

## **Creative Openings and World-Making: Postcritique, Reparative Readings, and Anzaldúa's *Borderlands***

**Selina Foltinek (University of Bayreuth)**

ABSTRACT: This article examines postcritical and reparative readings of female same-sex narratives and proposes a diversification of reading practices. The approach toward f/f-narratives presented here shifts attention to queer literary visions by questioning the narrative of the “impossible woman” (Valerie Rohy) as well as the hegemony and omnipresence of the “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Paul Ricoeur) in literary and cultural studies. It aims at queering hierarchies of knowledge as well as practices of readings. Eventually, a postcritical reading of Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) interrogates the text's potential for creative openings and queer world-making by drawing on entanglements of past, present, and future.

KEYWORDS: Postcritique; Reparative Readings; Same-Sex; Queer; Sexuality; Gloria Anzaldúa; *Borderlands*

(As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet.

(Anzaldúa 102-103)

### **“Fresh Ways of Interpreting”: Diversifying (Queer) Reading Practices**

Literature can offer orientation and knowledge, and can provide sexual as well as ethnic minorities with an impetus for empowering and remedial imagination. Christopher Looby argues that sexuality “is itself a fiction, an imaginary composite of many different experiences, identifications, and performances” (843). He insists that “sexuality is essentially a literary phenomenon. [...] [P]eople would never have had sexuality (never mind any particular sexuality) if novelists and others hadn't invented it (and them)” (841). However, literature's agency does not only lie in making sexuality legible. Susan Stanford Friedman touches upon the idea of literary agency in relation to a postcritical stance toward the close reading of a poem: “The poem begins in critique but isn't limited to it. The poem's agency is to make us laugh, to make us feel what it means to be looked at as strange, and thereby to enlarge our understanding, to change the way we think” (350). Tobias Skiveren suggests using “literature

as a means to get in touch with the emotional lives of the Other” (221) and “as a means of practicing good listening, of learning to be affected” (231). Among others, these scholars recognize literature’s creative and affective potential. In contrast to a detached mode of literary scholarship, postcritique values readerly affect and envisions literature as opening up new worlds to readers.

Postcritical discussions are part of an interrogation of reading practices in which Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, for instance, take a prominent role as well. They distinguish symptomatic and surface reading. Symptomatic readings, they argue, “locate outright absences, gaps, and ellipses in texts, and then ask what those absences mean, what forces create them, and how they signify the questions that motivate the text, but that the text itself cannot articulate” (Best and Marcus 3-4). Rita Felski establishes the binary of postcritical and suspicious reading. Her concept of postcritique challenges the “*hermeneutics of suspicion* [which] is a term coined by Paul Ricoeur to describe the practice of reading texts against the grain to expose their repressed or hidden meanings” (“Suspicious Minds” 215).<sup>1</sup> While suspicious readings of texts prevail in gender and queer studies, a postcritical reading framework postulates that suspicious readings do not ‘know’ everything. A postcritical approach combines discussions of the role of literature, of the kinds of texts scholars pay attention to, and calls for a shift in mode and mood<sup>2</sup> of reading. When Best distinguishes a first (sympathetic) and a second (suspicious) reading and assigns postcritical readings to the first category while understanding Felski’s definition of ‘post’ as ‘after,’ he misconceptualizes Felski’s and Elizabeth Anker’s aim: “Felski’s postcritical reading invites us to think again about why we were drawn to works of art in the first place, which has the effect of putting us in a position of looking after critique for a reading that is supposed to have preceded it (i.e., ‘*postcritique*’)” (339). Felski’s rejection of the hegemony of the hermeneutics of suspicion is not the same as insisting on an unsuspecting first reading. In *Critique and Postcritique*, Anker and Felski define the ‘post’ in postcritique not as an ‘after critique’ in the sense of a temporal relation, but rather as “an attempt to explore fresh ways of interpreting literary and cultural texts that acknowledges, nonetheless, its inevitable dependency on the very practices it is questioning” (1) to “avow the creative, innovative, world-making aspects of literature and criticism” (20). Friedman states that the (suspicious) humanities cast aside their potential of discovery, which she defines as “creative imagination, the ideas, the desires and fantasies, and the meaning-making activities of human life” (346).

I draw on this postcritical framework for my paper to spotlight narratives about female same-sex desire. Borrowing the wording from the title of Friedman’s 2017 essay “Both/And: Critique

---

<sup>1</sup> Ricoeur theorizes and compares hermeneutic strategies in theology and literary studies. By referring to Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, he states that the “‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ is an integral part of all appropriation of meaning. And with it follows the ‘de-construction’ of prejudices which impede our letting the world of the text be” (Ricoeur 32).

<sup>2</sup> Felski calls postcritique a “mood and method” to emphasize that it combines attitudinal and methodological aspects (*Limits* 1).

and Discovery in the Humanities,” which was published as a response to and discussion of the postcritical turn in a *PMLA* issue, I practice a ‘both/and’ approach that combines the perspective of (suspicious) critique and (reparative) imagination. Reparative readings are one example of a postcritical approach in the way they accentuate empowering and healing effects of texts on their readers. Although Felski challenges the suspicious mode of reading in approaches such as postcolonial studies, she acknowledges these approaches’ achievements. Feminist theory, for instance, has created “*both* a critique of a rhetoric of female identity and revolutionary poetic language that prevailed in differing strands of feminism in the 1980s *and* a defense of the world-making power of feminist fiction by way of the formation of a counterpublic sphere” (Felski, “Response” 385). Such an approach is inherently queer, I would suggest, as it leaves behind the binary notion of seemingly mutually exclusive poles. Through a postcritical lens, I aim at transgressing two often-practiced frameworks of analysis concerning LGBTQ+ characters: (1) the narrative of the ‘impossible woman’ and (2) the logics of the hermeneutics of suspicion. Firstly, I emphasize the importance of contrasting the narrative of ‘impossibility’ to represent female same-sex desire and, more specifically, the urgency of doing so from a postcritical perspective. Secondly, I illustrate what postcritical and reparative readings ‘know’ in contrast to suspicious ones. I thus make a case for diversifying and queering reading practices.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, I offer a postcritical reading of Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) to show how the text can creatively open a world of queer imagination departing from, but thoroughly framed by, a deconstructive position. Responding to Felski’s *The Limits of Critique*, Best criticizes the lack of postcritical reading examples: “Postcritique feels rather too negatively defined given Felski’s ambition to chart a ‘positive vision’ of critical inquiry” (339). Hence, for the last part of this paper, I offer a more detailed postcritical reading of a literary text. I read *Borderlands* from a position of hopeful imagination looking for the text’s affirmative spaces of queerness and female same-sex desire.<sup>4</sup>

