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- This section deconstructs the state of queerness as being untouchable. Disidentification brings on a class of affects which point to the element of incommensurability.

- We need to approach the incommensurable as something that cannot be complete.
- The perspective that knowledge can be complete is driven by paranoia, and has analogues in history and science. We cannot capture, grasp, or access queerness, and we look into methods of reading that try to ascertain truth or verify facts.
- We conclude here that the proper position is hesitation, restraint. An awareness of the need for hesitation, while also embracing embodiment. The challenge is to regain touch without resolving it.
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# 2 the problem: queerness as untouchable

## 2.1 toward a reading method of the untouchable

The idea of the "untouchable" builds off queer theorists who have isolated a queer experience of displacement, estrangement, or a feeling of a lack that creates a space for emergent affects. This experience derives from the political and social environment that attempts to erase the existence of minorty subjects, particularly queer people of color. Even as LGBT groups appear to gain more visibily and acceptance, such gains are trapped within the limiting, normative time of the present.

This chapter will unpack this condition of queerness being "untouchable" with regard to literary analysis. By "untouchable," I mean that queer subjects cannot be accessed or known in the same way that majority subjects are within dominant culture. This condition of queerness being 'untouchable' influences our approach as readers and critics toward queer texts, themes, and subjects. Identities within texts are not stable across time and place, and as readers, we tend to make acts of identification that collapse or overlook the complexity of experience. For queer readers in particular, identification can emerge from a desire to recognize within the past something that affirms queer experience in the present. Heather Love describes queer critics, "Like demanding lovers [who] promise to rescue the past when in fact they dream of being rescued themselves" (33). This chapter explores potential positions or orientations around queerness. To this end, it proposes a reading method that enables queerness to be grasped, but at a distance.

## 2.2 disidentification points to incommensurability

This chapter draws the condition of "untouchability" from a theory of identity developed by Queer Theorists from mostly Latinx backgrounds and traditions, particularly Muñoz, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Ofelia Schutte. The work of these theorists, which itself draws from the thinking of Chela Sandoval, Norma Alarcón and Audre Lorde, all radical feminists of color, coalesces around a paradigm of identity formation that Muñoz generalizes as "identities-in-difference" (*Disidentifications* 6). Muñoz's identities-in-difference marshalls theories of difference that center moments of failed interpellation, misfitting, and unbelonging as the core materials of identity formation. This paradigm of identity formation sets up our understanding of how affect provides the ground to remagine reading as situated within the reader's embodied relationship to the text.

Due to the effects of what Muñoz calls the "cultural logics of heteronormativity, white supremacy, and misogyny," queer people of color have been placed outside majority ideas about race, sexuality, gender, and class, that constitute dominant society (*Disidentifications* 5). As a result, minority experience is defined by a gap in identification, where the minority subject emerges in the failure to adhere to social expectations. Within this gap, dominant signfications of identity do not remain totally inaccessible to minority subjects. Rather, they are accessed according to a process of "disidentification," where subjects find alternative pathways of connection to that which remains beyond their grasp. These moments can be fleeting sensations of finding oneself attracted to something that is inappropriate, "to read onesself and one's own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to 'connect' with the disidentifying subject" (*Disidentifications* 12). Muñoz offers his own formative experience of disidentification from a childhood memory of watching Truman Capote on TV:

> I remember, for instance, seeing an amazingly queeny Truman Capote describe the work of fellow writer Jack Kerouac as not writing but, instead, typing. I am certain that my pre-out consciousness was completely terrified by the swishy spectacle of Capote's performance. But I also remember feeling a deep pleasure in hearing Capote make language, in "getting" the fantastic bitchiness of his quip. Like Gomez, I can locate that experience of suburban spectatorship as having a disidentificatory impact on me. Capote's performance was as exhilarating as it was terrifying. *Disidentifications* 4

This memory is distinguished by a powerful disjunction between opposite feelings, which consitutes identity from ambivalent affects. The exhilaration that Muñoz feels when he understands Capote's dig, the surprise of grasping its "fanstastic bitchiness," is attended by an alternative affect, one of fear of recognition. In this process, identification emerges in the space between these opposing sensations—pleasure and terror.

