and the quality of its application.

In an effort to sharpen the terms of the current reading debates, this essay locates Sedgwick's intervention in a broader tradition of "practical critiques," by which I mean interventions made by critics *against* a theoretical apparatus that seems, to them, to compromise the "quality" of *reading*.[15] Distinguishing momentarily among theorists, literary scholars, and practical critics, I suggest that whereas theoreticians critique theory on the basis of its logic or conclusions, and literary scholars critique methodologies on the basis of their techniques, a "practical critique" focuses on the relationship between a particular interpretive agenda and the theoretical paradigm that informs it. Raymond Williams's critique of French Marxism and Stanley Cavell's critique of skepticism are exemplary of this tradition, as both trace the connections between a given theoretical precept and the quality of its interpretive results.[16] Because "quality" is a value, it is always tied to a normative ideal; for this reason, a necessary step in comprehending any "practical critique" involves a distillation of the broader agenda *reading* is meant to serve. For example, while Cavell is interested in how literature dramatizes the ethical problem of avoidance/acknowledgment of others, Williams treats literature as a privileged realm of material social practice. In both cases, a "practical critique" does not necessarily explicitly announce its idea of what reading *should* be, so much as identify the ways that a popular theoretical apparatus impoverishes the ideal critical endeavor.

Situating Sedgwick's intervention within the register of "practical critiques" enables a new perspective from which to challenge dominant tropes of the current reading debates. Specifically, rather than perpetuating the prevailing narrative, shared by critics across the field, that a) there is such a thing as "paranoid" reading and b) that this type of reading correlates to a discernible set of psychic attributes, the following essay offers a new and different account of the "problem" Sedgwick mobilized the category of "paranoia" to diagnose. The question about how specific underlying socio-historical forces have determined the dominant conventions of contemporary criticism has been recently taken up by Amanda Anderson and Joseph North, who have each surveyed broader trends in and outside the academy in order to explain why we read the way we do now. North's *Literary Criticism: A Concise Political History*, has persuasively traced the current dominance of a "historicist/contextualist" model to Williams's influential brand of "cultural materialism."[17] While this

essay arrives at different conclusions than North's in many key respects, his focus on the centrality of Williams is extraordinarily helpful in contextualizing the uniqueness of current literary trends. Specifically, a deep engagement with Williams elucidates one powerful origin of the field's overarching orientation toward what Anderson has called "systems analysis." In a recent essay, Anderson astutely points out that "despite attention-attracting polemics of recent times" (322), "surely it is also undeniable that the case against suspicion is overstated" (321).[18] Without sharing North's complaint, Anderson nevertheless echoes the observation that what underlies a range of critical methods is an attempt to "imagine the relation between the lived experience of the subjects and the larger systems they inhabit" (324). Showing that in a variety of different criticism, "the power of the system remains fully assumed" (322), Anderson explains why the dual focus on systemic power and vulnerable subjects should come as no surprise, insofar as it joins an "age-old object of novelistic studies—the individual in society—to an updated understanding of precarious subjects in a power-laden system" (323).

Although both Anderson and North focus on how a single analytic paradigm dominates the entirety of contemporary criticism—"contextualist/historicist" (North), "systems analysis" (Anderson)—my own research draws on Sedgwick, and the Queer/Affect theoretical context more broadly, to signal the totalizing operation of a paradigm that I will call "sociological" critique and that can be contrasted with what I will designate as "speculative" analysis.[19] If "sociological" critique addresses the relation of the "individual *in* society," a "speculative" analysis problematizes the "individual *as* a system," where that system can be understood to be sexual, psychological, interpersonal, emotional, or technological.[20] In the account I offer here, the dominance of one particular and narrow reading style can be understood—not as an abstract pathology such as "paranoia" nor as the hypostatization of "critique"—but as the particular result of "sociological" criticism having become the field's default interpretive modality. Delineating these different approaches ("sociological" versus "speculative") establishes a framework within which to explore the necessary *tension* between them and, as such, provides a way of locating Sedgwick's "practical critique" as a repudiation specifically of those theoretical concepts, inherent to "sociological" criticism, that prohibited the further development of "speculative" reading.

There are several major implications of reframing the reading debates away from the familiar preoccupation with "paranoid/reparative," chief among them a new interpretation of Sedgwick's critical agenda. In particular, this essay demonstrates how Sedgwick's diagnosis of certain

interpretive tendencies and trends as "paranoid," rather than say, "sociological," misconstrued the conceptual and disciplinary stakes of her own close readings that were, I suggest, forceful and unapologetic exercises in "speculative" critique. Although the increasing popularity of posthumanist orientations to literature and the general climate of living (or wanting to) in an era of "postcritique" has made the labor of meta-critique or the close attention to individual critics seem outdated—overly personal, insufficiently political, fundamentally subject-centered and therefore old-fashioned—this essay insists on the value of a close engagement with the terms of Sedgwick's hugely influential "paranoid" diagnosis. By contextualizing Sedgwick's intervention in hermeneutics, and Queer Theory specifically, this essay endeavors to challenge the two major avenues of Sedgwick's critical reception: in the reading debates, as "reparative" against "theory" *tout court*, and by Affect Theory, as *beyond* sexuality and therefore "post-psychological." Trading the pathologizing discourse of "paranoia" for a deeper look at the recurring terms of Sedgwick's critique reveals the privileged role of "anti-biologism" in her "affective turn." By asking what exactly Sedgwick means by "anti-biologism," and linking this concept with the local interests of Queer Studies, as well as broader philosophical preoccupations of continental theory, this essay insists on a different interpretation of Sedgwick's arguments about "biology" than have been typically assumed by practitioners of Affect Studies. By differentiating Sedgwick's "practical critique" from its popular reception within Affect Studies as "post-psychological," as well as from its current role as a general referent in the battle of reading *against* "theory," this essay challenges the coherence and utility of "paranoia" in order to, ultimately, amplify the force and contemporary significance of Sedgwick's intervention.

II. Queer Theory and the Reading Debates

Whereas among practitioners of theory, there is a well-rehearsed tendency to dismiss "postcritique" as just another/newer assault on the beleaguered enterprise of "Theory," this reflexive approach relies, for its cogency, on analogizing "Theory" with the psychological "Unconscious" and diagnosing any hesitation toward "theory" as motivated by "anxiety" about the "truth." Paul de Man's landmark essay, "The Resistance to Theory," establishes the rhetorical coordinates of this approach[21] when he designates any challenge to "theory" as a manifestation of epistemological anxiety, as when, for example, he asks: "What is it about literary theory that is

so threatening that it provokes such strong resistances and attacks?" (11) and then dismisses previous accounts that mistakenly locate the threat of "theory" in its revelation of hidden mechanics or challenge to the philosophical tradition (11). Instead of such "resistances" that are "merely historical," a "passing squall in the intellectual weather," de Man declares that the "resistance to theory" is in fact "a-historical" and "cannot be reduced to a specific historical situation and called modern, post-modern, post-classical or romantic" but "can be read in the text of literary theory at all times, at whatever historical moment one wishes to select" because, he goes on to declare, "the resistance to theory is a resistance to the use of language about language" (12), by which he means that "theory" doesn't just reveal uncomfortable facts but jeopardizes the "rhetorical dimension of discourse" (14), effectively threatening the very foundations of epistemology and cognition.[22] De Man's use of psychoanalytic concepts (such as "resistance") to diagnose the mechanism of "theory's" operation in literary studies effectively relocates any argumentative debate about "theory" to an existential referendum on human cognition, thereby relegating the discourse of "theory" to a choice between being "anxious" (and defensive) or rigorous (and theoretical).[23] Such a crude distribution of psychic conflict inevitably misunderstands how "resistance" actually works, since there is no relation to "anxiety" that is once and for all, "resistance"-free, nor is there any logical reason why an intensive focus on the "rhetorical dimension of discourse" is not itself a strategy for managing the "anxiety" of epistemology's limits.