### From Narratives of Impossibility to Spaces of Queer Imagination

In *The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Literature* from 2015, Michael Cobb deems queer love in US American novels as “always” ill-fated: “Writing anything definitive about queer American novels will always be unsatisfying, if not impossible. Unsatisfying, because the romances they contain are uncertain and, quite often, doomed: heartbreak, violence, and

---

<sup>3</sup> Felski lists a range of reading practices in her article “After Suspicion” (34). I would like to point out that symptomatic readings which identify homoerotic subtexts have exemplified the act of queering reading practices since the formation of gay, lesbian, and queer studies. However, in this case, ‘queering’ calls for a diversification to refrain from taking symptomatic readings as the default option, as is explained in further detail in the postcritique subchapter of this paper.

<sup>4</sup> I borrow Annemarie Jagose’s definition of queer: “[Q]ueer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire” (*Queer Theory* 3).

persecution pepper nearly every page” (15). Heather Love addresses the problem of the “empty archive” of f/f-intimacy and the consequences of separate spheres that rendered female same-sex romantic and sexual relationships “unthinkable” and presented “lesbianism itself as fictional” before the second half of the twentieth century (“Lesbian Fiction 1900-1950” 392).<sup>5</sup> This focus on impossibility, death, and doomed characters is predominantly met with a psychoanalytic approach to texts that examines queerness as subtext. Such analyses focus on what is absent from the page, what cannot be seen but has to be detected underneath its surface. In a collection of literary case studies, Valerie Rohy accordingly chooses the term “impossible women” to describe lesbian characters in canonical texts from Nathaniel Hawthorne to Zora Neale Hurston and Elizabeth Bishop (1-2).<sup>6</sup> Borrowing the Saussurean idea of the binary opposition on which meaning relies, she traces “the construction of lesbian sexuality as a figure for resistance on which sexual, national, and literary ideologies of normative reproduction depend” (Rohy 4). Hence, Rohy studies how canonical writers appropriate lesbian experiences to use it as a foil against which the norm can be elevated. Non-heterosexual women are read as marginalized and assumed to function primarily as ‘the Other’ for heteronormative identity constructions. Scholars often reproduce the narrative of ‘impossibility’ by framing queer relationships as ‘always doomed’ and focusing on trauma, plight, and otherwise painful experiences. In scholarly criticism, one often seeks discussion of affirmative perspectives on queer female desire in vain, if it is included at all.<sup>7</sup>

I sketch a different mood and mode of reading f/f-novels, even as I acknowledge the prevalence of the above-mentioned plot formula and aesthetics. I argue that (queer) literary archives also offer texts that distinguish themselves as spaces of queer female imagination.<sup>8</sup> While the hermeneutics of suspicion prides itself in looking at invisibility and the hidden, postcritical readings of f/f-narratives can be practiced by looking at ‘visible’ relationships. I combine a reparative impulse, namely the impulse of countering the narrative of queer characters as always doomed, with a focus on texts that put non-heterosexual female

---

<sup>5</sup> In contemporary popular culture, this phenomenon is recurrently discussed as the bury-your-gays-trope. It stigmatizes same-sex relationships as doomed to fail in contrast to heterosexual counterparts. For a discussion of this trope, please refer to Haley Hulan’s essay “Bury Your Gays” (2017).

<sup>6</sup> Rohy draws on Carroll Smith-Rosenberg’s, Terry Castle’s, and Judith Butler’s work. She defines lesbian as the “name for the set of sexual and discursive effects that patriarchal culture displaces onto figures of pervasive female desire” and as “discursively constructed” (Rohy 9-10). However, her definitions exclude bisexual, trans, and other sexual and gender identities that can also express forms of female desire. Hence, I use a more inclusive terminology such as ‘female same-sex desire’—except for my reading of *Borderlands*, in which the narrator explicitly identifies as lesbian.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, Lillian Faderman’s famous historical overview *Surpassing the Love of Men* (1981) about romantic friendships also argues more in favor of Cobb’s argument and the invisibility and asexual characteristics of non-heterosexual women. Scholars such as Eve Sedgwick (*Between Men* 1992), Christopher Looby (“The Literariness of Sexuality” 2013), and David Bergman (*Gaiety Transfigured* 1991) have mostly focused on male same-sex desire in literature.

<sup>8</sup> In my PhD project, I will also address novels which, so far, have been mostly disregarded in both feminist and queer literary studies, like Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat’s *Ethel’s Love-Life* (1859), Florence Converse’s *Diana Victrix: A Novel* (1897), and Diana Frederic’s *Diana: A Strange Autobiography* (1939).

protagonists center stage. I do not claim, however, that narratives have to end in a happy monogamous relationship to be read from a postcritical perspective and to offer solace or empowerment. Instead of discovering what ‘was hidden’ or focusing on minor characters in canonized literature, I propose to shift attention to widely neglected texts or to reconsider texts such as Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands*, which have received scholarly attention mostly from the perspective of the hermeneutics of suspicion. Focusing for now on the latter option, I advocate making room for a postcritical perspective that also highlights reparative reading practices and narrative strategies, and does not suggest that all crucial aspects of a text are repressed or deconstructive. This lens does not claim to be superior to suspicious readings or readings that focus on the plight of non-heterosexual protagonists; instead, it proposes to diversify reading practices and carve out a space for reparative readings as well as affirmative and empowering spaces revolving around queerness and f/f-themes.