Acts of disidentification can be shattering. In "The Torment of Queer Literature," Kelly Caldwell explains the quandry of reading James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* as a transgender woman: "what if the only available act of identification is one of stigma and shame? Embracing queerness is often embracing abjection. Sometimes identification is loss and despair" (par. 4). Identification tends to center around these "bad feelings" which offer less fodder for political resistence. However, identification with more positive aspects of queer experience is hardly an alternative. For many readers, the

more redemptive or celebratory narratives offer no consolation. The reader is stuck between recognizing their own pain or feeling guilty for not recognizing pleasure: "Either read a book like *Giovanni's Room* at the risk of recognizing David's denial and repression as my own, or read a book that celebrates queer lives and sex boldly and end up despising my own cowardice" (par. 17).

This sensation of opposing affects and the shattering of identity has been well explored by queer Chicana Theorists Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga. Anzaldúa's figure of *la mestiza*, or mixed woman, drawn from Mexican philosopher Jose Vasconcelos's promotion of "una raza mestiza" [the mixed race], emphasizes hybridity as a structuring component of identity. Mestizaje is the experience of being mixed, at the intersection of two opposing forces, "Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures," being able to contain dualities, such as male/female, English/Spanish, American/Mexican (78). Mestiza consciousness, for Anzaldúa, is a tolerance for ambiguity, for existing in the middle space that contains dualities. This consciousness is characterized by what Anzaldúa calls the experience of *el choque* or the shock: "The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of referencee causes *un choque*, a cultural collision" (78). The affective experience of *el choque* consists of a bodily phenomenon where the subject receives multiple opposing messages that incite a physical upheaval. Anzaldúa explains that "the clash of voices results in mental and emotional states of perplexity... The mestiza's dual or multiple personality is plagued by psychic restlessness" (78). This physical upheaval is the ground from which the mestiza builds identity: "The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures" (79).

The choque experienced in acts of queer disidentification points to a core condition of queerness that is incommensurable. Latina feminist philosopher Ofelia Schutte poses the concept of the "incommensurable" to theorize cross-cultural communication between dominant and subaltern subjects. Writing specifically about communication between native English and Spanish speakers, Schutte wonders how subjects from different cultures might achieve effective conversation. She finds that they cannot, as "no two cultures or languages can be perfectly transparent to each other" (56). There is something lost in translation, "a residue of meaning that will not be reached in cross-cultural endeavors" (56). This vestige of communication that fails to transfer between subaltern and dominant subjects is what she calls the incommensurable. Schutte draws from feminist postcolonial and poststructuralist concepts of alterity and difference to present a view of subjectivity in which "the other is

that person or experience which makes it possible for the self to recognize its own limited horizons in the light of asymmetrically given relations marked by sexual, social, cultural, or other differences" (54). The effect of incommensurability, then, is not to try to grasp or translate the vestige of lost meaning, but to recognize that gap as a space that constitutes subjectivity. It is to "look at nodes in a linguistic interchange or a conversation in which the other's speech, or some aspect of it, resonates in me as a kind of strangeness, as a kind of displacement of the usual expectation" (56). Schutte proposes that one embrace the strangeness of communication, locating the moments where meaning seems to slip by and elude us. By paying attention to the awkward and even bizarre moments of misunderstanding, we find the materials for constructing new dis(identity).

As Cherríe Moraga points out, "it is not really difference the oppressor fears so much as similarity" (La Guera, 30). Although the feeling of incommensurability is central to queer experience, it can be accessible to majority groups. Getting in touch with the *choque*, however, is a great challenge for minority subjects, and an even greater challenge for those of dominant cultures. For those who can avoid it, there is an aversion to confront the "stranger within." Schutte goes into detail to explain how the incommensurable slips from view:

> In cross-cultural communication, each speaker may "say" something that falls on the side of the "unsaid" for a culturally differentiated interlocutor. Such gaps in communication may cause one speaker's discourse to appear incoherent or insufficiently organized. To the culturally dominant speaker, the subaltern speaker's discourse may appear to be a string of fragmented observations rather than a unified whole. The actual problem may not be incoherence but the lack of cultural translatability of the signifiers for coherence from one set of cultural presuppositions to the other. 62

For majority subjects, confronting the incommensurable is difficult because it requires them to step temporarily into the place of the other, "that person or experience which makes it possible for the self to recognize its own limited horizons in the light of asymmetrically given relations marked by sexual, social, cultural, or other differences" (Schutte 54). Subjects from dominant society opt to avoid engaging in minority discourse. Schutte explains that "The speaker from the dominant culture is basically saying: communicate with me entirely on the terms I expect; beyond this, I am not interested" (62).