In addition to developing one of the earliest analyses of "theory's" rhetorical constraints, Sedgwick's intervention is unique for its refusal to concede the total absorption of contemporary "theory" by an "a-historical" "Theory." Drawing attention to the discursive conventions of "theory," while at the same time advancing *theoretical* alternatives (Tomkins instead of Freud, Klein instead of Lacan), Sedgwick pushes back against de Man's sweeping declarations about some mythical "resistance to theory" for the sake of enhancing, not diminishing, the use of "theory" for approaching literature. That Sedgwick's argument was susceptible to its own broad assertions is a focus of this essay; for example, while the "paranoid" diagnosis is invariably gratifying—not least for how assuredly it identifies the villain of an absolutized Theory—Sedgwick's replacement of positive historical determinants with an abstract pathological designation undermines the rigorous analysis she endeavored to perform.

In many accounts of the field's disciplinary history, it was Eve Sedgwick's determination to "read" literature differently that inaugurated a new and provocative method for approaching the place of

sexuality in social and political life.[24] As Sedgwick observes in the final sentences of her *Preface* to the 1993 edition of *Between Men*, "the remarkable creativity of so much subsequent work" is not exclusively inspired by her own work but "has vastly more to say for the inveterate, gorgeous generativity, the speculative generosity, the daring, the permeability, and the activism that have long been lodged in the multiple histories of queer *reading*" (xx).[25] What makes this context signally important is that it anchors "queer *reading*" in an ideal of interpretive flexibility, such that the quality of a "queer *reading*" can be measured by the distance it takes from determinism of any kind. Putting this ideal into relief is necessary in order to appreciate the connections with Raymond Williams's project, in which he likewise defines the successful "Marxist" *reading* according to the complexity it reflects of the social-cultural relation. By foregrounding Sedgwick's investment in hermeneutics as the privileged site for changing how we think about ourselves and our experiences, it becomes possible to situate her field "diagnosis" less as repudiation of her younger (previously "paranoid" self)[26] or the manifestation of a lifelong pattern of disavowal-negation[27] than as the intervention of a practitioner-reader to rescue the "quality" of reading from a theoretical apparatus which threatens to corrode it. For Sedgwick and Williams determinism represents the primary threat to sophisticated interpretations, but whereas Sedgwick's "paranoid" diagnosis fails to draw the links between specific theoretical formulations and problematic deterministic outcomes, Williams's critique of Althusserian Structuralism identifies which specific features of a theoretical apparatus result in interpretive constraint. Using Williams's argument as a template for an effective "practical critique" enables us to better understand what Sedgwick's critical intervention is trying to do, and thereby draws our attention to how "anti-biologism" functions as the recurring, but mostly ambiguous and undeveloped, target of her critique.

III. Raymond Williams's "Practical Critique"

There are several reasons to focus on Raymond Williams's seminal critical intervention *Marxism and Literature*, and these include the virtuosity of his critique of French Marxism and development of "cultural materialism" as an alternative, the clarity with which he articulates the shortcomings of "ideology"/Althusserian theory and outlines the benefits of using "hegemony"/Gramsci instead, and the dazzling persistence with which he defends his particular agenda for Marxist literary practice. Williams is compelling for other reasons, as well, that have to do with

his formative role in the current methodological orientation of literary studies. In his recent "strategic history" of literary criticism, North singles out Williams's hugely influential "cultural" analysis as instrumental in reorienting the field of literary studies away from the conservative orientation of F. R. Leavis and the New Critics. While North's categorization of the field according to "scholars" and "critics" is not the focus of the present essay, his account of literary studies as primarily engaged in "historicist/contextualist" analysis is supported by many other recent histories of the discipline.[28] Williams is a key figure in the story North tells because it is Williams's particular brand of "cultural materialism" that gradually supersedes competing interpretive paradigms.[29] North draws out the British and American context of this debate in order to locate Williams's "cultural turn" as a rejection of Leavis and the tradition of aesthetic judgment he represented. While for North, the turn to "culture" in Williams evidences a "near complete replacement of criticism by scholarship" (73), this account completely ignores the context of Williams's elevation of "culture" over existing aesthetic categories that, throughout *Marxism and Literature*, Williams identifies as a vital alternative to the "base-superstructure" model of French Marxism's newly fashionable "ideology" theory.[30]

Therefore, although North insists that Williams's "cultural" turn was primarily motivated by an effort to distance himself from traditionalists like Leavis and Richards, throughout *Marxism and Literature*, Williams repeatedly explains that the danger confronting the literary studies of his day was the overreliance on vulgar conceptualizations of the relation between the "individual and society." In a rare moment when Williams refers to Althusser directly by name, he impugns "ideology" theory for resulting in "abstract" and simplistic interpretations of cultural processes and the relation of social practice to "actual men."[31] William's repetition of words like, "complexity," "process" and "actual" disclose his particular agenda for *reading* which is to produce sophisticated interpretations that reflect "a whole different way of seeing cultural activity" (111), not as a "superstructure" but as "a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world" (110). Defining "the most interesting and difficult part of any cultural analysis, in complex societies, is that which seeks to grasp the hegemonic in its active and formative but also its transformational processes" (113), Williams introduces "hegemony" as a richer analytic instrument than "ideology,"—since "it is in just this recognition of the wholeness of the process that the concept of 'hegemony' goes beyond 'ideology,'" thereby making clear that "cultural"

materialism is not only distinct from the traditional criticism associated with Richards and Leavis but, more importantly, superior to the vulgar materialism that results from using French Structuralism as a model for Marxist interpretation.[32]

