

Damage Limitation

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Diversity often takes institutional form as damage limitation.

This is a claim I make in [Living a Feminist Life](#) (2017). I want in this post to expand on what I mean by diversity as damage limitation as well as to show how university responses to complaints about racial and sexual harassment often take this form. I want to deepen some of my past analyses of damage limitation to consider how such activities go beyond official responses to complaints to include a wider set of activities, some of which are understood in positive terms, as being about collegiality and loyalty.

In the final chapter, “Speaking about Racism” of my book [On Being Included: Racism and Diversity as Institutional Life](#) (2012), I explored how diversity works as public relations, that is, how diversity offers a way of managing the relation between the university and wider publics often through presenting “the best image” of itself. Public relations is often about the handling of crises; think of how the expression “public relations disaster,” works to present problems in terms of their impact on the image or reputation of an organisation. To say that diversity is used as public relations is to imply that diversity is often mobilised in response or as a response to a problem. In that chapter I referred to two key instances, when universities responded to allegations of racism. It is interesting for me to revisit these instances in light of my research into experiences of complaint.

In one example, students experience racism on campus and report that they felt “there were no real channels for complaint.” The university responds by contradicting the students complaints: “This could not be further from the truth. The college prides itself on its levels of pastoral care.” The response not only contradicts the students’ claims (“nothing could be further from the truth”) but also functions to promote or assert the good will of the college. It is striking how “pastoral care” is evoked caring for students, but also creates an idea of the organization as “being caring.” Pastoral care is tied to an organizational ideal as being good: we do not have a problem (with racism, with responding to those who experience racism?) *because we care for these students*. To respond to a claim that there are no proper channels of complaint by saying that there are proper channels of complaint is to show how the channels are blocked. The response to the complaint enacts the very problem that the complaint is about. The response that we don’t have a problem is, in other words, a sign that there is a problem..

I also discussed another case in which a university responded to press coverage about it’s the lack of racial diversity on its campus, by making reference to its commitments to diversity: “we have just celebrated One World Week, which we tied in with Black History Month.” The response to a challenge about the lack of diversity of the university takes the form of a statement of how the university promotes diversity. Universities often treat whiteness as an image problem rather than an institutional problem, to change the whiteness of an image (for example by creating brochures showing smiling colourful faces) is how they do not modify the whiteness of the institution: *change the image, keep the thing*. Indeed in the same article the communications officer claims: “We don’t have a problem with racism here...we take a much more holistic approach, working with the community. But we don’t come at it as a way of tackling racism.” Statements such as “we don’t have a problem with racism” make those who report racism into the problem. Note also that the “holistic approach” of “working with the community” is explicitly linked to not coming at “it” as racism. Racism is not spoken about by those who speak for the university.

To change the whiteness of an image is still, I should add, work. Those who embody diversity, those of us *of colour*, have to appear more; and we have to appear in such a way, happy and smiling, that might be counter to how we experience the organization. Heidi Mirza describes how her university kept using her smiling face: “Visual images of ‘colourful’ happy faces are used to show the university has embraced difference. My happy face appeared on the front of the university website – even though every week I asked for it to be taken down, it still kept popping up” (2017, 44). Diversity work can also be the work you have to do *not* to appear smiling or even *not* to appear.

If you do not do what you are supposed to do or do not appear as you are supposed to appear, if you talk about racism, you are treated as damaging the organisation and as refusing to be grateful. We learn the conditions of inclusion from what happens to those who fail to meet the conditions. In another instance, a diversity officer for the centre that funded our research project (which was primarily about diversity and leadership in the FE sector), talked to a newspaper and used the words “institutional racism.” A newspaper report followed that quotes from the diversity officer about the existence of institutional racism within the sector. The director is “outraged” and sent off an email to all staff saying that “we would never accuse a college of institutional racism.” The concept of “institutional racism” was of course introduced to show how racism is reproduced through institutions rather than simply coming from the individuals. When institutional racism is talked about as an “accusation,” the institution is treated as if it was a person as if the institution is “the one” who is suffering a blow to its reputation. When racism is recognised as institutional, the institution is quickly psychologised.