Muñoz reminds us that "The fiction of identity is one that is accessed with relative ease by most majoritarian subjects" (*Disidentifications* 5).

## 2.3 TODO draft reading practices try to resolve incommens: sedgwick

The reality of incommensurability points to ways that knowledge will always be flawed, never complete, and never self-evident. When confronted with the unknown, however, the impulse is to find ways of resolving it. The illusion that we can gain sufficient knowledge into queer experience, that such experiences are "commensurable," drives certain reading practices that critics describe as "paranoid" or "suspicious." Here, the assumption that knowledge is knowable masks a deeper investment in knowledge as a goal in and of itself. This reading practice not only assumes queer experience and subjectivity to be fundamentally accessible, but bases an entire program of analysis on revealing it. Kadji Amin, Amber Jamilla Musser, and Roy Pérez explain that paranoid impulses "rely on the concept of immutable difference, on sharp boundaries, and on the possibility of exhaustively knowing the other" (232).

Paranoid reading practices deliver results that are imaginable within given knowledge structures. To illustrate this effect, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick relates a conversation between herself and a friend during few years of the AIDS crisis, when speculation about the government's complicity in spreading the virus is rampant. At the time, Sedgwick wonders whether "the lives of 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" (123). Her friend counters this suspicion, pointing out that knowledge of conspiracy doesn't achieve anything on its own: "Supposing we were ever sure of all those things—what would we know then that we don't already know?" (123). Merely knowing that something is true, revealing the presence of systematic oppression, injustice, discrimination, does nothing. As Sedgwick explains, knowledge of a problem is not enough to "enjoin that person to any specific train of epistemological or narrative consequences" (123). Moreover, a paranoid or suspicious stance blocks out other possibilities for relation to the text. Paranoia often only affirms itself; reflecting and replicating itself in every surface, giving too much power to the act of exposure. The work of paranoia is never done, "for all its vaunted suspicion, [paranoia] acts as though its work would be accomplished if only it could finally, this time, somehow get its story truly known" (141). Like many other theorists, Sedgwick wonders what is the point of continually trying to reveal, unravel, deconstruct the injustices of the past. She searches for "some ways of understanding human desire that might be quite to the side of prohibition and repression, that might hence be structured quite differently from the

heroic, 'liberatory,' inescapably dualistic righteousness of hunting down and attacking prohibition/repression in all its chameleonic guises" (10).

## 2.4 TODO add Scott & Kazanjian on overreading

-> the way that literary critics approach vision vs other fields
Scott, Joan. "The Evidence of Experience":

- Using experience for evidence rather than thinking about how experience is shaped. Scott talks about representation, about looking at experience, at the vision, the optical effects, for what they suggest. The beautiful reading of Samuel Delany's vision of the "millions of gay men" the fantastical projection (rather than real identity) that suggests a political consciousness. Historiography is about modes of seeing.

- Experience is always mediated for literary critics. We never take a

text as referential—there is rhetoric and form.

David Kazanjian, "Scenes of Speculation," Social Text 33:4 (2015), 77-84.

The charge of "overreading" – the idea that we are attributing a contemporary meaning to a historical text. This presumes a strict separation between historically contextualized reading and ahistorical reading, saying that we can read as if we are in the same situation as the writer. Kazanjian calls for overreading "for scenes of speculation" When we make historicist readings, we end up "making theoretical claims about the who in question, claims that imply or assert a theory of the subject", in which they have a self-conscious will or desire (81). Every historicist reading is implies a level of imposition by the reader.