By historicizing Williams in the context of his engagement with French structuralism, we are able to observe how an argument for "hegemony" over "ideology," Gramsci over Althusser, "culture" over "base-superstructure" was articulated as a battle over what paradigm facilitated the most sophisticated (and therefore *least* deterministic) hermeneutic results. Indeed, using many of the same verbs that Sedgwick identifies as "paranoiac," Williams describes as one of the major and irremediable flaws of "ideology" theory that it treats the aesthetic object as "hiding" the content of "social reality" and thereby leads to methods of literary interpretation that are preoccupied with a "kind of reductive analysis, and of 'stripping,' 'laying bare' or 'unmasking'" (98). By demonstrating that impoverished interpretive practices result from "relying mainly on the concept of 'ideology' as (class-based) distortion," Williams asserts the superior analytic of "hegemony" on the grounds that "hegemony" is "not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values" (109). While "ideology" has tremendous "popularity as a concept in retrospective analysis," Williams impugns this theoretical apparatus for how "the relatively mixed, confused, incomplete, or inarticulate consciousness of actual men in that period and society is thus overridden in the name of this decisive generalized system" (109). For Williams then, "theory" is never separable from the practical interpretations and methodologies it engenders. Since there is no single "theory" but heterogeneous theories, and since traditional theorists are primarily concerned with critiquing competing theories on logical or philosophical grounds, it is the unique contribution of literary/cultural analysis to evaluate the merits of a given theoretical apparatus ("ideology"/Structuralism, for example) not on the basis of internal coherence or consistency but according to its hermeneutic results, where interpretive *quality* is measured by the distance it achieves from determinism, idealism, and abstraction.

IV. The Limits of a "Paranoid" Critique

Although Williams's elevation of "hegemony" over "ideology" has not gone uncritiqued,[33] for the purposes of the present essay, it is Williams's argumentative formula that facilitates a vital reengagement with the terms

of Sedgwick's intervention. Specifically, Williams's critique demonstrates that activities of "unmasking," "laying bare," and "exposing" are not the incidental consequence of mean-spirited reading or reading motivated by unique psychological conditions or even the particular consequence of reading with "theory" but instead the practical *means* by which reductive, unsophisticated, totalizing readings are identifiable as such. Therefore, whereas Williams draws the direct links between how idealist "reflection theory" essentializes and "fixes" ever-changing social forces, and how the simplification of "culture" as "superstructure" impoverishes interpretation, Sedgwick's depiction of "paranoia" as a widespread psychological condition abstains from the substantive account of how specific theoretical doxa and the predominance of "dramas of exposure" are putatively linked. Folding all of contemporary "theory" into the umbrella term of "hermeneutics of suspicion," Sedgwick contends that "Marx, Nietzsche, Freud" "by themselves are taken as constituting a pretty sufficient genealogy for the mainstream of New Historicist, deconstructive, feminist, queer, and psychoanalytic criticism."[34] This "pretty sufficient genealogy" is structurally compatible with her approach to "paranoia" as a "composite sketch" that refers to a general disposition rather than particular traits.[35] But just as de Man diagnosed any challenge to deconstructive criticism as a manifestation of "a-historical" psychological "resistance," so too the short-circuiting of specific critical presumptions ("ideology," for example) and their correlative methodologies ("unmasking" hidden social content) permits Sedgwick to equate *all* of "criticism" with some *essential* "paranoia."

Rita Felski's *The Limits of Critique* develops this transcendental feature of Sedgwick's argument most fully when, instead of identifying the particular critical concepts that might produce simplistic readings, she claims "paranoia" as a general "thought style" or "mood" that has infected criticism as we know it. While Felski's broadened application of "paranoia" is certainly warranted by many of the claims in Sedgwick's essay, it is worth considering that instead of moving to some yea-saying utopia *beyond* critique, or repudiating all of "theory" as constitutively flawed, Sedgwick's contemporaneous "affective turn" does not foreswear "interpretation" *tout court* but outlines how a new metapsychological paradigm offers the promise of better critical results. Tomkins's affect theory provides the basis of Sedgwick's attempt to reorient the field, and many critics have subsequently registered the advantages of replacing sex with affect, Freud with Tomkins, dualistic binaries with infinite combinatorial possibilities. But notably absent from celebrations of Sedgwick's "affective turn" is any account of the putative link between the new capacious,

affect-oriented hermeneutics and the categorical condemnation of theory's "anti-biologism." Indeed, while Sedgwick's essay on "paranoid" reading characterizes a diverse range of critical activities as fundamentally paranoiac, her seminal essay on Tomkins, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins," is almost single-mindedly preoccupied with the impact of "anti-biologism" on contemporary theoretical practice. But what exactly is "anti-biologism"? Sedgwick's totalizing censure of dominant critical practices can have the effect of making "anti-biologism" seem like just another manifestation of "theory's" knee-jerk resistance to "representation" but contextualizing the relation of this term to the broader agenda of "sociological" critique demonstrates that "anti-biologism" is not just another bad habit that theorists need to unlearn but, in fact, constitutes the foundational ideological premise of contemporary systems-analysis. Therefore, rather than subsuming Sedgwick's "affective turn" into a more general exasperation with the "paranoid" landscape of mainstream "theory," a deeper engagement with the role of "anti-biologism" in her essay on Tomkins enables us to establish the *particular* links between *certain* theoretical approaches and unsatisfying interpretive results in such a way that is invariably foreclosed by continuing to treat the "paranoid" reader as a substantive diagnosis or taking the "paranoid" essay out of its queer-critical context.

Rather than providing diagnostic clarity, the universal applicability of "paranoia" demonstrates its hollowness as a practical and explanatory term. While the activities Sedgwick associates with "paranoid" reading might technically be found in most critical writing, this says more about the predominance of "sociological" analysis than an epidemic of pathological critics. Since endeavoring to reveal the "individual's relation to society" (in Anderson's words) is the central feature of systems-analysis, it is impossible to cite, as Sedgwick does, exemplary systems-analysis and then somehow *disprove* they are *not* "paranoid," that is, *not* preoccupied with how the individual reflects the broader operation of social relations. Upbraiding "sociological" critiques for being "paranoid" pretends that any interest in the individual's relation to society could meaningfully participate in activities *other* than "unmasking," "laying bare," "exposing," insofar as the primary focus of "sociological" analysis pertains to how the individual discloses something (otherwise imperceptible) of economic relations. Even as Williams develops "hegemony" to counter the reductive tendencies of popular "ideology"-based "sociological" critique, a careful analysis will suggest that what felt, to Sedgwick, like an epidemic of "paranoid" reading has in actuality more to do with the discursive monopoly of "sociological" criticism, the weakness of

"sociological" methods for conducting complex "speculative" analysis, and the impoverishment of critical resources for generating a different kind of "speculative" work.