Since I published *On Being Included*, there have been many comparable instances of universities responding to complaints about racism by making explicit use of diversity, that is, by pointing to diversity as evidence of what the institution is really like. These defensive uses of diversity are often made because information has been leaked to the press by those who have tried to make complaints about racism but have not got anywhere. This is how diversity ends up being used to deny racism; to promote an image of institutional inclusivity and happiness. By treating racism as causing damage to the organisations the damage caused by racism is not addressed. Damage limitation can also mean in practice: the failure to recognise the role of the institution in causing damage. Indeed damage limitation is often about the *denial* of the damage caused (“nothing could be further from the truth”). Leila Whitley (2017) has usefully identified the “displacement of harm” as central to how universities manage complaints about sexual harassment: the harm experienced by the person who experiences harassment is displaced by being treated as harm to the organisation. *We are witnessing the displacement of damage from the person who makes the complaint to the institution that receives that complaint.*

The term “damage limitation” is typically used to refer to the activity of limiting or containing the effects of an accident or error. When organisations make use of diversity as damage limitation, they are treating racism as incidental rather than structural, indeed, as an accident or error. Diversity is used as if such activities *are true indicators of the nature of the institution*. Importantly then superficial activities are treated as if they are revealing of something. I will return to the significance of the superficial nature of diversity (and other solutions) in due course. That One World Week can be used as evidence there is not a problem with racism teaches us how solutions can be problems given new form. In *Living a Feminist Life* (2017) I also described diversity as *institutional polishing*: a way of polishing the furniture so it can reflect back a good shiny version of the organisation. Or perhaps we could think of diversity as rather like a bad repair job. Diversity is the effort to fix a leak, treating the leak as the problem. And the work of repair or *recovery* can be understood as a *covering over* the damage caused, creating the right impression as the impression that things are all right. Even bad repair jobs

can be successful. Perhaps you can only see the plaster – what has been plastered over- when you know how much there is to leak.

Complaints procedures can be used rather like diversity, as a way of fixing a leak, *or as way of appearing to address a problem*. One university's complaints policy includes a section on the recording and monitoring of complaints. One bullet point is that complaints will: “assist in identifying problems and trends across the University.” The next bullet point is that complaints will: form “the basis of positive publicity, in demonstrating that identified issues have been resolved.” When complaints record a problem they can be quickly folded into a solution; a record of how universities have resolved something; resolution, dissolution. We learn from how solutions can be found before problems have even been identified. Damage limitation can thus refer to a system that is *already in place*, that is, damage limitation is a system for managing problems by managing them out of existence.

I noted earlier how diversity often works as a bad repair job, a superficial or surface-level activity that is given the status of depth, that is, used as evidence of what an organisation is really like. What is striking is how often complaints about harassment are treated as if they can be resolved in a superficial way, which I would argue, *is a way of treating harassment as superficial*. I spoke to an academic about her experiences as a student. She was assaulted by one of the lecturers in her department. With the help of the student union, she writes a letter detailing the assault. That letter would be considered the first stage of a formal complaint process if she went ahead with a formal complaint (she did not). Where does the letter go? It ends up with the Dean. And what does the Dean do? “The Dean basically told me I should sit down and have a cup of tea with this guy to sort it out.” So often a response to a complaint about harassment is *to minimise harassment*, as if what occurred is just a minor squabble between two parties, something that can sorted out by a cup of tea that English signifier of reconciliation. A complaint would become a failure, your failure, her failure, to resolve a situation more amicably. A complaint too can be handled like a bad repair job; covering over something very serious by the ease of how it is addressed.

I have many examples in my data of the *minimisation of harassment*. It is very important to work out what is going on here. We need to think about how this minimisation is being enacted *in* an address to the student who has been harassed (1). So she is being told: what happened to you is not serious; I don't take it seriously; I don't take you seriously. She is being told: it is small thing, you are a small thing. In the telling is lodged a command to make what happened a small thing by not making a complaint. When some forms of violence are normalised as being about how things are, they are also treated as little things. With “boys will be boys” is often an accompanying “he didn't mean anything by it.” When it becomes routine to make forms of violence small, then any act of attending to these forms, facing up to them, let alone complaining about them, is judged as making something bigger than it is, should be, or needs to be. So in making a complaint, you are treating what is around you quite differently than others around you because you are refusing what has become routine; you are refusing to reduce the significance of what happened. Many of those I have spoken to describe the experience of complaint as one of *disorientation* as well as *alienation*: what appears to you does not appear to others.