Kazanjian suggests that we attend less to the wills, desires, and voices of historical subjects and more to the textual traces which invite speculative work. "Unfinished recovery [of the archives] is the very condition of possibility for their ongoing interpretation" (83). → what are we trying to solve?

## 2.5 paranoia and replication: haraway

It is, in Donna Haraway's words, a search for the "one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism" (*Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* 176).

In order to understand the ways that the paranoid impulse harm and constrain inquiry, it is useful to view it at work in scientific disciplines. Some strains of scientific inquiry, in particular, show us how paranoia enacts a

self-replicating mechanic. Though it appears in much of literary studies, the impulse that drives paranoid reading is borrowed from a critical viewpoint in scientific inquiry that assumes a detached observer. Critiques of this position, particularly in Donna Haraway's work on primatology, attempt to articulate a new mode of feminist science that de-naturalizes the "natural." Haraway's research on primates reveals the ways in which assumptions and preconceptions from the (white, male) subject inflect the object of study. She examines how scientists bring their own investments to bear even in the seemingly benign questions they might ask, or qualities they isolate, as areas of interest. For example, primatologists working with the goal of studying social structures in the field often impose their own social structures by turning their assumptions of male dominance into "observations." Feminist scientists attempt to revise such narratives by emphasizing organization and cooperation among primate communities: "revisionists have stressed matrifocal groups, long-term social cooperation rather than short-term spectacular aggression, flexible process rather than strict structure" (19). Pointing out that, "Women know very well that knowledge from the natural sciences has been used in the interests of our domination and not our liberation," Harwaway asserts that such revision is about empowering the subjugated, reconceiving "female receptivity" as "female choice" (8). The creation of a subject/object split *reproduces* and legitimizes hierarchies of domination.

Oftentimes, new tools can obscure the ways that we replicate our own assumptions. The advent of photography in the mid-nineteenth century allowed subjects to codify their prejudices as science, for example, in the pictures of American slaves taken by Louis Agassiz in 1850. These daguerrotypes, a pioneering practice in photography that uses light-sensitive chemicals on silver plates, show how the impulse for scientific classification impacts the quality and kind of knowledge that results. Agassiz, a Swiss anthropologist, came to the United States to study the physical differences between European whites and African blacks, by examining the shape and character of their heads and torsos, similar to contemporary studies in physionomy and phrenology that analyzed the exterior form of the human body. Agassiz's goal was to amass evidence to support his theory, that mankind had been separately created and whites and blacks were in fact different species (Wallis 40). Using photography for anthropoligical purposes, and organizing photographs to support a classification system, Agassiz's work demonstrates how the apparent "objectivity" of the photograph can mask the highly subjective motives for classification. Writing about the photographs, which were exhibited by the Amon Carter Museum in 1992, Brian Wallis explains that such images were organized to suggest divisions between "self and other, healthy and

diseased, normal and pathological," with the insidious effect of "mask[ing] its subjective distortions in the guise of logic and organization" (Wallis 47, 54-55). The problem, Wallis points out, is the realism of the photographic tool obscures the ways that subjects harness it to solidify their preconceptions—"Strengthened by the seeming transparency of photographic realism, these categories and the divisions between them soon took on the authority of natural 'facts.' Supplying either too much or too little information, photographs soon muddied the easy distinctions between subjective knowledge and what was called "objective." (47-48). The more seeminly transparent the tool, the easier it is to wrangle it toward proving "self-evident" truths.

In this case, the apparent fidelity of the photographic tool to record "nature" in fact obscures the ways that using the tool only reinforces a preconceived notion of "nature." Wallis explains that, "Supplying either too much or too little information, photographs soon muddied the easy distinctions between subjective knowledge and what was called 'objective' (48). The photographs reinforce the ways that scientific tools, which appear to capture "reality," can be harnessed and manipulated toward the observer's purpose.