V. "Anti-biologism" and Sociological Analysis

In an essay on Tomkins that has been since credited with launching Affect Studies, Sedgwick begins by announcing that the taboo on anti-biologism is so universally maintained that within "theory," "the distance of any such account from a biological basis is assumed to correlate near-precisely with its potential for doing justice to difference" (1). The automatic equivalence between theoretical rigor and "distance" from any "biological basis" is upheld so unproblematically that, Sedgwick memorably attests, "you don't need to be long out of theory kindergarten to make mincemeat of, let's say, a psychology that depends on the separate existence of eight (only sometimes it's nine) distinct affects hardwired into the human biological system" (2). Anticipating the accusation of naïve and essentializing "reductionism," Sedgwick ridicules the reflexive conflation of all "biology" with "coarse" and "cockamamie" scientism by refusing to concede that "biology" is necessarily "essentializing." With characteristic sarcasm and impatience, Sedgwick then proceeds to taunt traditional theory for its anxious discomfort with words like "hardwired," "biological system," "nature," "trigger" and "brain," forcefully proclaiming that, "theory has become almost simply coextensive with the claim (you can't say it often enough), *it's not natural*" (16). In what unfolds as a kind of guerrilla tactic of in-your-face assaults, Sedgwick counters the "hygiene" of theoretical pieties repeatedly hurling those messy, egregious words—"hardwired," "human," "biological system," and numbers—like "eight" or "sometimes nine"—and seeing if it's all really as terrible and irresponsible as we are accustomed to expect. In an effort to demonstrate the problematic congeniality of "anti-biologism" with dominant theoretical orientations, Sedgwick cites the impact of Foucault's "repressive hypothesis," a "nominal deprecation of the question of *essential truth*," and suggests seeing "a variety of twentieth-century theoretical language as attempts . . . to detoxify the excesses of body, thought, and feeling" (20). Returning to the opening assertion of the "anti-biologism of current theory," the essay then concludes that, "there is no reason to believe that the necessarily analog models of the color wheel or, shall we say, the periodic table of the elements constrain against an understanding of difference, contingency, performative force, or the possibility of change" (20).

While Sedgwick's sarcastic reference to the "essentialism" of the "periodic table of the elements" is an effective maneuver at embarrassing those who continue to insist on precious claims about the "reductionism" of the "natural" world, this rhetoric fails, as a substantive assessment, to consider that "anti-biologism" may not express, merely, an anxious defensiveness about "feelings" and the "body," or an obsessional preoccupation with systems of symbolic certainty, but may in fact reflect a foundational precept of "sociological" critique. While Sedgwick's characterization of generalized uptightness as the source of "theory's" "anti-biologism" rehearses a familiar trope of scholastic/abstract thought, such a caricature prevents substantive consideration of how "anti-biologism" is not incidental to systems-analysis but is its necessary precondition. To return to Williams for a moment, it is relevant to observe that while "cultural materialism" may have differed from "ideology" theory, what all variations of Marxism had in common was the absolute *reversal* of traditional orientations toward consciousness, biology, and natural life. Given the influence of Williams's "cultural materialism" on the development of literary studies, it is worth revisiting how thoroughly a sophisticated Marxist analysis depends upon the recognition that "social being determines consciousness" (76). Calling this "proposition" "equally central, equally authentic" (to the concept of base-superstructure), Williams repeatedly avers that the Marxist revelation that "social being determines consciousness," and *not vice versa*, is "literally a moment of crisis: a jolt in experience, a break in the sense of history; forcing us back from so much that seemed positive and available . . . yet the insight cannot be sealed over" (11). What is this "insight" that "cannot be sealed over" but precisely the presumptive primacy of "natural" phenomena, biology chief among them?

VI. No Such Thing as "Human Nature"

Among literary critics, Fredric Jameson has perhaps done the most to vigorously elaborate the implications for hermeneutics of recognizing History's preeminence, as when he writes "that any 'anthropology,' any statement about 'human nature,' is necessarily and irredeemably ideological."[36] Insisting, throughout his varied oeuvre, that "the political perspective" be considered "not as some supplementary method, not as an auxiliary to other interpretive methods current today . . . but rather as the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation,"[37] and that "from the point of view of interpretation," the problem with analytic focus on a mechanism such as "desire" "is that desire is always outside of time,

outside of narrative: it has no content, it is always the same in its cyclical moments of emergence . . . what is more damaging, from the present perspective, is that desire . . . remains locked into the category of the individual subject, even if the form taken by the individual in it is no longer the ego or self, but rather the individual body" (68). Indeed, Jameson continues, "The need to transcend individualistic categories and modes of interpretation is in many ways the fundamental issue for any doctrine of the political unconscious" (68) and therefore, as Jameson will go on to demonstrate, textual interpretation must forego any analysis of "human consciousness" or "human nature" since "the forms of human consciousness and the mechanisms of human psychology are not timeless and everywhere essentially the same, but rather situation-specific and historically produced" (152). If Marxism has proven, as Jameson and Williams contend it does, that society produces consciousness, and History is the ultimate ground of any literary/cultural analysis, and "any statement about 'human nature' is necessarily and irredeemably ideological," then what is required of interpretive work is neither reductionist "ideology" critique nor vulgar historicization, but a nimble critical approach that conveys the material complexity of the "system" as it impacts a given text. From within this context, "systems analysis," or what I'm calling "sociological" critique, is not just the accidental default mode of contemporary literary study ("caught" by contagion and reproduced compulsively) but a coherent research program that, retaining fidelity to the insights of Marxism/historical materialism, defines its primary analytic object as the imbrication of the individual in society.

With this context in mind, we can begin to measure the distance between the antipathy toward biology expressed in "sociological" critique and the alternative meta-psychological paradigm Sedgwick uses Tomkins to represent. Specifically, when in an essay entitled "The Quest for Primary Motives," Tomkins writes that "affect mechanisms are no less biological than drive mechanisms. We do not argue for a Chinese hunger drive and an American hunger drive as two kinds of hunger drives,"[38] we should be able to identify that what's at stake in critical theory's "anti-biologism" is not just a vague derision of the body or the "strange metamorphosis from anti-essentialist to private eye,"[39] but a determined refusal to think critically about the *transhistorical* features of sensuous-affective life. Suggesting, as Sedgwick does, that suspicion of "human nature" is just another casualty of the paranoiac disposition, or an outrageous consequence of some more limited essentialist position, neglects to consider that "anti-biologism" is congenial to systems-analysis because what matters to the (sociological) critic is *not* the complex mechanisms of material life as

it unfolds in the subject but that, as Lukács wrote, "Man must become conscious of himself as a social being, as simultaneously the subject and object of socio-historical process."[40] As such, what Sedgwick's decontextualized accusation of "anti-biologism" obscures is just how infrequently "biology" (or science more generally) is the particular object of critical distrust. It is, instead, "biology" as a lens that *isolates* the individual from "history" that becomes the source of its denigration in historicist readings. Lukács describes this situation elegantly when he links, by association, "biology" with its object, "the individual," in order to demonstrate that studying this single unit of measurement—the "individual"—is fundamentally "bourgeois": "The bourgeois method is to consider the machine as an isolated unique thing and to view it simply as an existing 'individual' . . . to view the machine thus is to distort its true objective nature by representing its function in the capitalist production process as its 'eternal' essence, as the indissoluble component of its 'individuality.' Seen methodologically, this approach makes of every historical object a variable monad . . . which possesses characteristics that appear to be absolutely immutable essences" (153). As Lukács makes clear, the problem with "biology" is not, as Sedgwick alleges, that its dismissal conveniently facilitates the "constant invocations and detectivelike scrutinies of supposed truth claims by others" but that "biology" is focused on the "monad" that, even if it is verifiably complex, nevertheless redirects attention away from the *historical* relations.