### **Why Postcritique? Or: Suspicion Does Not Know Everything**

Postcritical and reparative readings involve theoretical discussions about reading practices, professional modes, affects of criticism, and a shift away from the omnipresent hermeneutics of suspicion in literary studies. Felski’s concept of postcritique thereby heavily draws on Eve Sedgwick’s framework of reparative readings. In the introductory chapter to the edited volume *Novel Gazing*, Sedgwick proposes the paranoid/reparative-binary and brings together essays by various scholars that were written in the spirit of a reparative reading practice. Elaborating on the “suspicion or paranoia” position, Sedgwick traces a special historical relationship between paranoia and homosexuality (“Reparative Reading” 3). She argues that psychoanalysis proved to be homophobic in its designation of paranoia as a homosexual disease, an association sparked by Freud’s contributions. Eventually, paranoia was appropriated and employed as “a uniquely privileged site for illuminating not homosexuality itself, as in the Freudian tradition, but rather precisely the mechanisms of homophobic and heterosexist enforcement against it,” hence, her observation that paranoia “tends to be contagious” (Sedgwick, “Reparative Reading” 6). Sedgwick argues that paranoia has become the predominant framework of interpretation for theoretical endeavors that address homophobia and heterosexism. She names Butler’s *Gender Trouble* as exemplary of paranoid reading, quoting several phrases that are based on “knowledge in the form of exposure” (Sedgwick, “Reparative Reading” 17).<sup>9</sup> However, Sedgwick rejects the idea that paranoid readings offer “unique access to true knowledge. They represent a way, among others, of seeking, finding, and organizing knowledge. Paranoia knows some things well and others poorly” (9). Paranoid readings are thus insightful for (queer) research projects but do not constitute the only form of reading a text.

---

<sup>9</sup> Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* would be another example of suspicious reading.

Similar to Sedgwick's claims about paranoid readings, Felski convincingly shows how suspicious reading is an ubiquitous reading practice spread across various theoretical approaches in literary studies, from psychoanalytical feminism and New Historicism to postcolonial criticism, which "share the conviction that [...] reading a text is to critique it by underscoring what it does not know and cannot understand" ("Suspicious Minds" 217). In this context, critique is the result of detachment and a consequence of working *with* but at the same time *against* the text. Suspicion is engrained in society as a mode of thought, an attitude toward the world, and as a profession, for instance, in police work and forensics (Love, "Critique" 365-66). Furthermore, it is omnipresent in academia and embodies the "default option" and "intellectual mainstream" (Felski, "Suspicious Minds" 231). Speaking of a phenomenology of suspicion, Felski defines suspicion as a detached professional mode that has been privileged as the only way to do research; it is a putatively "non-emotional emotion [...] that became synonymous with professional culture" ("Suspicious Minds" 220). Emotional attachment and affection are often devalued in academia and scholars frequently hold on to the rational/emotional binary. This attitude results in an ostensible detachment from the objects we study. Playing with the terms 'close' and 'distance reading' that are often contrasted as a binary opposition, Felski comments that suspicious reading is "engaging in close—yet also critical and therefore distanced—reading" ("Suspicious Minds" 222). Suspicious readings often work closely with a text to uncover the hidden meanings (mode) while claiming an emotional detachment (distanced) that makes them supposedly even more critical (mood).

Conceptualizing an alternative to an implicitly paranoid interpretive framework, Felski's distinction of suspicious and postcritical readings is a rather recent scholarly position she elaborates in different articles, edited volumes, and monographs such as *The Uses of Literature* (2008), "Suspicious Minds" (2011), *The Limits of Critique* (2015), and *Critique and Postcritique* (2017). Felski adds new facets and perspectives to Sedgwick's framework of reparative readings and frames her postcritical approach with three major theoretical underpinnings: a text's mobility, agency, and a transgression of the hegemony of the hermeneutics of suspicion. Emphasizing "textual mobility and transhistorical attachment," literary texts are conceptualized as nonhuman actors based on Bruno Latour's Actor-Network-Theory; they foreground an agency that "derives not from its refusal of the world but from its many ties to the world" and a reading that refrains from a rigid dichotomy of intellect/affect or thought/emotion (Felski, *Limits* 154). While intersubjectivity is indispensable for scholarly work, it does not preclude the option of taking the critic's emotional attachment or the narrative's affective strategies into consideration.<sup>10</sup> Jamie Ann Rogers elucidates that, for instance,

---

<sup>10</sup> The lack of courses on queer studies in my own educational pathway inspired me to start this project. If ever students were to discuss queerness, non-normative sexualities, or queering perspectives, we would focus on canonical fiction and homosexual subtexts.

Black feminist writings [...] dismantle the subject-object dualism that acts as the philosophical basis of Western modernity, and as the alibi for its history of dehumanization of gendered and raced subjects. Such arguments prefigure by several decades the “affective turn”—declared by many theorists as a profoundly “new” way to deploy critical thought—which is in many ways committed to similar critiques of dualistic thinking. (202)<sup>11</sup>

Whereas ‘felt truth’ and emotions are often stigmatized as derogatory terms in the context of knowledge production, ‘feeling something is true,’ such as feeling comfortable with one’s sexual identity and finding a home metaphorically, is crucial in the field of queer studies. For instance, Tyler Bradway mentions reading as a form of seeking repair and hope during the AIDS crisis, which was “a *felt* crisis for queer publics, marked by a desperate lack of epistemic mastery” (196-97). He contends that “queer reading entails feeling our way toward more radical modes of erotic and social belonging in historical moments when these possibilities are increasingly foreclosed, stigmatized, and forgotten” (Bradway 193). Similar to Bradway, I strive for a hopeful and reparative critique that draws attention to empowering spaces of queerness and f/f-intimacy that tend to be overshadowed by suspicious readings.

A reparative reading can serve as one example of postcritical readings, an example that Felski herself draws on (see, e.g., *Limits* 151). In contrast to paranoid readings, reparative readings know, for instance, “the many ways in which selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture—even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them” (Sedgwick, “Reparative Reading” 35). A reparative reading “reads texts and semiotic practices (e.g. camp) in terms of their empowering, productive as well as renewing potential to promote semantic innovation, personal healing and social change” (Röder 58-59).<sup>12</sup> As opposed to paranoid readings, reparative readings would, for instance, focus on emotions like joy, pride, or surprise.<sup>13</sup> Scholars such as Sara Ahmed, Sedgwick, and Felski turn to affect and emotions, and, more specifically, identify emotions such as paranoia and fear but also carve out a space for desire and joy in critical readings. Affect scholar Katrin

---

<sup>11</sup> Nash similarly argues that “reading black feminism’s long-standing interest in affect exposes that the roots of the ‘affective turn’ are far more varied than often theorized. Although affect theory and queer theory are inextricably intertwined, the labor of constructing political communities around ‘public feelings’ and ‘communal affect’ has been a black feminist investment for decades” (20).

<sup>12</sup> Sedgwick makes clear that “[i]n a world full of loss, pain, and oppression, both epistemologies [reparative and paranoid] are likely to be based on deep pessimism—the reparative motive of seeking pleasure [...] arrives [...] only with the achievement of a depressive position” (16).