## 2.6 TODO add Barad on replication / representationalism

## 2.7 TODO revise paranoia and recovery: hartman

Not only does paranoid inquiry tend to replicate the assumptions of the observer, but it blocks out other forms of knowledge. This is especially evident in the work of historical recovery, in the impulse to find "hidden" or "forgotten" meaning in textual and archival material. Recovery works by a self-legitimizing and perpetuating logic that attempts to render what has been left out, disregarded, or misunderstood within the logic of dominance. It is Jacques Derrida's *archive fever*, or the desire for legibility, under the auspices of the ruler, which animates the endless search for origins. It is, in Haraway's words, a search for the "one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism" (*Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* 176).

The stakes of recovery work are uniquely stark in the history of the Black Atlantic, where researchers must work to square the growth of an inhuman practice within a historical narrative of progress and liberalization. A tradition that rationalizes slavery with the right to property, that justifies war through the social contract. Black Atlantic scholars Lisa Lowe and Saidiya Hartman point out that the central paradox of studying the archive

of slavery is the structuring condition of recovery. In her essay "History Hesitant," Lowe explains that because recovery work necessarily occurs within the limits of the authorizing power, it always subjects itself to that power. Rather that work under these conditions, historians of enslaved experience ought to examine this confining structure, "the archeology of knowledge through which the archive subjects and governs precisely by means of instruments that absent the humanity of the enslaved" (87). Researchers might examine, for example, how "the slave trader's desire to record, measure, list, and account" weigh up against "rationalist claims to produce truth or meaning about the terrors of captivity, enslavement, or torture" (88). Saidiya Hartman similarly turns to the question of epistemology as the crux of the recovery work: "If it is no longer sufficient to expose the scandal, then how might it be possible to generate a different set of descriptions from this archive?" (7).

Hartman's central problem is what to do with an absent archive. She leaves us the paradox of recovery work: "How does one revisit the scene of subjection without replicating the grammar of violence?" (4). Hartman writes caustically about the impossibility of telling stories that have been left out of the record. Not only that we can never recover these stories (they are lost to time) but we can not approximate them with our current tools, with language. In "Venus in Two Acts," Hartman tells the story of Black Venus, the unnamed slave woman who appears variously throughout the "offical" record:

> we could have as easily encountered her in a ship's ledger in the tally of debits; or in an overseer's journal—–"last night I laid with Dido on the ground"; or as an amorous bed-fellow with a purse so elastic "that it will contain the largest thing any gentleman can present her with" in Harris's List of Covent- Garden Ladies; or as the paramour in the narrative of a mercenary soldier in Surinam; or as a brothel owner in a traveler's account of the prostitutes of Barbados; or as a minor character in a nineteenth-century pornographic novel. 1

What draws all these iterations of Venus together is their silence, "no one remembered her name or recorded the things she said, or observed that she refused to say anything at all" (2). The fact of silence cuts deeper than the failure of history but is part of the condition known as the "violence of the archive," which denotes not only absence as a form of evidence, in that the physical records are missing, but also in the tools of expression, in language that cannot approximate the reality of experience, and in the audible discourse that dictates silence. an

## 2.8 Queerness irrecoverable, but tempting ID: Love

Heather Love offers a reading strategy that acknowledges queer experience, particularly suffering, as unconsoleable. In resisting the temptations to redeem psychic suffering by queer subjects, Heather Love offers a strategy called "feeling-backward." This strategy opens a space for bad feelings without trying to recuscitate, justify, or transform them. She focuses on feelings such as "nostalgia, regret, shame, despair, *ressentiment*, passivity escapism, self-hatred, withdrawal, bitterness, defeatism, and loneliness," which, according to Love, are tied to "the historical impossibility of same-sex desire" (4, emphasis original). She examines the burdened protagonists from famous modernist texts like Walter Pater's *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873), Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* (1918), and Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Summer Will Show* (1936). Love argues that the shame and stigma experienced by these characters ought to be recognized rather than resolved. Instead of turning negative histories into sites of resistance or affirmation, these hurting characters might have full reign over their own darkness. And this darkness must be where the critic will meet them.