From the point of view of those trying to limit damage to the organisation's reputation, damage limitation can work. In this case, that damage limitation worked meant : she did not go ahead and make a formal complaint (if she had the letter that ended up with the Dean would have been the first stage of a formal complaint in accordance with complaint procedures). We immediately learn: the success of damage limitation is how damage is

reproduced. When an attempt to stop harassment fails, the harassment does not stop: “He was a known harasser; there were lots of stories told about him. I had a friend who was very vulnerable, he took advantage of that, she ended up taking her own life.” She ended up taking her own life; so much more pain, so much more damage at the edges of one woman’s story of damage. He went on; he was allowed to go on, when her complaint, and for all we know there were others too, we do not know how many said no, did not stop him. He has since retired; much respected by his peers; no blemish on his record. No blemish on his record, no blemish on the institutional record, the damage carried by those who did complain or would complain if they could complain, carried around like baggage, slow, heavy, down. To hear complaint is to hear from those weighed down by a history that has not left a trace in the official records. Damage to a person is indeed deflected by being treated as potential damage to the institution and damage to a person if a person is identified by a complaint. That damage is often evoked through or as concern, as *concern for consequence*, for how much he or they have to lose, reputation, status, standing, and so on. I will return to the role of “they,” in due course. They matter.

I am learning so much from *the repair work* those who been harassed or bullied, are asked or made to do. When we are talking about bad repair jobs, we are still talking about some being asked to do that work, which usually means in practice being asked (or required) to get over what is not over. In another instance, a black woman is racially harassed and bullied by a white woman colleague. When another white woman becomes head of the department she says: “I want you to reconcile with her because after all she is my friend and colleague and all she ever did was write you some long emails.” She is my friend. Racial harassment is reduced to a style of communication; we are back to the *minimisation* of harassment. And a complaint about racism becomes damage to a friend, to a white friend; racism even as damage to whiteness. I will return to the figure of the white friend in a future post on racial harassment (2). An expression of desire for reconciliation might appear to be a friendly gesture. There is nothing friendly about this gesture. If a black woman does not return the desire for reconciliation, if she is not willing to smooth things over, moving on, getting along, getting on, she becomes mean; the one who has not only broken a connection but refused to repair it.

If you do proceed with a complaint you are often treated as causing damage or as being unwilling to repair the damage caused. Discrediting a complainer is also about damage limitation. And the discrediting is itself damaging: discrediting often works in practice as an effort to stop a would-be-complainer from complaining. I will be describing this effort as *institutional harassment* and *institutional bullying* in future posts. Harassment can be the attempt to stop someone from identifying the harassment that implicates the institution in wrong doing (that many complaints end up as complaints about how complaints are mishandled is telling us something about *implication*). One method of discrediting the complainer is to identify the complainer as *malicious*. The figure of the malicious complainer is exercised before a complaint is lodged; she has precedence. That figure is even evoked by some complaint policies; we learn that the same policies that tell you how to complain evoke that figure. One person who I spoke to informally told me she was treated as a “loose cannon” as if the damage caused by a complaint is a failure of precision; as if by complaining she is firing off at anyone or anything. You can be treated as if you are intending to cause as much damage as possible, as if the effect is your cause, as if your cause is to cause damage. One academic I interviewed, who had recorded 72 instances of racial and sexual harassment, was accused of a “scatter gun” approach (can I repeat that number, 72).

The more evidence you have of violence directed at you the more violent you are made to appear.

It is because the system of damage limitation is already in place that organisations can respond so quickly when

the information generated by a complaint (and complaints are always data-rich because they require the collection of evidence) gets out. They often respond with statements of commitment: we do not tolerate sexual harassment, or we are a diverse and inclusive organisation, as if saying it is so, makes it so. I call these statements *non-performatives*: they do not bring what they name into effect. I have used that term in part as these statements are made *as if* they are performative; as if they, in Judith Butler's terms, produce "the effect that [they] name" (1993, ix). Non-performatives are all about damage control; statements are easy to make because of what they do not do. It is not just statements that are made because they lack the force to bring something about. Many of these activities undertaken *after* cases of sexual harassment are made public can be understood as damage limitation; however much the work is conducted with commitment and in good faith by those employed to do the work. The point of the work undertaken, the reasons that work is funded, is often to repair damage to the institution's reputation. This would not be surprising at all to diversity or equal opportunities practitioners: as I described in *On Being Included* (2012), drawing on interviews with practitioners, one of the most successful ways for directing funds to equality and diversity is to make that work a matter of *risk and reputation*.