By specifying the ways that, for practitioners of "sociological" critique, "biologism" represents a "bourgeois" retreat from perceiving the broader "socio-historical process," we can begin to observe the contours of an ineluctable tension between readings that attempt to discern the individual *in* society ("sociological") versus the individual *as* a complex system ("speculative"). Although Sedgwick's invention of the "paranoid" reader misdiagnoses this powerful tension as a pathogenic deviation of critical norms, a closer look at the broader philosophical context of postwar continental theory brings into focus the relevant links between "sociological" critique and the field's predominant, methodological conventions. Highlighting the "antihumanism" of "theory" on the one hand, and Sedgwick's lifelong commitment to "speculative" concerns on the other, substantially sharpens the differences between two modes of interpretive work operating in the field today. Rather than minimizing these differences or, worse, converting them into intractable psychological disorders, the remainder of this essay establishes the missing genealogy of today's current reading debates with an eye toward facilitating new coordinates for a more rigorous discourse.

VII. Antihumanism and Contemporary Critical Theory

In Mark Greif's recent study of how the "discourse of Man" has been transformed by the impact of postwar thinking and events, he persuasively unifies a range of disparate developments in France, Germany, and the United States under a "unifying philosophical impulse" called "antihumanism."[41] According to Greif's analysis, "the "death of man," the "end(s) of man," the "death of the subject," the "author [who] has disappeared," and the "death of the author" (311) were all aligned in a fundamental reorientation of Man's centrality to philosophical thought. Although Greif warns that "in English the word can hardly avoid the sound of something like 'hatred of the human,'" his account of "antihumanism" avoids caricature by observing, first, that "antihumanism nearly always has a normative or therapeutic motive we would identify as humane. That motive may be liberation, emancipation, and opposition to tyranny in intellect of politics" and, second, that in the context of mid-century political crises, "antihumanism" "refers to a principled removal of the level of explanation of phenomena from single rational human actors and their explicit self-understandings to sub- and superpersonal aggregations. It denotes an explanatory antipathy to humanism understood as the doctrine that 'man is the measure of all things' and that individual consciousness is the arbiter and best explainer of its own behavior, social practices and beliefs" (286). Part of what makes Greif's definition of "antihumanism" so crucial is that it develops the operational connection between a turn away from "individual consciousness" and concomitant focus on "sub- and superpersonal aggregations." Perceiving all "humanism" as a "humanism which assumes its own centrality, homogeneity, and transparency" (286), for generations of thinkers after the failures of Communism and the atrocities of World War II, the only legitimate inquiry into "individual consciousness" was one that showed how it was always and already hooked up to the socio-historical machine. In the context of the present inquiry, "antihumanism" helps to explain how literature's preoccupation with "sociological" critique fits within a broad and systematic philosophical reaction against earlier forms of "flabby" humanism that, for postwar thinkers, was irredeemably synonymous with complacency and political moralism.[42] Indeed, as one small measure of how powerfully "antihumanism" determines the totality of contemporary discourse, it is worth observing that in the entirety of North's recent call for "new methods for cultivating subjectivities" (20), there is only one tentative mention of the word "human," which North puts forward hesitantly and immediately retracts, as when he asks, "if one believes in the political—I am tempted

to add 'human'—importance of something like the project of criticism" (124)[43]—here, it is as if the "human" is so outdated and naïve to contemporary readers that North is forced to defend the cultivation of "subjectivity" without any defensible language for the subject as such.

While there can be little doubt about the salutary effects of purging philosophy of its humanist pretensions, might we not link Sedgwick's characterization of "theory's" extreme "hygiene" to the deliberate aversion of "sociological" critique to questions centered on phenomena of desire, consciousness, experience, and affectivity? If, that is, to a "sociological" critic, attention to these complex mechanisms "isolates" the "individual" from social processes and, worse, from its *historical* context, there can be no interpretive avenue for distilling the "monad's" complexity that is not immediately susceptible to all the charges of "flabby" humanism. What this means for our present purposes is that when Sedgwick laments "theory's" stubborn hostility to "biologism" and the "*human* nature" it purports to explain, and insists that its effects on critical discourse are corrosive and debilitating, we are observing the frustration of a critic trying to do "speculative" work with "sociological" tools. In a different essay, Sedgwick hints at her apprehension of this tension when, in a remark about the kinds of "questions" she likes to ask, she draws attention to their insecure status within contemporary discourse, observing that

> I've always taken to heart Thoreau's guess that quiet desperation characterizes the majority of lives. The question of whether or not mine is part of that majority—though I have plenty of questions about the question itself, including who's asking it—that question nonetheless still feels crucial to me and many times frighteningly unsettled. Klein is one of the people who most upsets me by unsettling it—vastly more than Freud or Lacan does, for example, and even more than the Marxist or anticolonial perspectives from which my preoccupations are so effectively made to feel marginal, even to me.[44]

Associating the marginality of her singular life with the "quiet desperation" of the "majority of lives," Sedgwick here defends her interest in these "questions" by insisting on the difference between a critical/"speculative" discourse that "unsettles" the "I" and a traditional humanism that merely reinforces it. After all, what are Sedgwick's close readings—of characters in Henry James, Marcel Proust, Oscar Wilde—but sustained speculations about how erotic forces course through a singularly

conflicted psychic life? Although Sedgwick is rigorously committed to situating literary works in their socio-political contexts, her work is marked by a definitive turn *away* from "sociological" interpretations that subsume individual psychology into culture or ideology by treating the individual as (merely) emblematic, or symptomatic, of material conditions.[45] Instead, Sedgwick uses the social conditions of literary texts to illuminate the pathways that desire can take; in her close reading of James's "The Beast in the Jungle," for example, Sedgwick uses the dynamics of homosexual panic to speculate on the psychological trajectory of Marcher's relation to his own knowledge and desire. From here, Sedgwick wonders about May Bertram's interior life and sets about "inquiring into the difference of the paths of her own desire. What does she want, not for him, but for herself, from their relationship? What does she actually get?"[46] Refracting from here to a broader question about the "particular relation to truth and authority that a mapping of male homosexual panic offers to a woman in the emotional vicinity," Sedgwick reads James's story for insight into the myriad possible forms that erotic life can generate.