The more hopeless and resistant queer subjects make for more tempting identifications. Love explains how these subjects remain beyond the reader's grasp: "As queer readers we tend to see ourselves as reaching back toward isolated figures in the queer past in order to rescue or save them. It is hard to know what to do with texts that resist our advances" (8). The reason that these subjects remain so unreachable has to do with the nature of queerness itself, which represents absence, loss, and failure. Love illustrates this quality by evoking a Greek myth, Orpheus and Eurydice, in which the lover botches his beloved's rescue by looking back at her as they exit the underworld. Love quotes from Maurice Blanchot's account of the story in "The Gaze of Orpheus," to describe what Orpheus searches for in the prohibited and doomed glance backward:

> Not to look would be infidelity to the measureless, imprudent force of his movement, which does not want Eurydice in her daytime truth and in her everyday appeal, but wants her in her nocturnal obscurity, in her distance, with her closed body and sealed face—wants to see her not when she is visible, but when she is invisible, and not as the intimacy of familiar life, but as the foreignness of what excludes all intimacy, and wants, not to make her live, but to have living in her the plenditude of death. 50

Orpheus's downfall is his desire for a glimpse at what cannot be grapsed, at what remains beyond the light. This desire is not for "daytime truth" but for "noctural obscurity," which is always receding at the moment of pursuit. Like Eurydice, queerness emerges only to slip away, turning its face from the parched gaze. Can we be blamed for looking for that which cannot be grasped? No, because queerness has always been structured by that which is not, by what Love calls "impossible love" (24). Not only is queerness projected to fail, it is a project of failure. Love reminds us that "Queer history has been an education in absence" (50). In learning failure and loss, queer readers can only identify with what they have been taught to recognize as untouchable. Full identification, like Eurydice in the daylight, is prevented by design.

## 2.9 TODO revise hesitation, critical distance is necessary: Lowe

-> To avoid paranoid methods we develop a critical distance, we turn to the ways that "touch" can be distanced.

Within the dominant culture, recovery means authorizing the structures of knowledge that give rise to injustice in the first place. So what do we do now? There are affects associated with this kind of impasse. We hold ourselves back, restraint, avoidance. Lowe explains that

> Hesitation, rather than rushing to recover what has been lost, need not be understood as inaction or postponement, or as a thwarting of the wish to provide for a future world. Rather, it halts the desire for recognition by the present social order and staves off the compulsion to make visible within current epistemological orthodoxy. 98

Feelings of hesitation, doubt, dissapointment are ways of protecting the archive of slavery from further exploitation.

To sum up: one solution to paranoid impulses involves is critical awareness, the ability to access the affects that come between you and the object of study.

The archivist must work within the discrepancy between reality and the historical record. Hartman's goal is "to expose and exploit the incommensurability between the experience of the enslaved and the fictions of history... the requirements of narrative, the stuff of subjects and plots and ends" (10).

## 2.10 TODO cut/revise post-critical reading: sedgwick & felski

### 2.10.1 Felski on the illusion of emotional detachment:

The reality is that we are stuck in these bodies of our thinking. Rita Felski describes how seemingly neutral and detatched critical stance belies an emotional disposition:

> Scholars like to think that their claims stand or fall on the merits of their reasoning and the irresistible weight of their evidence, yet they also adopt a low-key affective tone that can bolster or drastically diminish their allure. Critical detachment, in this light, is not an absence of mood but one manifestation of it—a certain orientation toward one's subject, a way of making one's argument matter. 6

The "low-key affective tone" of scholarly discourse suggests that affect, and the feeling subject associated with it, has been left out of the critical process. However, appealing to the apparently unemotional does not succeed in removing emotion from argument—this is impossible—but it does reinforce the illusion that emotions don't belong in rational thought. Actually they do—though the emotions of critical discourse are of a quality and degree that mask their own presence. Felski explains that, "Rather than an ascetic exercise in demystification, suspicious reading turns out to be a style of thought infused with a range of passions and pleasures, intense engagements and eager commitments" (9). One follows the exposition of the framing paradigms, the twists and turns of the driving question, the climax of of discovery followed by the of denouement of the conclusion, one immediately senses the full dramatic repertoire of critical inquiry.