<sup>13</sup> I am not concerned with distinguishing affect from emotion in this paper as I am focusing on feelings involving both affects and emotions in terms of the critic, their readings, and the narratives’ affective strategies. Rogers explains that “theorists of affect typically associated with queer theory [...] might use the terms ‘emotion’ and ‘affect’ interchangeably, or they might note subtle differences between the two. They might ask how emotions work on the body, how they influence everyday life, how they participate in cognitive processes, or how they act as subjugating and subjectifying forces” (205).

Emotions should always be contextualized within specific historical, cultural, and socioeconomic frameworks, since they “should not be regarded as psychological states, but as social and cultural practices” (Ahmed 9). Hence, when I speak of emotions such as joy or surprise, I do not assign any transhistorical meaning to them.

Röder describes that paranoid readings’ “focus on negative affects ([...] fear, terror, shame, humiliation, [...]) has marginalized investigations of positive and neutral or ‘resetting’ affects ([...] excitement, joy, enjoyment, surprise [...])” (59). One of these resetting affects is hope, which I turn to in the following.

Other scholars of queer studies have similarly turned to hope as an intervention into scholarly practices of their field.<sup>14</sup> In *Cruising Utopia* (2009), José Esteban Muñoz argues in favor of critical utopianism and an “idea of hope, which is both a critical affect and a methodology” (4). Muñoz envisions critical utopia as shaping the present through investments in the future. His monograph is an attempt at claiming the future for queers and queer perspectives, as it is currently still reserved for heterosexual culture and the “fantasy of heterosexual reproduction”; more specifically, he argues for a “future in the present” (49). In Christopher Castiglia’s *The Practices of Hope* (2017), hope is “continuous dissatisfaction” (3). He proposes ‘critical hopefulness’ and emphasizes the attitudinal aspect.<sup>15</sup> Castiglia pushes his claim further and identifies hope as “the *literariness* of literature” (3), as carrying the potential of social change, and being itself expressed in the social practice of imagination. Both Muñoz and Castiglia operate with the term hope to refer to an affective strategy of looking at texts that impacts and critically investigates the present. This strategy relies on a practice of imagination stirred by literature. The creative potential of literature mentioned earlier can be summarized as hopeful imagination that literary spaces of f/f-narratives, in this particular case, offer to both critique oppressive contexts in the present and, simultaneously, generate worlds of imagination that aim at repair and remedy.

In a both/and approach, Castiglia combines a hermeneutics of suspicion and a postcritical attitude. What is often presented as a binary opposition, i.e., suspicious reading and postcritical reading, can be productively fused. Instead of indulging in just one of these reading practices and/or setting suspicious reading as the default mode, these approaches can be seen as complementary in the way they arrive at a literary analysis that takes into account the literary work with its different facets, even when they may seem contradictory at first. In an article about T. S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, Röder similarly argues that “Sedgwick’s and Ricoeur’s approaches can be productively combined to investigate hermeneutic processes in which the textual energy of a dissemination of meaning is redirected by a reparative or integrative impulse” (58). Both Röder and Castiglia thus contribute to the theoretical discussion of postcritique while also illustrating their approach with explicit examples. Castiglia interprets symbolism as a “practice of hope” which refuses one single authoritative truth. Symbolism is

---

<sup>14</sup> Opposing scholars focused on the anti-social thesis (Leo Bersani’s *Homos* from 1995 and *Is the Rectum a Grave?* from 2010) or an investigation of feelings such as shame and despair (Sedgwick’s *Touching Feeling* from 2003, Lee Edelman’s *No Future* from 2004, and Lauren Berlant’s *Cruel Optimism* from 2011).

<sup>15</sup> Felski recognizes Castiglia’s attempt to offer a postcritical approach but also criticizes him, since difficulties of critique are “not only attitudinal but also methodological and theoretical” (*Limits* 188).

deeply connected to dissatisfaction with claims to represent a singular authoritative truth, and to an awareness that below the surface lies not a true truth but perpetual opportunity to speculate about what truth might look like from other perspectives and different epistemological methods. Symbolism is not simply content or form, then, but a way of reading, the result of which is not the satisfaction and finality of meaning but an invitation to imagine hopefully. (Castiglia 157)

Friedman's aforementioned *PMLA* essay "Both/And: Critique and Discovery" is structured and born out of the notion that the humanities engage in both critique and discovery. In this paper, my reading values *Borderlands'* deconstructive framework revolving around the plight of Chicanas while it also aspires to draw attention to the world-making function of the text. *Borderlands* carves out a space for queerness and f/f-intimacy that is read from a position of hopeful imagination.

### **Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987)**

I read *Borderlands* as an assemblage of a wide range of affects. In this paper, I focus on those affects and emotions that are crucial to a discussion of affirmative spaces of female same-sex desire and significantly contribute to the hopeful outlook of the book. *Borderlands* has had a profound impact on postcolonial, feminist, and queer studies (among other disciplines), which are known for overwhelmingly suspicious inquiries. Debra Castillo juxtaposes what I understand as a suspicious reading of *Borderlands*, framing the narrative as a "symbol of a valued transnationalism" (262),<sup>16</sup> and a postcritical reading of Anzaldúa as a "poet that [...] continues to inspire some members of the next generation" (265).<sup>17</sup> While scholarship on *Borderlands* largely focuses on the traumatic consequences of being exposed to oppressive contexts as well as the text's strategy to deconstruct white supremacy and Chicano patriarchy,<sup>18</sup> I want to draw attention to its creative potential as a literary work with its affirmative and empowering affects to complement paranoid readings.

---

<sup>16</sup> Castillo draws on scholars suspiciously critiquing the accuracy of the depiction in *Borderlands*, as it distorts borderland realities of "border enforcers" by focusing on "border crossers" (261) and Mexican perspectives on the borderlands (264). Another exemplary suspicious reading of *Borderlands* is offered by Annamarie Jagose in *Lesbian Utopics* (1994), who identifies *Borderlands'* complicity with a "defensive mechanism of disavowal that elsewhere it attributes to the operations of colonialism, homophobia and phallogocentrism" (153). In *The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Kyla Wazana Tompkins critiques "Anzaldúa's vision of the stateless queer" and exposes "the occlusion of indigenous peoples from her analysis" (180).