Sedgwick's oeuvre is therefore marked by her delicate negotiation of the tension among her interests in desire, motivation, and the human psyche within a theoretical landscape that was enduringly hostile to those kinds of concerns.[47] Indeed, in one of Sedgwick's most forceful appraisals of the "I" as a dynamic source of radical contradiction and potential, she confronts the difficulty of this position directly, writing, "I'd find it mutilating and disingenuous to disallow a grammatical form that marks the site of such dense, accessible effects of knowledge, history, revulsion, authority, and pleasure. Perhaps it would be useful to say that the first person throughout represents neither the sense of a simple, settled congratulatory 'I,' on the one hand, nor on the other a fragmented postmodernist postindividual—never mind an unreliable narrator. No, 'I' is a heuristic; maybe a powerful one."[48] Referring to Sedgwick's idiosyncratic conceptualization of "desire" as "algebraic," Wayne Koestenbaum writes that "she mapped human relations with the abstract and paradigm-happy clarity of an anthropological semiologist, in a language of vectors, angles, equations, additions, cancellations, and other chiasmatic patternings."[49] This image should seem dramatically at odds with the familiar characterization of desire/individual-oriented inquiries as linear, straightforward, and simplistic. Indeed, wouldn't one version of the "queer" intervention name precisely the overthrow of traditional "humanist" presumptions, *not* because studying the "monad" is inherently complacent but, rather, that complacency inheres in a failure to treat the "monad" as materially and structurally complex?

VIII. Affect and "Speculative" Criticism

Since the refusal to concede all theoretical rigor to antihumanist critique was among the boldest claims of Sedgwick's multiple interventions, it is crucial to observe that Affect Studies' continued reliance on antihumanist ideology for its "sociological" critiques demonstrates how the violent break with critical doxa that Sedgwick attempted has been systematically refused. Therefore, while Affect Studies proudly embraces "biology," it does so within a definitively antihumanist frame; a move made possible by ignoring what Sedgwick specifically meant by "antibiologism." Indeed, in spite of her prodigious defense of "biologism," Sedgwick remains unabashed and unapologetic about her relative disinterest in the actual "scientific" veracity of Tomkins' "biological" claims; what matters for her, as a literary critic, is that Tomkins offers "such a useful site for resistance to teleological presumptions of the many sorts historically embedded in the disciplines of psychology" (7). We can perhaps most readily appreciate the fundamental disconnect between Sedgwick's use of affect and its subsequent development in Affect Studies by observing that whereas for Sedgwick, the multiplicity of combinatorial possibilities enabled by the "affect system" offered a richer panoply of explanatory possibilities of *human* "motivation," and the "human psyche" (125), the subsequent development of Affect Theory has mostly assimilated Sedgwick/Tomkins into the methodological concerns of "sociological" critique, whereby "affects" belong to the larger systems of "worlds, bodies, and their in-betweens" in ways that precisely transcend the "tried-and-true handholds" of traditional (residually humanist) analysis of "subject/object, representation and meaning, rationality, consciousness, time and space, inside/outside, human/nonhuman, identity, structure, background/foreground, and so forth."[50] For "sociological" critique, "affect" becomes such a promising avenue of inquiry precisely for how effectively it demolishes what it perceives to be the separable, individual—monadic—structure of a particular subjectivity. The gap should be readily perceivable between Sedgwick's own interest in using affect to complicate the stories we tell about human experience and motivation, and Affect Theory's determination to dissolve the unitary subject of experience and motivation in the "muddy" "intensities" of a processual materialism.[51] Across the field, affects are generally considered to be "'inhuman,' 'pre-subjective,' 'visceral' forces and intensities that influence our thinking and judgments but are separate from these," and which "must be noncognitive, subpersonal, or corporeal processes or states."[52] While Ruth

Leys is particularly interested in the implications of Affect Studies for questions of anti-intentionalism and rational discourse, her deep engagement with Sedgwick's thinking leads her to make a remarkable observation about the distinctiveness of Sedgwick's project as one which was less interested in the "inhuman" and "corporeal processes or states" than in what a model of affect could reveal about the complexities of a singular embodied, psychic, and relational life. Leys suggests that "for Sedgwick the shift away from questions of meaning and intention in Tomkins's approach" facilitated greater flexibility in adumbrating "the singularity of one's affective experiences, which is to say with the idea of one's difference from all other subjects" (336).[53] The divesture of psychic activity from predictable plotline (a goal that Sedgwick originally identified with "queer" studies in juxtaposition to traditional feminist theory)[54] is linked with an abiding commitment to the "singularity" of affective life.

Leys's careful reading of Sedgwick seems motivated by the question of how a brilliant critic could end up renouncing intentionalism in what Leys calls a "post-psychoanalytic" turn[55]; a more nuanced parsing of the difference between metapsychology and traditional psychoanalysis would actually demonstrate in what ways Sedgwick's rejection of orthodox Freudian-Lacanian conceptualizations is not identical to the rejection of psychology or sexuality *tout court*. While in critical theory and the non-clinical academy generally, psychology is synonymous with Freudian psychoanalysis, "metapsychology" refers to the "study of psychology in its most theoretical dimension."[56] Since the term was invented to inaugurate a scientific field that was distinct from metaphysics and mythology, metapsychology continues to represent a way of thinking about psychic life that locates the coherence of its interpretations in a body of ideas about the mechanisms, operations, and topologies of non-conscious mental phenomenology.[57] Differentiating Freudian psychoanalysis from "metapsychology" is crucial for demonstrating that every turn away from Freud/Lacan is *not* necessarily a turn away from psychology *tout court*. Not only does Sedgwick's interest in Klein challenge any easy alignment of affect with some place *beyond* the psyche, but her constant search for new psychological paradigms ought to confirm the range of psychological ideas that can be included in a "speculative" agenda. As such, it is not a particular psychological thinker or specific psychological theory that poses a problem for contemporary criticism but the "speculative" agenda itself, which, as Heather Love recently suggested, is always traceable to "traditional humanist categories of experience, consciousness, and motivation."[58] Calling for

a new "dehumanizing" reading practice that once and for all disavows its retrograde preoccupation with "imponderables like human experience or human nature," Love argues for sociology as a new basis for critical reading that is finally emancipated from the "hermeneutics of recognition and empathy—originally sacred and now grounded in an unacknowledged but powerful humanism—that defines literary studies, even in an age of suspicion" (388).

Even as the characterization of all interpretation as inherently humanist overlooks the ways that, for example, Marxist criticism changed the focus of interpretation to include description as a means of accommodating the determinedly "antihumanist" agenda of "sociological" critique—I am thinking here of Jameson's insistence that "the process of criticism is not so much an interpretation of content as it is a revealing of it"[59]—nevertheless, Love's critique of Sedgwick's affect-oriented inquiry effectively identifies the broader stakes of these methodological choices and moves us toward a deeper appreciation of the ideological differences at work in varieties of contemporary critical activities. To return to the question of *reading*, we might suggest that future debates about the status of critique take seriously the tensions, within theory, of (at least) two distinctive approaches (what I have called the "speculative" and "sociological"), so that rather than impugning "sociological" criticism for being anxiously and compulsively "anti-biological" or "speculative" analysis for surreptitiously defending naïve humanism, we might consider making space for inquiries that are doing sophisticated work in different, fundamentally incompatible ways. In an effort to wean ourselves from the easy recourse to psychological diagnoses where a more substantive theoretical account is possible, this essay sought to sharpen the philosophical differences between "depth" and "surface," between "anti-biologism" and studies of "human motivation," between "sociological" critique that studies the complex relation between the subject and the system, versus "speculative" analysis that studies the subject as a complex system. With hope, replacing psychologization with historical context, and fixed identities with close reading, will enable a less pathologizing and more rigorous discourse of rival reading practices and aims. After all, a pathologizing discourse isn't problematic merely because it circumvents analysis or is mean to other people, but, well, because, as stories of desire and motivation go, it is reductive and deterministic. Not to mention, boring.