[move to section on the digital] And the illusion of reason as being devoid of emotion is not limited to verbal discourse. It also pervades– perhaps even more insidiously—the apparently objective reprsentations data visualization. Graphs, charts, and maps all contain persuasive elements that succeed through their invisibility, in the trust, for example, that the souces are truthfully represented in the visualization or the implied preference of some metrics over others. Lauren Klein and Catherine D'Ignazio point out that "so-called 'neutral' visualizations that do not appear to have an editorial hand... might even be the most perniciously persuasive visualizations of all!" (*Data Feminism*, chapter 2). Not dots on a graph can be said to be removed from the predelictions of the creator and the generosity of the viewer.

### 2.10.2 Felski & Sedgwick affective approaches

Critics like Rita Felski and Eve Sedgwick adopt an alternative approach toward reading that exposes knowledge as derived from embodied experience. Felski talks about reading as an affective orientation, where readers position themselves and their desires around texts. Felski critiques the popular orientation in literary criticism centered on what Paul Riceour has called the "hermeneutics of suspicion"—the desire to unmask and demystify the secrets of literary works. According to Felski, critics generally behave as if language is always withholding some truth, that the critic's task is to reveal the unsaid or repressed. She identifies the affective modes of suspicion to include disenchantment, vigilance, paranoia.

Sedgwick makes a similar assertion about tendencies of "paranoid reading," though she bases her critique on Michele Foucault's repressive hypothesis from his *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, which approaches discussions on sex and sexuality through the lense of repression or prohibition. Rather than excavating the workings of the repressive hypothesis, Foucault is interested in the ways that discourse on sex has proliferated, in its multiplications that avoid censure while satisfying the desire for sexual discourse. Left with no place to go, discussion on sex simply continued to spread by transforming itself into palatable discourses such as Marxism, pyschoanalytic, libertarian, etc. By looking for the specter of sex/power dynamics in these discourses, Foucault seems to work outside the logic of the repressive hypothesis. But this is not the case. Sedgwick explains that, "the almost delirious promise of the book" is "the suggestion that there might be ways of thinking around [the repressive hypothesis]" (9). In fact, Sedgwick explains that Foucault's inquiry has been, from the start, structured by repression and prohibition. She finds that the "critical analysis of repression is itself inseparable from repression" (10).

Felski and Sedgwick see a dead end in militant reading practices.

Felski's nightmare: Sedgwick's wish:

"How do we step outside the repressive hypothesis "to forms of thought that would not be structured by the question of prohibition in the first place?" (*Touching Feeling* 11).

Speaking on Foucault's repressive hypothesis: "I knew what I wanted from it: some ways of understanding human desire that might be quite to the side of prohibition and repression, that might hence be structured quite differently from the heroic, 'liberatory', inescapably dualistic righteousness of hunting down and attacking prohibition/repression in all its chameleonic guises" (*Touching Feeling* 10).

Felski shows how this suspicion toward texts forecloses other possible readings while providing no guarantee of rigorous or radical thought. Rather than adopt a suspicious attitude, Felski suggests that literary scholars try "postcritical reading," which looks to what the text suggests or makes possible. Felski wonders what if we allowed ourselves to be marked or struck by what we read. Then, rather than just be a cognitive activity, reading can become an "embodied mode of attentiveness that involves us in acts of sensing, perceiving, feeling, registering, and engaging" (176).

Reading is about movement

Postcritical Reading — "Reading, in this light, is a matter of attaching, collating, negotiating, assembling—of forging links between things that were previously unconnected"... "Reading, in this sense, is not just a cognitive activity but an embodied mode of attentiveness that involves us in acts of sensing, perceiving, feeling, registering, and engaging" (Felski 176).

### 2.10.3 Sedgwick on generative shame

What if we read Henry James mobilizing shame as a creative resource? For many queer people, shame is a structuring force in their identity. But this doesn't mean we need to be negative, we can look to the ways that shame unlocks creativity and productivity—to the ways that metaphors are made possible through shame. James' "blushing", "flushing" is linked to a fantasy of the skin being entered, or touched by a hand. GLOVE, GAGE, GAGEURE... We can reclaim a negative affect of shame and approach it as a generative force.