<sup>17</sup> Castillo adds the perspective of her daughter, a student, to make this clear: "I had always been embarrassed by my Spanish—a Spanish which was good enough to be called a 'native speaker' by professors, yet poked fun at by my cousins in Mexico City. My first language, over the years, had become a painful reminder of acculturation—that I was a bad Mexicana, a gringa, a pocha [...]. On the inside, I felt like a failure. But Anzaldúa, told me different" (264). Castillo's daughter re-evaluates her lived experience based on a reading of *Borderlands* that expands her worldly knowledge.

<sup>18</sup> Most scholars read *Borderlands* as a theoretical piece that envisions the border as an open wound, disentangles the intricacies of living in the US-Mexican borderlands, or discusses power structures. Roberto Hernández, for instance, argues that *Borderlands* "makes visible the ways in which coloniality has historically functioned" (17).

Anzaldúa's text is not only a postmodern but also a postmodernist text that is unique in the way its aesthetics approach and define Chicana existence and history. I analyze Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* as a literary text that cannot be categorized according to genre conventions. It is neither an autobiography nor a historical or sociological text per se. I follow Cassie Steele's example and read it from a postcritical literary studies perspective:<sup>19</sup>

[C]ritics tend to cite Anzaldúa's work in a sociological context, as a case history or as an example of 'border identity,' while I read Anzaldúa's work as literature and show that it is *through literature* that we may heal from traumatic histories. [...] [I]t is the transformation of 'real experience' into literature through image, metaphor, and re-imagination, that turns the trauma of history into a poetry of witness. (5)

The text negotiates finding agency and self-consciousness in producing knowledge about the history of inhabitants of the (geographical) Mexican-US American borderlands and, metaphorically speaking, of sexual borderlands. *Borderlands* practices what is often termed as 'writing back' in postcolonial discourses—in this case, to white supremacy as well as to Chicano patriarchy. Commenting on multiple forms of oppression and othering, *Borderlands* outlines social practices of a misogynist patriarchal society that pushes non-conforming members to the margins. Nevertheless, the text moves beyond these discourses and envisions a path of solace to transgress the norms of a heteronormative society without obliterating, diminishing, or dismissing the plight of (lesbian) Chicanas. Based on her lived experience, Anzaldúa creates an autodiegetic narrator who navigates her way through entanglements of the past, present, and future, a US American racist and homophobic society, and Chicano patriarchy in order to arrive at a perspective that also gives voice to the joy, tenderness, and affirmative spaces she encountered on the way.

By focusing on the queer content of Anzaldúa's book, I draw attention to parts of *Borderlands* that are often neglected in scholarly readings, as the author laments in an interview: "The queer stuff is still a problem with the guys, and it is still a major barrier to their reading me" (Ikas 281). While Anzaldúa chooses 'queer'<sup>20</sup> to refer to a strategy of self-definition defying patriarchal, homophobic, and white non-heterosexual contexts of oppressions, she carves out a more general space wherein people living in the borderlands can voice their perspective. More specifically, she also creates a literary space that cherishes female same-sex desire.

---

<sup>19</sup> Speaking about her spiritual journey of writing *Borderlands*, which made her realize that subjectivity is a gathering of various parts, Anzaldúa interprets the text's narrative construction as follows: "One notion would be Gloria Anzaldúa as the author writing this piece. Then there is the narrator, who is also Gloria Anzaldúa, and within that there is then maybe also a character, a protagonist which is based on me. So you have three frames" (Ikas 279). Steele explicates that, for Anzaldúa, "healing from trauma means turning from autobiography to mythology, recognizing the spiritual promise of facing horror, and finding in myth the symbols that might lead to the construction of a new history" (91). AnaLousie Keating considers *Borderlands* as the prime example of autohistoria-teoría, which "blend[s] [...] cultural and personal biographies with memoir, history, storytelling, myth, and/or other forms of theorizing" to "create new stories of healing, self-growth, cultural critique, and individual/collective transformation" (319).

<sup>20</sup> As Ian Barnard points out, *Borderlands'* use of queerness signifies "a politicized queer identity, using 'queer' to denote oppositionality" (42). Please compare the epigraph of this article.

Anzaldúa's text is a prime example of what I understand as the creative agency of literature. Its agentive practice lies not only in deconstruction but also in opening up a world of queer imagination by remembering affective spaces of affirmation and granting space to affective restructuring of the self. According to Felski, a postcritical reading is also "a matter of attaching, collating, negotiating, assembling—of forging links between things that were previously unconnected" (*Limits* 173). *Borderlands* transgresses genre boundaries and breaks with genre conventions; conflates prose and poetry; links the past, present, and future; celebrates, remembers, and refers to non-normative concepts of sexuality and gender while also transgressing linguistic and geographical borders. The text sparks hopeful readings as it is both a critique of oppressive contexts and a literary space of queer imagination that does not only rely on critical investments in a future to shape the present but that also references a past in which it sees productive queer potential for the here and now. My reparative reading takes into account *Borderlands'* often overlooked but essential amalgamation of affirmative and empowering experiences, memories, glances, and reframings that let the text end on a hopeful note looking into the future. By no means do I intend to romanticize the text through my postcritical reading; rather I want to decisively shift attention to the paragraphs that accentuate queer identity and lesbian experience. I focus on three passages in this paper: *Borderlands'* subchapter on homophobia, an f/f poem, and a renegotiation of queer Aztec roots.

In the subchapter on homophobia, the lesbian narrator, who conceives of herself as part of a larger lesbian community, actively makes the fear she has to face visible in order to escape invisibility and shame. Recounting her time as instructor at a New England college, the narrator sets off on a metaphorical journey to ponder the affective implications of overcoming homophobia. Triggered by a lesbian student's comment ("I thought homophobia meant fear of going home after a residency") in an atmosphere of "panic," she analyzes the affective responses to homophobia that lead to the "fear of going home" (Anzaldúa 42). Anticipating rejection, one's "sexual behavior" (41) is deemed "unacceptable, faulty, damaged," which causes the subject to "push the unacceptable parts into the shadows" (42). These parts are personified as a "Shadow-Beast" that may "break out of its cage" any minute (42). While conformity to dominant culture is shortly mentioned as one response, the narrator devotes her attention to the option of revising, and I would argue 'repairing,' her self-understanding. The text identifies "the undershadow that the reigning order of heterosexual males project on our Beast" (42) and thus deconstructs the power structures that caused the metaphorical conception of homophobia in the first place. A suspicious reading would further indulge in revealing and investigating the heteronormative structures in white US American and Chicano patriarchal society to which the text passages that draw on queerness symptomatically respond. However, my postcritical lens shifts attention to the resetting affect of "tenderness" (42) the narrator experiences once the confrontation and deconstruction takes place. This restructuring exercise is framed as a "path of knowledge" (41). In this subchapter, visibility is a process of acquiring knowledge, of learning about oneself and the fear that is created and

