Considering Queer Objects, or Failing to Pass (through) Composition

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Anecdotal Introduction re: Failure
Considering Queer Pedagogy

- Alexander and Wallace (2009): “…attention to sexual identity in rhetoric and composition has been spotty at best” (302).
- Alexander and Rhodes (2011): “We question what, if anything, queerness has to say to composition” (179).

failure of “queer pedagogy”?
Considering Queer Pedagogy

• Britzman (1995): “Queer Theory offers education techniques to make sense of and remark upon what it dismisses or cannot bear to know. ...ignorance is analyzed as an effect of knowledge, indeed, as its limit, and not as an originary or innocent state” (154).

• Marinara (2012): “…queerness ruffles or disturbs the boundaries and borders of knowledge and practice already in place in the academy” (201).
Considering Queer Pedagogy

- Kopelson (2013): “…pedagogy works toward and in the service of normalization and assimilation” (206).
- Rhodes (2015): “Can such a thing as queer pedagogy even exist? For pedagogy is about disciplining the subject.”
Considering Queer Pedagogy

attending to the **outside** of our knowledge
vs.

normalizing **queer** through pedagogical practice
Considering Queer (De)Composing

• McRuer (2004): “…recentering our attention on the composing bodies in our classrooms can inaugurate a productive process of ‘decomposition’” (50).

• Alexander (2015): “Learning to ‘compose’ is about becoming disciplined, even normed to particular ways of communicating and knowing.”
Considering Queer (De)Composing


• Alexander and Rhodes (2011): “…we are struck by the lack of writing samples from ‘de-composed’ students in his chapter. Where, in other words, are the material effects of de-composition?” (189-190).
Considering Queer (De)Composing

decomposing: in-process, disruptive, unsettled

vs.

composing: finished product, evaluated, organized
Considering Queer (De)Composing

what writing is de-composed?
what writing fails?
what writing fails to appear?
Considering Queer (De)Composing

legitimate knowledge?
legitimate work?
legitimate orientation?
legitimate object of attention?
legitimate object of desire?
Considering Objects

• Ahmed (2006): “…orientations involve different ways of registering the proximity of objects and others. Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as ‘who’ or ‘what’ we direct our energy and attention toward. A queer phenomenology, perhaps, might start by redirecting our attention toward different objects, those that are ‘less proximate’ or even those that deviate or are deviant” (3).
Considering Objects

• Ahmed (2010): “We could say that happiness is promised through proximity to certain objects. Objects would refer not only to physical or material things but also to anything that we imagine might lead us to happiness, including objects in the sense of values, practice, styles, as well as aspirations” (29).
Considering Objects

• Ahmed (2006): “The object is an effect of towardness; it is the thing toward which I am directed and which in being posited as a thing, as being something or another for me, takes me in some directions rather than others” (27).

• Ahmed (2006): “…being oriented in different ways matters precisely insofar as such orientations shape what bodies do: it is not that the object ‘causes’ desire, but that in desiring certain objects other things follow” (100).
Considering Objects

queer pedagogy

vs.

queer orientation towards pedagogy
Considering Objects

• Ahmed (2006): “For a life to count as a good life, then it must return the debt of its life by taking on the direction promised as a social good, which means imagining one’s futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course. A queer life might be one that fails to make such gestures of return” (21).

• Ahmed (2010): “To be affected in a good way by objects that are already evaluated as good is a way of belonging to an affective community. We align ourselves with others by investing in the same objects as the cause of happiness” (38).
Considering Objects

what are the queer objects in our classrooms?
what are the unhappy objects in our classrooms?
Considering Objects

queer/unhappy objects?
• addictions?
• disabilities?
• experiences of trauma?
• experiences of mania?
• feelings of apathy?
• feelings of depression?
• marketable futures?
• unmarketable futures?
Considering Objects

what is our orientation toward the language and writing (or lack thereof) that accompany these objects?
Considering Objects

• Ahmed (2010): “To make a simple point: some bodies more than others will bear the promise of happiness” (45).
Considering Objects: Feelings

- Worsham (1998): “[Pedagogy’s] primary work is to organize an emotional world, to inculcate patterns of feeling that support the legitimacy of dominant interests, patterns that are especially appropriate to gender, race, and class locations” (223).
- Worsham (1998): “In general, the dominant pedagogy of emotion refuses the expression of anger by subordinates” (225).
Worsham (1998): “Legitimate and illegitimate (or appropriate and inappropriate) objects of affective attachment, in other words, are structurally or systematically related and, in prohibiting particular objects or persons as legitimate attachments, a society automatically invests them with great value and interest—if only for their disciplinary value in reproducing or policing authorized distinctions” (223).
Considering Objects: Affects

- Worsham (1998): “Grief, hatred, bitterness, anger, rage, terror, and apathy as well as emotions of self-assessment such as pride, guilt, and shame—these form the core of the hidden curriculum” (216).

- Johnson (2001): “...we have not simply diminished the pleasures of awakening literacy but have linked that experience, perhaps indelibly, to pain” (632).

- Lindquist (2004): “...students are asked to render successful affective performances to create viable personae as middle-class critics and producers of discourse” (197).
Considering Objects: Goals

• Smith (1997): “Students attend college as a means to an end” (316).

• Miller (1998): “…we teach those who have already found their way into the system, those who wish, at some level, to gain access to the material benefits that higher education is understood to promise” (18).

• C. Fox (2006): “Within a heteronormative desiring framework, our work as critical pedagogues is made meaningful through…passing on our identities, values, and morality to the next generation” (245).
Considering Objects: Desires

- Bawarshi (2003): “part of what students do when they invent their essays involves recontextualizing the desires they have acquired as their own self-prompted desire to write” (141).
- Monson and Rhodes (2004): “Students emerge as docile bodies whose desire is mediated and shaped by language and ergo by pedagogical prescriptives on discourse” (85).
(Re)Considering Failure

• Bartholomae (1993): “…basic writers are produced by our desires to be liberals—to enforce a commonness among our students” (12).

• T. Fox (1999): “Devoid of content, [basic] writing courses become suited to the general task of social sorting” (54).
(Re)Considering Failure

• Ahmed (2006): “An action is possible when the body and object ‘fit.’ So it is not simply that some bodies and tools happen to generate specific actions. Objects, as well as spaces, are made for some kinds of bodies more than others” (51).

• Ahmed (2006): “Disorientation involves failed orientations: bodies inhabit spaces that do not extend their shape, or use objects that do not extend their reach” (160).
Ahmed (2006): “The point is what we do with such moments of disorientation, as well as what such moments can do—whether they can offer us the hope of new directions, and whether new directions are reason enough for hope” (158).