- "Shame interests me politically, then, because it generates and legitimates the place of identity–the question of identity–at the origin of the impulse to the performative, but does so without giving that identity space the standing of an essence. It constitutes the as-to-be-constituted, which is also to say, as already there for the (necessary, productive) misconstrual and misrecognition. Shame–living, as it does, on and in the face–seems to be uniquely contagious from one person to another. And the contagiousness of shame is only facilitated by its anamorphic, protean susceptibility to new expressive grammars" (63).

## 2.11 TODO draft the dimensions of touch: anzaldua

–> the challenge is to regain touch without resolving it–overcoming impulse of subj/obj divides. how do we touch without presuming full connections? the answer is through abstraction, formalization, opacity...

Touch reconciles the inherent connection between bodies, something that heteronormativity tries to suppress. For things to not touch, to be severed or "objectified," moves them into a relation of violence. Gloria Anzaldua explains that separation is brutal: "In trying to become 'objective,' Western culture made 'objects' of things and people when it distanced itself from them, thereby losing 'touch' with them. This dichotomy is the root of all violence" (37). Losing touch is a prerequisite for exploitation. The sundering of "objects" from our touch primes us to take advantage of them. Colonial history is a case study in losing touch: "White America has only attended to the body of the earth in order to exploit it, never to succor it or to be nurtured in it" (68). Anzaldua's *mestiza*, birthed in the open wound of the border, "where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds," is an attempt to bring together what has been separated (3). Those who live on the border know better than anyone–divisions between bodies puts those bodies into conflict.

Touch offers myriad ways of relation. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick offers touch as a way of connecting to objects that evades "dualistic thought," that is, in "binary" thought, where things are presumed to be discrete and opposed.

"But it is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank, shouting questions,. challenging patriarchal, white conventions. A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in mortal ,combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence... At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes" (Anzaldúa 78-79 in old book).

In short, for queer bodies, there is a dual impulse, a desire to touch and be touched that coexists with the inability for touch to satisfy, provide redemption, or avoid violation. Respecting the right not to be touched, some queer theorists pursue critical methods that prevent overidentification or overanalysis. They resist reading practices, which have been called "suspicious reading" or "paranoid reading"[1], that seek to expose the effects of homophobic prohibition and repression with the goal of affirming queer subjects or recuperating their losses. Paranoid or suspicious reading is oriented around finding and exposing the pain and shame of the closet in order to turn them into sites of political resistance, liberation, or pride.

This leads us to the main problem with touch: it goes both ways. What I touch also touches me; one body impressed by or in collision with another.

[1] Rita Felski? and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains that "the sense of touch makes nonsense out of any dualistic understanding of agency and passivity; to touch is always already to reach out, to fondle, to heft, to tap, or to enfold" (13). Touch engages a range of relations where power is not always reduced to opposition. The sensation of touch often obscures this dual effect. Some bodies appear to desire touching rather than being touched; sometimes, the desire for touch does not seek contact, but the fullness of desiring. it is bidirectional, reveals a subject/object divide.

## 2.12 TODO refine *feeling backward* as touching at a distance

–> Love offers a model of "feeling backward" which is a way for critics to connect with queer subjects in a way that keeps objects out of the critic's reach.

Love proposes a method in which the goal is not to redeem queer subjects or resolve queer failure. Rather, the problem of identification is turned to a reading strategy: "I want to suggest a mode of historiography that recognizes the inevitability of a 'play of recogniztions,' but that also sees these recognitions not as consoling but as shattering" (45). Reading, for Love, can enact a "play of recognitions," which is a way of making fleeting connections that do not presume complete understanding. It is a way of identifying, but not fully. Full identification would attempt to wrench the subject from its suffering, and effectively transform it into something else. Rather that attempt to rescusitate it, Love looks to the ways that identity unsettles and dissolves subjectivity. She gives the example of Stephen Gordon from Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*. Once considered too depressing as a model of lesbianism, recent critics have cast Stephen Gordon as a transgender figure. Love resists this label, maintaining that Stephen is "beyond the reach of such redemptive narratives" (119). The question, for Love, is not whether Stephen is a pre-op FTM (Female-to-Male), but how Stephen's existential negativity can be read as an embodied phenonmenon, as "a social experience insistently internalized and corporeal" (108).