increased by invisibility imposed by heteronormative society. Social invisibility of homosexuals leads to fear and buries emotions such as “tenderness.” Tenderness, however, becomes accessible only after enduring initial pain of confrontation. The narrator is painfully affected by homophobia but works her way through discrimination and agonizing experiences by voicing her feelings and imagining homophobia’s affective formation as a material being that can be confronted. Feelings very much constitute a reality that is both brutal and tender. Thus, for the narrator to write solace into existence, it is crucial to navigate her way through conflicting feelings. As Sara Ahmed claims, “[f]eminist and queer scholars have shown us that emotions ‘matter’ for politics; emotions show us how power shapes the very surface of bodies as well as worlds. So in a way, we do ‘feel our way.’ This analysis of how we ‘feel our way’ approaches emotion as a form of cultural politics or world making” (12). This world-making potential of emotions resonates with a postcritical approach that acknowledges the composing and creative element of this passage, which is, in turn, based on hopeful imagination and a renegotiation of past experiences. By envisioning the experience of homophobia as a personified encounter between protagonist and Shadow-Beast, the narrator chooses an empowering metaphorical language to promote personal healing.

Jennifer Nash makes a case for Black feminism’s embrace of love-politics as affective labor by referring to Alice Walker and Audre Lorde. Similar to Lorde, who is “urging her black feminist subjects to embrace a politics that names that fear, and actively labors to topple it,” Anzaldúa embraces a form of affective labor that “actively reorient[s] the self” (Nash 11). Moving past the stage of being negatively affected by systemic discrimination and societal rejection, the narrator remembers the feelings related to the incident and works her way through them. Read from this perspective, *Borderlands* can renew and expand knowledge of homophobia and can help conceptualize a response to homophobia within oppressive contexts by drawing on hopeful imagination and affective strategies. This journey is not only a cognitive undertaking of identifying power structures and systemic discrimination but even more so an emotional one. The text confronts the reader with what homophobia feels like. It gives access to a world of feelings. This perspective constitutes a hopeful form of critique. It is postcritical because postcritique is shaped by affect theory and strives “to register affective resonances and their implications at the micropolitical level” (Ahern 17). Stephen Ahern stresses that “[t]o be open to the pain, the joy, the fear—and to refuse to foreclose the transformative potential of such engagements—is an ethical imperative that must guide our critical practice” (17). Rogers argues that narrative can “articulate the affect of the past that remains, and draw from the information it provides. Such stories, entering into the affective circuits of the present, have the potential to disrupt dominant structures of feeling, including those related to cultures of white supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity” (214). My reading illustrates that knowledge derived from the articulation of a range of affects provides access to these emotions that renew our understanding of lived experience. Anzaldúa’s text offers repair to readers exposed to homophobia themselves as well as spaces of affirmation by writing queer desire. Additionally, it offers access to a world of emotions and imagination unavailable or

unknown to readers who have never been exposed to this form of discrimination, to f/f-intimacy, or queer repair. Thus, such a reading of *Borderlands* presents an epistemological inquiry “without opposing thought to emotion or divorcing intellectual rigor from affective attachment” (Felski, *Limits* 154). If readers let themselves be attached and moved by the emotions and affects being discussed, a world of feelings can be accessed that hold a truth different from and complementary to the uncovering of patriarchal structures. It is only after or whilst critical readers acknowledge the importance of deconstructing patriarchal and white supremacist structures and the text’s role in it that they can let themselves be attached to the text. It is not an either/or but a both/and reading.

In the following, I turn to the second key passage for my post-critical reading. In the poetry collection that constitutes *Borderlands’* second half, the poem “Compañera, cuando amábamos” (Anzaldúa 168-69) is an explicitly same-sex and affirmative poem in which the lyrical I, identifying as a woman, is intimate with another woman. She describes their love for each other in this two-page-poem in Spanish without translation. “Compañera, cuando amábamos” follows a poem about police brutality against a homosexual Puerto Rican man, entitled “Corner of 50<sup>th</sup> St. and Fifth Av.” (167).<sup>21</sup> Using Sedgwick’s words, the “compañera” poem may come as a ‘surprise,’<sup>22</sup> yet as a rather reassuring perspective on same-sex desire in this case, that is situated after a poem which depicts homophobia and white supremacist violence. The poem mentions how the women are under social scrutiny (“la gente mirando nuestras manos” 168) yet devotes most verses to queer pleasure. The lyrical I addresses her “compañera” and asks her repeatedly if she can remember the afternoons when they were making love (“¿Volverán esas tardes sordas cuando nos amábamos?” 168). She refers to them as lesbians (“manfloras”) wandering around on an island of ‘mutual melody’ (“Dos manfloras vagas en una isla de mutua melodía” 168). The poem recalls those afternoons by appealing to the senses of touching (“cuerpo,” “¡tócame!”), hearing (“mutua melodía,” “sorda”), and seeing (“tu mirada” 168-69). She imagines retracing her compañera’s bodily features.

Again, *Borderlands’* agentic practice does not only lie in its deconstructive endeavors—crucial as they may be to the book’s overall effect—but in its writing of female queer desire and pleasure. It recurrently takes an affirmative stance toward same-sex love and gender-bending practices of the past and present, and shifts attention to emotions such as love, tenderness, and pride. Ahmed refers to “emotions as performative: they both generate their objects, and repeat past associations” (194). Thus, queer love requires the repetition of affirmative spaces and emotions to leave the heteronormative frame of reference. *Borderlands* embodies such an approach if it is not only read selectively—to prove a

---

<sup>21</sup> It is the second-to-last poem of the third poetry chapter called “Crossers.”

<sup>22</sup> Sedgwick argues that a paranoid framework of interpretation envisions surprise as a lack of control, which makes surprise a highly undesired emotion, one the critic fears, which is why “paranoia requires that bad news be always already known” (“Reparative Reading” 10). The ‘surprise’ mentioned in the postcritical reading above does not have this negative connotation.

theoretical argument or as sociological context<sup>23</sup>—but when it is considered as a whole and as a literary text. Thus, I read it from a position of hope that identifies affirmative spaces in *Borderlands* as constitutive of the literary work.