But we have a problem when such activities, however they are funded, or why ever they are funded, are used as evidence that the problem has been resolved. An academic who participated in a collective complaint about a culture of harassment at a former university describes how: "[the university] now has a very nice patch on its intranet telling staff what happened and it all looks cleaner than clean because of all the action they have taken in the past six months and frankly they haven't addressed the situation at all." I am interested in the evocation of the intranet: communication about the house can be kept in house. Communication can be used to clean up a mess, which implies that complaints about harassment are treated rather like dirt, "matter out of place" to reuse Mary Douglas's reuse of an old definition of dirt (1966, 35). It is not just that activities undertaken do not address the problem; *they can even be a way of not addressing the problem*. Perhaps these activities are another version of One World Week, a way of creating evidence you have dealt with a problem.

Creating evidence of doing something is not the same thing as doing something.

Those who make complaints often know about *what is not being addressed*. In this case, the university appointed an external person to conduct an enquiry as a result of complaints (I will be discussing in due course how independent enquires are often far from independent, which is not surprising given the person who is appointed is usually appointed by the institution). Between them, the students had direct experience of sexual harassment (including grooming and sexual assault) from 5 different lecturers in the same department (can I repeat that number 5). And the report did not even mention the testimony provided by some of the complainants: "And what they have effectively done with that report is identify one rogue member of staff whose been encouraged to take retirement, and then of course 'they've dealt with the situation', and the reason they left all of our testimony out of the picture is that they didn't want to accept exactly why we wanted to talk to them about it in the first place which was that this all was *the face of culture*." So here to contain the damage caused by a complaint it to contain the problem that the complaint is addressing: as if the problem can be removed by removing a person. Alison Phipps (2018) has usefully described this removal as *institutional airbrushing*. As Leila Whitley and Tiffany Page argue "by treating a reported incident of sexual harassment as a singular one-off event exercised by a singular excisable member of staff, the university can maintain its reputation" (2015, 47). We might consider how in becoming excisable, harassment is also treated as foreign to the organisation, as being inexpressive of its core values (3).

There is indeed often a *blur of activity* after cases sexual harassment is made public. I use the term blur to imply

that such activities can be used to obscure the problem. Much of the activity following publicity about sexual harassment relates to the creation of new complaints procedures or new procedures for reporting harassment. New procedures are important given the inadequacy of old procedures. In particular we do need to create systems to enable anonymity for those reporting harassment given what we know: many do not report harassment because they fear the consequences of reporting harassment. But as I noted in an earlier [post](#), you can change procedures without changing the culture (4). You can even change procedures *in order not to* change the culture; changing procedures as a way of not seeing “the face of culture,” of *not facing up to something*. That many organisations turn new complaints procedures into public relations exercises should alert us to the problem of what is not being addressed.

You can change how you address a problem without addressing the problem.

I am learning about what is not being addressed by listening to those who have tried to address a problem. And by listening I have also learnt that damage limitation needs to be understood as an inside job; it not simply imposed on universities from the outside or imposed on academics from above by senior management. The activity of containing the damage of complaint is *shared*. I am not saying that all the activity is the same activity or that it is even coordinated. Containing damage is often achieved without the need for any coordination. It can be achieved by silence; not saying something *is* doing something. When a complaint has been made, silence can sometimes be achieved by *silencing*, you have to silence someone because they are talking or because they are talking in the wrong way, perhaps in a way that has too many *implications* for the organisation.

I think of silence not as separate sphere of activity but as an effect of how people are already working. *Silence can even be a way of performing collegiality*. Indeed how complaints are suppressed might point in the same direction to what we hold dear: working with others; having a sense of a shared project; being part of something, part of a feminist “we” even (5).

Note: many who make complaints are called “uncollegial.”

Damage limitation is often about the work of maintaining silence in public about the role of institutions in reproducing the problem. Maybe sometimes silence is heard as *dignified*. Too many of our virtues are about rewarding submission to authority. Now we could understand silence as a disciplinary technique –academics themselves are forced to be silent. I think this is accurate in some cases. In the UK, many codes of conduct (as well as some employment contracts) for academics include clauses about not doing or saying something that would bring the employer/university into disrepute. I have to confess that until I began working a complaint, I did not know this was the case! Disciplinary norms are perhaps more successful the less we are conscious of them. I know of some instances when codes of conduct have been used as disciplinary measures. In one case a senior academic was fired from her job and her conduct was described by the university as “disgraceful and scandalous” with this word *scandal* being used in her university’s code of conduct. In another instance, a lecturer was told that even communicating with students who were putting forward a complaint about sexual misconduct from a senior member of her department would be “in breach of her contract.”