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NOTES

The author wishes to thank colleagues at NeMLA 2018 where an earlier version of this essay was presented.

1. "Diagnostic Code for Paranoid Personality Disorder, Cluster A Personality Disorder," in *DSM-5* (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 322.
2. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes," in *The Weather in Proust*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 125.
3. There is a burgeoning secondary literature on Sedgwick's impact on the field. See especially, Jonathan Flatley, "Unlike Eve Sedgwick," *Criticism* 52, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 225–234; Ellis Hanson, "The Future's Eve: Reparative Reading After Sedgwick," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 101–119; Tavia Nyong'o, "Trapped in the Closet with Eve," *Criticism* 52, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 243–251; Jason Edwards, ed. *Bathroom Songs: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick as a Poet* (New York: Punctum Books, 2017).
4. Robyn Wiegman's meticulous historicization of Sedgwick's essay in the context of queer/feminist studies argues that scholars mostly refer to the 2003 version of the essay, which "aligns it with a post 9-11 rethinking of paranoid sensibilities in ways that have skewed our understanding of her work's own present, which was profoundly influenced by her disgust with the national fantasy of gay extermination propelled by this health emergency of AIDS and by her own personal battle with breast cancer" (9). Robyn Wiegman, "The Times We're In: Queer Feminist Criticism and the Reparative 'Turn,'" *Feminist Theory* 15, no.1 (2014): 4–25. All references in this essay are to the 2003 edition of Sedgwick's "Paranoid" essay, *Touching Feeling*, Duke University Press.
5. Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015; Elizabeth Anker and Rita Felski, eds., *Critique and Postcritique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017). Among the most popular interventions are those by Steven Best and Sharon Marcus on "surface reading;" Heather Love, "descriptive turn"; and Franco Moretti, "distant reading." For a powerful critique of these developments, see Ellen Rooney, "Live Free or Describe: The Reading Effect and the Persistence of Form" *differences* 21, no. 3 (2010); and Elizabeth Weed, "Gender and the Lure of the Postcritical," *differences* 27, no. 2 (2016).
6. Heather Love, "Critique is Ordinary," *PMLA* 132, no. 2 (2017): 364–70; see also, "Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," *Criticism* 52, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 235–241.
7. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins," in *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, eds. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).
8. In one of the few mentions of Queer Theory in this debate, Heather Love suggests the centrality of Queer Studies to current methodological questions. *PMLA* 132, no. 2 (2017): 366. Additionally, Michael Warner, who is a prominent queer theorist, has historicized "critique" in relation to Western secularism but not focused on the link between "critique" and Queer Studies. "Uncritical Reading," in *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*, ed. Jane Gallop (New York: Routledge, 2004).
9. Bruce Robbins, "Not So Well Attached," *PMLA* 132, no. 2 (2017): 373.
10. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), especially 53–73.

11. In framing the stakes of this situation, Felski writes, "There is a growing sense that our intellectual life is out of kilter, that scholars in the humanities are far more fluent in nay-saying than in yay-saying, and that eternal vigilance, unchecked by alternatives, can easily lapse into the complacent cadences of auto-pilot argument." *The Limits of Critique*, 9.

12. Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, 3.

13. Sedgwick describes it as a "contagion" that she cannot really account for the origins of ("Paranoid"). I'm not sure you need to be particularly persuaded by Foucault to wonder at the characterological claims embedded in these arguments and how the psychologization of critical positions endangers norms of critical discourse.

14. Amanda Anderson, *The Way We Argue Now: A Study in the Cultures of Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 134.

15. I think a certain "marginal" quality is a particular feature of these "practical critiques," insofar as they are usually staged against predominant forms of theorizing/reading. These "practical critiques" are different from arguments made by literary theorists advancing one or another theoretical paradigm/set of techniques, as, for example, in the work of Paul de Man or Fredric Jameson who apply theory to literature (Deconstruction and Marxism respectively) because "practical critique" isn't primarily oriented (as these practitioners are) toward disseminating readings of applied-theory but in producing readings that explain certain phenomena of particular interest to the critic. The development of clinical theory might offer a helpful example here, insofar as there is a robust category of clinical thinking that emerges from the critiques made by practitioners (rather than philosophers or metapsychologists) about the usefulness of a given concept.

16. Toril Moi's recent *Revolution of the Ordinary: Literary Studies after Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017) persuasively demonstrates the difference Cavell/Wittgenstein might make to existing critical orientations. Pointing out that "in the humanities today, the *doxa* concerning language and meaning remains Saussurean or, rather, post-Saussurean" (15), Moi argues that Wittgenstein's vision of language is a far more radical and liberating alternative than yet another attempt to redefine the "materiality of the signifier." For a thorough engagement of Cavell's relationship to skepticism and its import for deconstruction, see Michael Fischer, *Stanley Cavell and Literary Skepticism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989) and Cavell's work.

17. Joseph North, *Literary Criticism: A Concise Political History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

18. Amanda Anderson, "Therapeutic Criticism," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 50, no. 3 (November 2017): 321–328.

19. By "speculative" I intend to connote the hypothetical, conjectural, and suppositional characteristics of this enterprise, in contradistinction to the focus of "sociological" critique on discerning empirical knowledge about historical and economic conditions. This word has a vast legacy in Hegelian thought, as it has been counterpoised to "reflection," for example, Donald Phillip Verene, *Hegel's Absolute: An Introduction to Reading the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Albany, NY: SUNY University Press, 2007). Additionally, the increasing popularity of "speculative" to designative new materialisms and ontologies is interesting for how it might suggest a more general move away from existing methodological conventions and agendas. See Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, eds., *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: re.press, 2011).

20. The "sociological/speculative" classification participates in a robust lineage of similar designations that attempt to distinguish different strands within the field. My terms are not intended to replace existing ones but to register that the field is ever changing and,

specifically, the impact of criticism on the field requires more particular terms that are obscured by terms that attempt to account for the broader field of literary study, such as composition. See Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987); also, John Guillory, "Literary Study and the Modern System of the Disciplines," in *Disciplinarity at the Fin de Siecle*, eds. Amanda Anderson and Joseph Valente (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

21. Ian Hunter's reinterpretation of "theory" is crucial here for challenging the sweeping ahistorical assertions of de Man, and "theory" more generally. Hunter persuasively demonstrates that the "success of disciplines is rarely the result of their truth, while their failure often has little to do with their falsity" but that, in fact, there are contingent historical circumstances that determine the "concrete intellectual combat" of different positions. "The History of Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 1 (Autumn 2006): 78–112.

22. Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory*, Theory and History of Literature series, vol. 33 (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1986).