*Borderlands* includes further meanings of queerness to repeatedly affirm non-heteronormative imaginations by turning to the past. Coatlicue (an Aztec goddess) represents queer imagination and rejects binary oppositions as well as white and Chicano patriarchy. Coatlicue is addressed as a “protean being” in the fourth prose chapter that revolves around the ‘Coatlicue State’ (Anzaldúa 63). As the goddess of birth and death as well as light and darkness, she “represents: duality in life, a synthesis of duality, and a third perspective—something more than mere duality or a synthesis of duality” (68) and hence an embodiment of ‘queerness.’<sup>24</sup> As Steele argues, Coatlicue “functions as a model for [...] acknowledging both physical and emotional feelings, for overcoming resistance to such feelings, and in doing so, learning from the wounding” (137). *Borderlands* draws attention to love between women and disrupts heteronormativity by rejecting its language, power structures, and discriminatory practices and also by providing a world of references rooted in a Chicana past that extends to the present. On the first page of the Coatlicue chapter, the reader is immediately drawn to its aesthetics (Anzaldúa 63). Linguistic expressions form the center of attention. Words are aligned while often lacking writing conventions like punctuation and are presented in an elliptic style with excessive use of nonfinite verb forms. Even language is queered, as it defies finite meaning—the passage is a “protean being,” aesthetically speaking. Read rather suspiciously, the visual form of the chapter’s beginning subverts linguistic conventions and presents a queering aesthetic endeavor that is also associated with Coatlicue as a disruptive force. Read from a postcritical perspective, *Borderlands’* remembering of the Aztec goddess as a “protean being” both in content and form constitutes a queer and creative world-making force. When Natalie Prizel discusses lesbian repair, she asks: “What if it were possible to look back not in regret but in search of something usable for the here and now?” (284). Anzaldúa’s narrator does exactly that: she turns back in time to present queer imaginations that are forgotten in the present.

In contrast to the above-mentioned passages that look backwards in time, the final poem, “Don’t give in Chicanita,” ends on a hopeful and empowering note of a future in which Chicana women are “very much alive” (Anzaldúa 225). This poem embodies Sedgwick’s reparative position and envisions hope “among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates. Because she has

---

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., María-Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba’s “Literature of the Borderlands” in the *Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature* (2015) that values *Borderlands* as crucial for the formation of border studies, Suzanne Bost’s *Mulattas and Mestizas: Representing Mixed Identities in the Americas, 1850-2000* (2003) that discusses the mestiza concept, Mohammad Tamdgidi’s “Anzaldúa’s Sociological Imagination” (*Human Architecture*, 2006), or Debra Castillo’s evaluation of *Borderlands’* significance for transnational studies (*PMLA*, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> The epigraph to this article refers to this aspect of creating something new when conflating sexual, cultural, and racial otherness.

room to realize that the future may be different from the present” (“Reparative Reading” 24). In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz uses the term “anticipatory illumination,” which is “a kind of potentiality that is open, indeterminate, like the affective contours of hope itself” (7).<sup>25</sup> He argues that “[q]ueerness is also a performative because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future. Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (Muñoz 1).<sup>26</sup> For *Borderlands*, this does not entirely hold true. The narrator orients herself toward the future but she also finds strength, affirmation, and healing in a discussion of Chicana history, turning toward former queer features of her culture and a renegotiation of emotions in the present. *Borderlands* is a complex entanglement of the past, present, and future that offers a reparative perspective not only to be anticipated but one already found. Assigning a reparative framework to her analysis of *Borderlands* in *We Heal from Memory*, Steele convincingly states that “Anzaldúa takes the shattered bones of cultural myths and makes them into seeds for the future” (129). Queer hope stems from the past as much as from the future. The text allows the reader to glimpse at the future from a position of hope to imagine what is yet to come as a continuation of repair rooted in a revision and recalling of the past.

## Conclusion

Instead of exclusively focusing on deconstruction and negative knowledge (i.e., looking at absences and gaps), postcritical readings analyze the creative potential and ‘positive knowledge’ of texts. Situated at the nexus of postcritical and suspicious readings, my approach to f/f-narratives presented here shifts attention to empowering queer visions. Highlighting affirmative aspects contradicts the narrative of the ‘impossible woman.’ It also opens up and adds critical “arenas in which to gather”, to use Latour’s terminology (246), in terms of a diversification of reading practices. From my postcritical perspective, Anzaldúa’s text embodies a literary example of a both/and approach: It deconstructs the plights of Chicanas, of which I have accentuated sexual discrimination, while it also constitutes a space of hope, drawing both on a (semantic) renegotiation of the past and an imagination of a remedial future. By conflating inheritances of Chicana culture, personal memories, and an appeal to persist in this endeavor to carve out a space for solace and affirmation, *Borderlands* both criticizes intersecting systems of oppression and creates queer imagination.

---

<sup>25</sup> Muñoz himself references Sedgwick and contends that “[u]topian readings are aligned with what Sedgwick would call reparative hermeneutics” (12).

<sup>26</sup> This again resonates with what Nash calls “Black feminist love-politics” that “has long been invested in the ‘open end,’ in radical possibility, orienting itself toward a yet-unknown future” (16).