It is not simply that codes become disciplinary when we fail to follow them. Rather when we fail to follow them, we come to know them.

When a grievance or complaint is not stopped, that is, when it is made (so often the work of complaint is about

what you have to do to stop being stopped), what follows is often a sustained effort to stop the information from becoming general knowledge. Non-Disclosure Agreements are the *tail end* of a longer process of withholding information (and by tail end I do not mean they are the end: I will be describing in future posts how silencing follows complaints well after they have been “resolved.”) So much of the activity around complaint happens “behind closed doors.” I will be writing more about doors as they come up a lot in my data. Universities will justify this silence and secrecy (if they are called to do so) as being about protecting the complainant. My own view is that it is not the interests of complainants being protected; the “displacement of harm” described by Leila Whitley can also manifest as the *displacement of concern*.

Silencing can take the form of a deliberate attempt to stop a complaint made against a colleague. When a student made a complaint after being sexually assaulted by a lecturer – he had forced himself on her in his office after locking the door – she is called to a meeting with three women professors and a male dean:

One of the professors said laughing, for instance, “Ah, X, he is always like this, isn’t he? Always very seductive and funny...He has been always like this since we were studying together...He also touches me when talking, what so?”... while the other was saying “Ah, I know him for so many years, it must be some misunderstanding, for sure” while the other was just smiling and nodding; before even having heard what I had to say.

Now we could understand this meeting as evidence of top down bullying from management. That is going on but that is not all that is going on. A history can be casually evoked (studying together, I have known him for years), a complaint about assault dismissed as misunderstanding, smiling, nodding (nods can be non-performative); it is right, he is right, you are wrong; he is being wronged. A complaint can be stopped because of what is shared, who is shared; friendships, loyalties, personal, professional; *affection becoming like cement in a wall*, a bond, a bind, be kind, he is one of a kind, one of our kind. Closing the door on a complaint, stopping it from getting through or getting out, is also about closing ranks; another student describes “they have each other’s backs.”

A complaint about a sexual assault can be stopped as an expression of collegiality. In another case, a student submitted what was described by a member of the department as a “me too letter.” The letter contained information about harassment from a highly respected member of the department; and also referenced a prior history of complaints. What happened? People in the department were instructed not to talk about the letter. Who would make silence an instruction? We might expect that feminists, for example, would refuse such an instruction. But the instructions were also made by feminist academics. By mentioning this, I am not trying to claim that feminist academics are worse than non-feminist academics. I am merely registering that we might expect feminists to do better. Why would those who identify as feminists make silence an instruction? I am still learning from the mere fact that silence can be not only imposed on feminists (although it can be) but imposed by feminists. My data includes many such instances of feminist academics trying to stop those who make complaints from talking about harassment or from talking “too explicitly” about the role of institutions in reproducing harassment. I will be trying to account for what is going on in such instances.

Maybe conversations are treated rather like cans of worms: you do not open one up in fear of what might tumble out (or who might tumble out). The *limitation of the complaint* is sometimes justified as avoiding a *future fall out*, that is, as avoiding a potential future damage. Complaints do seem to be kept like worms in that can; cans are also files. Filing complaints away as if they are “historical,” done and dusted, is used as a method of protection. Simply put, protecting the reputation of colleagues or an institution is often given priority over enabling a conversation about harassment.

Perhaps if silence can be about protection, silence can be about promotion. Some might be willing to participate in silence-as-damage-control because they have interests in doing so. To advance within the organisation might require being silent about certain kinds of problems; let's call these *institutional problems*. I talked to a woman of colour who had experienced racism and sexism in her department and who was trying to change departments. She talked about how she was not supported by a senior white feminist professor who was the head of another department. I am still learning from her interpretation of what was going on: "it's easy to be radical on paper but in reality it's quite different....Her politics were to do with advancing her career and nothing to do with changing the landscape for women." Those who seek support in making complaints often know all about paper feminists – those who are feminist on paper but not in practice. The act of turning away from or not giving support to a complainer seems rather different than the act of trying to stop someone from making a complaint about a colleague. It is different. But the effects can be similar: if you turn from away from the one who makes the complaint she is left holding the baggage. Containing the damage of a complaint might also be about self-protection: how some avoid damage by avoiding proximity to those who have damages to report. By avoiding proximity to a complaint you might also avoid having to [confront](#) the institution. What we might call *liberal white feminism* is this: when the career advancement of individual white women is dependent on the extent to which she demonstrates that she is willing *not* to confront the institution or willing *not* to address institutional problems.