23. This Manichean dichotomization has been replicated most faithfully in Lee Edelman's substitutions of the "sinthome" for "language" and "theory" for "sexuality." *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

24. Sedgwick's status as a pioneer of a field is traced to the publication of her path-breaking *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) and *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). See Wayne Koestenbaum, forward to *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

25. Queer Theory is a heterogeneous discourse and Sedgwick's ideas of "queer reading" are distinguishable from other major strands within the field. Specifically, as it relates to Sedgwick's abiding interest in individual desire and subjectivity, it is important to note that for many queer theorists, the promise of queerness represented the negation of individuality, and even psychology, as Sedgwick defines it. I address this in depth elsewhere, "Two Girls: Berlant + Sedgwick, Relational and Queer," *Postmodern Culture* 27, no. 1, (September 2016).

26. This is in some sense the explanation Sedgwick herself gives in the essay.

27. Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, *Sex, or the Unbearable* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 59.

28. Amanda Anderson describes the last 40 years of literary criticism as being concerned with "ideology criticism" ("Therapeutic Criticism"), also Gerald Graff (*Professing Literature*) and Rita Felski.

29. Eagleton describes the formidable impact of Williams as having to do with his development of Marxist literary criticism into a rigorous interpretive paradigm. According to Eagleton, "When Raymond Williams came to write in the early 1950s, the ethos of Thirties criticism, compounded as it was of vulgar Marxism, bourgeois empiricism and Romantic Idealism, could yield him almost nothing; Caudwell, he remarked sardonically in *Culture and Society 1780–1950,* was for the most part 'not even specific enough to be wrong.'" *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: Verso, 2006), 21.

30. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

31. Williams writes: "Since a system of ideas can be abstracted from that once living social process and represented, usually by the selection of 'leading' or typical 'ideologists' or 'ideological features,' as the decisive form in which consciousness was at once expressed and controlled (or, as in Althusser, was in effect unconscious, as an imposed structure)" (109) and that, "more generally, this sense of 'ideology' is applied in abstract

ways to the actual consciousness of both dominant and subordinated classes" (109). *Marxism and Literature*.

32. Indeed, when in *Politics and Letters*, Williams is asked about the near total absence of Leavis and New Criticism from *Marxism and Literature*, he responds that "my thrust was much more against the limits of the newly dominant mode of critical structuralism, because this was what was being taken as Marxist literary theory all over Western Europe and North America," and he goes on to explain, "it is not, of course, that I think detailed argument with Richards or Eliot or Leavis about the idea of literature is unimportant. . . . But . . . I felt that there was a more urgent danger on the other side, of the eruption of a mode of idealist literary study claiming the authority of Marxism and the prestige of association with powerful intellectual movements in many other fields. So I went much more for that." Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: Verso, 2015), 339–40. Also, throughout *Marxism and Literature*, Williams discusses the need for a new Marxist literary analysis to counter the rigid and simplistic Marxism of Caudwell. This contextualization of Williams's "cultural" turn reveals the extent to which the turn to "culture" was not necessarily a turn "away" from "aesthetics" but actually a "turn" away from the traditional (i.e., pre-Marxist) conceptualization of the "aesthetic" as separable from social life.

33. Terry Eagleton provides an engaged critique of Williams's concept of "culture" and "hegemony" and also pushes back against Williams's characterization of "base-superstructure" economic model. See also, Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1971).

34. Sedgwick, "Paranoid," 125.

35. In Sedgwick's "sketch" outline: "Paranoia is *anticipatory*. Paranoia is *reflexive* and *mimetic*. Paranoia is a *strong theory*. Paranoia is a theory of *negative affects*. Paranoia places its faith in *exposure*." Sedgwick, "Paranoid," 130.

36. Fredric Jameson, "Marxism and Historicism," in *The Ideologies of Theory* (London: Verso, 2008), 463.

37. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 17.

38. Silvan Tomkins, "The Quest for Primary Motives: Biography and Autobiography of an Idea," in *Exploring Affect: The Selected Writings of Silvan Tomkins*, ed. E. Virgina Demos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 58.

39. Eve Sedgwick, "Shame," 17.

40. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 19.

41. Mark Greif, *The Age of the Crisis of Man: Thought and Fiction in America, 1933–1973*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 285.

42. Pierre Bourdieu uses this phrase, "flabby humanism." Greif, 286.

43. Although North makes constant reference to Kant, there is no engagement with the centrality of humanism to Kantian aesthetics, specifically as it relates to the concept of bildungsroman.

44. Sedgwick, "Melanie Klein," 125.

45. Stanley Cavell's work offers another example of "speculative" reading as it insistently focuses on interpreting the motivation of characters—in Shakespeare or Hollywood—for insight into how desire, and one's defenses against it, can shape and/or deform a character's interpersonal life.

46. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, (Oakland, CA: University of California University Press, 1990), 209.
47. I address Sedgwick's changing relationship to psychology over the course of her career, and through her autobiographical writing specifically, in a chapter of *Homo Psyche* (under review).
48. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), xiv.
49. Wayne Koestenbaum, forward to *Between Men*, xi.
50. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.
51. I discuss this more in "The Ideology of Transference: Laplanche and Affect Theory," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 19, no. 2 (April–June 2018).
52. Ruth Leys, *The Ascent of Affect: Genealogy and Critique* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017), 310; see also, *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).
53. In their response to Leys's critique, Adam Frank and Elizabeth Wilson argue that Leys conflates Tomkins's theory of the object-aim relation with those of Freudian psychoanalysis. They explain that, like Freud, "the stability of the trigger permits any affect to have any object" but, unlike in Freudian ideas about sexuality, "once triggered, an affect comes to inform its object in a complex manner that Tomkins terms "affect-object-reciprocity," in which, as he puts it, "the object may evoke the affect, or the affect find the object," leading to a "subjective restructuring of the object" . . . this can hardly be described as affects behaving "without regard to the objects that elicit them." Rather, "the freedom of affect with respect to objects leads to the possibility of a motivational system of great flexibility" (875). Although this is not the place to adjudicate which one is the correct interpretation of Tomkins's work, Frank and Wilson themselves focus on how rarely Tomkins is read—"There is very little engagement with the particulars of Tomkins' theory," they write, and "most often, in fact, Tomkins' theoretical claims are gleaned from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's writings rather than Tomkins himself; rarely does anyone engage the lengthy, difficult, and compelling prose in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*" (874). For the purposes of this essay, the "truth" of Tomkins's own ideas is less relevant than is how Sedgwick interpreted and instrumentalized them. "Like-Minded," *Critical Inquiry* 38 (Summer 2012).
54. Sedgwick, preface to the 1993 edition of *Between Men*.
55. Ruth Leys, "Post-psychoanalysis and post-totalitarianism," *Psychoanalysis in the Age of Totalitarianism*, eds. Matt Ffytche and Daniel Pick (London: Routledge, 2016).
56. Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973), 249.
57. See Adrian Johnston, *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005).
58. Heather Love, "Close but not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn," *New Literary History* 41, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 375.
59. Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 404.