## Works Cited

- Ahern, Stephen. "Introduction: A Feel for the Text." *Affect Theory and Literary Critical Practice*. Edited by Stephen Ahern, Palgrave, 2019, pp. 1-21.
- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2014.
- Anker, Elizabeth, and Rita Felski, editors. *Critique and Postcritique*. Duke UP, 2017.
- . Introduction. *Critique and Postcritique*. Edited by Elizabeth S. Anker and Rita Felski, Duke UP, 2017, pp. 1-28.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 1987. Edited by Norma E. Cantú and Aída Hurtado, 4th ed., Aunt Lute Books, 2012.
- Barnard, Ian. "Gloria Anzaldúa's Queer Mestisaje." *MELUS*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1997, pp. 35-53. doi:10.2307/468079. Accessed 9 July 2020.
- Bergman, David. *Gaiety Transfigured: Gay Self-Representation in American Literature*. U of Wisconsin P, 1991.
- Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Duke UP, 2011.
- Bersani, Leo. *Homos*. Harvard UP, 1995.
- . *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays*. U of Chicago P, 2010.
- Best, Stephen. "La Foi Postcritique, on Second Thought." *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 2, 2017, pp. 337-43. doi:10.1632/pmla.2017.132.2.337. Accessed 10 July 2020.
- Best, Stephen, and Sharon Marcus. "Surface Reading: An Introduction." *Representations*, vol. 108, no. 1, 2009, pp. 1-21. doi:10.1525/rep.2009.108.1.1. Accessed 10 July 2020.
- Bost, Suzanne. *Mulattas and Mestizas: Representing Mixed Identities in the Americas, 1850-2000*. U of Georgia P, 2003.
- Bradway, Tyler. "Bad Reading." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2-3, 2018, pp. 189-212. doi:10.1215/10642684-4324777. Accessed 2 Jan. 2020.
- Castiglia, Christopher. *The Practices of Hope: Literary Criticism in Disenchanted Times*. New York UP, 2017.
- Castillo, Debra A. "Anzaldúa and Transnational American Studies." *PMLA*, vol. 121, no. 1, 2006, pp. 260-65.
- Cobb, Michael. "Queer Novelties." *The Cambridge Companion to American Gay and Lesbian Literature*. Edited by Scott Herring, Cambridge UP, 2015, pp. 15-28.
- Converse, Florence. *Diana Victrix: A Novel*. Riverside Press, 1897.
- Córdoba, María-Socorro Tabuenca. "Literature of the Borderlands." *The Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature*. Edited by Suzanne Bost and Frances R. Aparicio, Routledge, 2013, 454-61.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Duke UP, 2004. Series Q.
- Faderman, Lilian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women, from the Renaissance to the Present*. Morrow, 1981.
- Felski, Rita. "After Suspicion." *Profession*, 2009, pp. 28-35. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25595909. Accessed 8 July 2020.
- . "Response." *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 2, 2017, pp. 384-91. doi:10.1632/pmla.2017.132.2.384. Accessed 10 July 2020.

- . "Suspicious Minds." *Poetics Today*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2011, pp. 215-34. doi:10.1215/03335372-1261208. Accessed 4 Nov. 2019.
- . *The Limits of Critique*. U of Chicago P, 2015.
- . *Uses of Literature*. Blackwell, 2008.
- Frederics, Diana. *Diana: A Strange Autobiography*. With an Introduction by Julie Abraham, 1939. Edited by Karla Jay. New York UP, 1995.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. "Both/And: Critique and Discovery in the Humanities." *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 2, 2017, pp. 344-51. doi:10.1632/pmla.2017.132.2.344. Accessed 2 Jan. 2020.
- Hernández, Roberto. *Coloniality of the US-Mexico Border: Power, Violence, and the Decolonial Imperative*. U of Arizona P, 2018.
- Hulan, Haley. "Bury Your Gays: History, Usage, and Context." *McNair Scholars Journal*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 17-27. scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mcnair/vol21/iss1/6. Accessed 21 Jan. 2020.
- Ikas, Karin. "Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa." *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Edited by Norma E. Cantú and Aída Hurtado, 4th ed., Aunt Lute Books, 2012, pp. 267-84.
- Jagose, Annamarie. *Lesbian Utopics*. Routledge, 1994.
- . *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York UP, 1996.
- Keating, AnaLouise. *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*. Duke UP, 2009.
- Latour, Bruno. "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2004, pp. 225-48.
- Looby, Christopher. "The Literariness of Sexuality: Or, How to Do the (Literary) History of (American) Sexuality." *American Literary History*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2013, pp. 841-54. doi:10.1093/alh/ajt040. Accessed 30 May 2019.
- Love, Heather. "Lesbian Fiction 1900-1950." *A Companion to the Modern American Novel: 1900-1950*. Edited by John T. Matthews. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, pp. 392-413.
- . "'Critique Is Ordinary.'" *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 2, 2017, pp. 364-70. doi:10.1632/pmla.2017.132.2.364. Accessed 10 July 2020.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York UP, 2009. Sexual Cultures.
- Nash, Jennifer C. "Practicing Love: Black Feminism, Love-Politics, and Post-Intersectionality." *Meridians*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2013, pp. 1-24. doi:10.2979/meridians.11.2.1. Accessed 30 June 2020.
- Prizel, Natalie. "Beside Women." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2-3, 2018, pp. 267-89. doi:10.1215/10642684-4324813. Accessed 2 Jan. 2020.
- Ricoeur, Paul. "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1975, pp. 14-33. doi:10.1177/000842987600500103. Accessed 10 July 2020.
- Röder, Katrin. "Reparative Reading, Post-structuralist Hermeneutics and T. S. Eliot's 'Four Quartets.'" *Anglia*, vol. 132, no. 1, 2014, pp. 58-77. doi:10.1515/anglia-2014-0004. Accessed 2 Jan. 2020.

- Rogers, Jamie Ann. "Invisible Memories: Black Feminist Literature and Its Affective Flights." *Affect Theory and Literary Critical Practice*. Edited by Stephen Ahern, Palgrave, 2019, pp. 201-16.
- Rohy, Valerie. *Impossible Women: Lesbian Figures & American Literature*. Cornell UP, 2000.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Columbia UP, 1992.
- . *Epistemology of the Closet*. U of California P, 1990.
- . "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading: or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction Is About You." *Novel Gazing*. Edited by Eve Kosofsky, Duke UP, 1997, pp. 1-37.
- . *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Duke UP, 2003. Series Q.
- , editor. *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*. Duke UP, 1997. Series Q.
- Skiveren, Tobias. "On Good Listening, Postcritique, and Ta-Nehisi Coates' Affective Testimony." *Affect Theory and Literary Critical Practice*. Edited by Stephen Ahern, Palgrave, 2019, pp. 217-33.
- Steele, Cassie Premo. *We Heal from Memory: Sexton, Lorde, Anzaldúa, and the Poetry of Witness*. 1st ed., Palgrave, 2000.
- Sweat, Margaret J. M. *Ethel's Love-Life: A Novel*. Rudd & Carleton, 1859.
- Tamdgidi, Mohammad H. "Anzaldúa's Sociological Imagination: Comparative Applied Insights into Utopystic and Quantal Sociology." *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2006, pp. 265-85.
- Tompkins, Kyla Wazana. "Intersections of Race, Gender, and Sexuality: Queer of Color Critique." *The Cambridge Companion to American Gay and Lesbian Literature*. Edited by Scott Herring, Cambridge UP, 2015, pp. 173-89.