Please note then: there can be a connection between *progressing* within an organisation and *not supporting* those who make complaints about problems such as racism and sexism.

Silence can be about promotion. Silence can be about protection. We learn: promotion and protection can be performed or achieved through the same actions. Who is being promoted? What is being promoted? Who is being protected? What is being protected? I am still learning about who and what by listening to those who make complaints. Complaints teach us about *who's who* and *what's what*. A black academic describes to me what she learned from her experience of participating in a complaint about racial discrimination:

What I learnt from the complaint process was that white organisations always seem to protect white people because in protecting the one white person they are protecting the whole institution from any claim that there is any racism happening at all. There is always this massive PR exercise.

Complaints can be used as public relations (yes rather like diversity). When we are talking about protecting the institution, we are also talking about protecting some colleagues more than others; or even some colleagues *against* others. We are talking about how protecting one person can be the same thing as protecting the whole institution. There is a history to who becomes that person. *And there is a history to who does not become that person*. So when we are talking about damage limitation we are also talking about who is protected in the name of "the whole institution," we are talking about who can *embody the whole*, and who cannot or does not. Silence becomes not only loyalty to the institution but loyalty to one's colleagues, or even loyalty to those deemed of one's own kind. When being kind is restricted to those of one's kind, kind is not kind.

Complaints are often suppressed (and suppress can mean both to keep something a secret as well as to contain) out of loyalty to one's colleagues. Complaints are treated rather like infections; the attempt to contain a complaint is an attempt to stop an infection from spreading. The complainers are treated as if they are infectious; as if you can catch something from her, something that would be bad for your health and general health. Information too can be treated as infection: when a complaint is made, that information, that data, is held all the more tightly, as if

to let it spread would be to spread a sickness. This is why to speak out often requires becoming a leaky pipe, drip, drip. And then: organisations will try and contain the damage. The response in other words *is* damage limitation. This is how diversity too works as damage limitation, an attempt to contain the damage caused not by racism but by leaking information about racism.

The term *damage control* might be helpful here to expose the violence of some of these responses to violence. This term is typically used in emergency situations. Say a ship is sinking: watch out! Damage control is used to stop the ship from going down by locking off the damaged area from other ship's compartments. The containment of damage becomes necessary to stop the whole thing from sinking. The complainers are perhaps located here: in that damaged room, keeping the whole thing afloat by what they are expected to take in and take on.

If dealing with complaints about harassment were to sink the ship, we might need the ship to sink.

Notes

(1) It could be said that to identify an assault as harassment is another kind of *minimisation*. I am using the words those I have spoken to use to describe their experiences. She described the assault as part of a long campaign of harassment by the lecturer.

(2) See Nicola Rollock's 2019 report, [Staying Power](#) drawing on testimony from twenty Black women professors for many comparable examples. See also work by Kalwant Bhopal (2015) that documents bullying and racial harassment experienced by Black and Minority Ethnic staff, as well as Shirley Tate and Deborah Gabriel's (2017) important collection offering first accounts from Black women, which includes many descriptions of experiences of racism and sexism in the "ivory tower." I will be connecting some of my findings with all of this vital and important work. I will also be discussing the misuse of mediation in bullying and harassment cases: how harassment or bullying are often enabled by being treated as a conflict between equal parties.

(3) In future writing, I will explore how in becoming a complainer you are deemed a foreigner; a complaint is evidence you are "not from here." Those who harass and those who are harassed can then be positioned in a kind of moral equivalence as foreigners (not from here). I have much more to say about this.

(4) I have communicated with a number of people now who have gone through a complaints process *after* the university concerned overhauled their complaints procedures and have direct evidence of how new procedures do not necessarily mean any change or improvement in practice.

(5) This post is already too long! But I will explore in much more detail how a complainer is treated as compromising of a collective (understood even *in a good sense*). In working as feminists we might come to identify feminism with the organisation for which we work: that might be an expression of how hard we have to work; how hard it is to work so hard without becoming invested in the organisation as a good thing (even a feminist thing, or an inclusive thing).

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